

Bogdan Witecki
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Reformed Theological Seminary
Office Hours: By Appointment

Dallas, Fall 2023
Thursday, 10AM –12PM
PT6115
2 Credit Hours

THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING

I. Course Summary & Objectives

- a. This is a practical theology course on theological research and writing. It will instruct the students to use the library resources in an efficient and fruitful way (the local book collection as well as on-line resources: e-books and articles databases). It will introduce the students to the habit of taking notes while reading and the habit of creating a reference tool for future sermons, Bible studies, articles or books.
- b. Communication (written and oral) is an essential skill for those who serve the Church. This course will focus on:
 - understanding the research process: locating the primary and secondary sources and organizing the fruits of the research
 - creating and maintaining bibliography
 - formulating the thesis (what to say/write)
 - validating the thesis through proper argumentation
 - employing a clear style of presentation (how to say/write)
 - using Turabian and SBL styles for writing papers
 - understanding and avoiding plagiarism.

II. Course Requirements

- a. *Class Participation:* includes attendance of all classes, active participation and contribution in a class discussion.
- b. *Readings:* There are two short books required for this course. The students are encouraged to purchase the required texts, which may serve them as references in the future writing. There will also be reading associated with the research for the term paper.
- c. *Writing Assignments:* There will be three writing assignments - two short exercises and one research paper.
 - After careful reading of the Book of Jonah the student will express the message of the Book of Jonah in one sentence.
 - The student will write a short article (between 900 and 1200 words) presenting recent mission experience or involvement in church outreach.

- At the end of the semester, the student will have written a 12-15 page research paper on a topic approved by the instructor. The research for this paper may be used for another assignment (another course) as long as there is permission from the other professor. The paper will follow either Turabian or SBL style and will include bibliography (books, journal articles, and website postings).

III. Required Texts

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

Strunk, William, Jr. *The Elements of Style*. Fourth edition. New York: Longman, 2000.

IV. Recommended Texts

Ahrens, Sönke. *How to Take Smart Notes: One Simple Technique to Boost Writing, Learning and Thinking*. Second edition. Hamburg, Germany: Sönke Ahrens, 2022.

Collins, Billie Jean, Bob Buller and John F. Kutsko, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. Second edition. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014.

Houghton, Peggy M., Timothy J. Houghton. *Avoiding Plagiarism: the Easy Way! Writing with Honesty and Integrity*. Ann Arbor, MI: XanEdu, 2019.

Kibbe, Michael. *From Research to Teaching: A Guide to Beginning Your Classroom Career*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021.

Le Peau, Andrew T. *Write Better: A Lifelong Editor on Craft, Art, and Spirituality*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019.

McMillan, Kathleen, Jonathan Weyers. *How to Cite, Reference & Avoid Plagiarism at University*. Harlow, England: Pearson, 2013.

Pazmiño, Robert W. *Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Education*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009.

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean, Terry Dwain Robertson. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. Fourth edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Fifth edition. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2017.

Williams, Joseph M., Joseph Bizup. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. Fifth edition. Boston: Pearson, 2015.

Grading Overview

Reading	20%
Jonah	10%
Short article	10%
Research paper	60%

Grading System

A	(97-100)	4.00
A-	(94-96)	3.66
B+	(91-93)	3.33
B	(88-90)	3.00
B-	(86-87)	2.66
C+	(83-85)	2.33
C	(80-82)	2.00
C-	(78-79)	1.66
D+	(75-77)	1.33
D	(72-74)	1.00
D-	(70-71)	0.66
F	(0-69)	0.00
I	(incomplete)	
W	(withdraw)	

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv Student Learning Outcomes
With Mini-Justification**

Course: Theological Research and Writing
Professor: Bogdan Witecki
Campus: Dallas
Date: Fall 2023

MDiv Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	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	Students will submit a graduate level research paper of 15–20 pages. Students will give a 15–20 minute oral presentation of a paper. Lectures and discussions are focused on developing communication skills
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skills 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 hermeneutic; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Minimal	Students may choose to write an OT or NT paper for their main assignment.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	Students may choose to write a ST or HT paper for their main assignment

Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification	Minimal	Students are encouraged to apply biblical ethics and principles of sanctification in the areas of plagiarism and other forms of cheating
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	Students will learn how studying and writing theology will affect their future vocation and ministry regardless of what shape that may take.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	Students are given experience in public speaking with oral assignment. Significant time is spent covering the writing of exegesis papers, an essential skill for preaching in a Biblical and Winsomely Reformed manner.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm	Moderate	Students are given experience in public speaking with oral assignment. Significant time is spent covering the writing of exegesis papers, an essential skill for preaching in a Biblical and Winsomely Reformed manner.
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.	Minimal	See Desire for Worldview