

Theological Research & Writing

06PT6115 – Fall 2023

Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Tuesdays, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

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Course Description

This is a two-hour course on theological research and writing, which will give special attention to using the library, writing graduate level research papers, and the problem of plagiarism. This course is designed to help students communicate well.

Course Goals

- Students will be able to use library resources and services effectively.
- Students will understand the different types of papers expected of them in seminary.
- Students will learn how to develop an effective thesis statement.
- Students will be able to defend their thesis with a clear and cogent argument.
- Students will recognize what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.
- Students will be able to compile and manage bibliographies.
- Students will be able to edit and revise their work for grammar, structure, content, and style.

Required Texts

Kibbe, Michael. *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.

Pinker, Steven. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. New York: Penguin Books, 2014. Pages 57-76. (Available on Canvas)

Strunk, William, and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

Turabian, Kate, et. al. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2018.

Course Assignments

- *Reading Report* (10%) At the conclusion of the course, you will submit a reading report on Canvas with the percentage completed of each assigned reading. **(Due 12/15)**
- *Research and preliminary work* (20%)
 - *Initial Topic*– You will submit the topic choice for your final paper. **(Due 9/12)**
 - *Tentative Thesis Statement* – You will draft a tentative thesis statement for your paper; this thesis may (and probably will) be revised as you write the paper. **(Due 10/3)**
 - *Paper Outline* – You will create and submit a working outline for your paper. Details for this assignment will be discussed in class. **(Due 10/24)**

- *Working Bibliography* – You will submit the working bibliography for your research paper. This should be formatted according to Chicago/Turabian guidelines. **(Due 10/24)**
- *Paper Draft* (10%) –The first draft of the paper should include an introduction, thesis statement, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. More details for this assignment will be discussed in class. **(Due 11/14)**
- *Final Paper* (60%) – This final paper is the major focus of the course. The final draft of your paper should be 10-15 pages long (double-spaced), and should cite at least 8 sources, two of which must be from academic journals. The final paper should reflect changes and edits from your initial draft based on the instructor's comments. **(Due 12/15)**

The following scale will be used to determine your final grade: A (97-100), A- (94-96), B+ (91-93), B (88-90), B- (86-87), C+ (83-85), C (80-82), C- (78-79), D+ (75-77), D (72-74), D- (70-71), F (below 70).

Course Outline

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
8/29	Syllabus/Introduction	Kibbe pp. 11-44	
9/5	Choosing a Topic	Kibbe pp. 45-54	
9/12	Research	Kibbe pp. 55-64	Topic selection due
9/19	Research, cont.	Turabian pp. 25-50	
9/26	Crafting a Thesis	Kibbe pp.77- 91	
10/3	Outlining	Turabian pp. 51-74	Tentative thesis due
10/10	Bibliography & Citations	Turabian pp. 149-168	
10/17	READING WEEK		
10/24	Plagiarism	Turabian pp. 75-85; 139-148; 358-369	Outline & working bibliography due
10/31	Sentence & Paragraph Structure	Strunk & White 15-38	
11/7	Writing a Draft	Pinker pp. 57-76	
11/14	Grammar & Usage	Strunk & White pp. 1-14; Turabian pp. 305-318	Rough draft due
11/21	Style	Strunk & White pp.66-85	
11/28	Editing	Turabian pp. 102-123	
12/15			Reading report & final paper due

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Theological Research and Writing

Professor: Stephanie DiMaria

Campus: Washington, D.C.

Date: Fall 2023

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		Rubric ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	Mini-Justification
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	1. Lectures and discussion on research which builds to clear and effective writing. 2. Lectures and discussion focus upon developing oral and written communication skills.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Minimal	1. Students may choose to write an exegesis paper for their main project. 2. Research for writing about scripture will be discussed in class.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	1. Students may choose to write a systematic or historical theology paper for their main project
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	None	
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	1. Students learn how studying and writing theology will affect their future vocation and ministry regardless of what shape that may take.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Minimal	1. Students are taught principles of writing theology boldly and in a spirit of graciousness and love.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	1. Students are taught how to clearly communicate a line of thought to an audience, an essential component to effective preaching.
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	None	
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	None	
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	None	