

Theological Research and Writing

(PT6115-O1, 2 hours)

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Course Description:

This is a two-hour practical theology course on theological research and writing. The course will give special attention to using the library, writing graduate level research papers, and the problem of plagiarism. This course is designed to help you communicate well. Written communication and oral communication overlap, so whether you are going on for graduate studies or studying to become a pastor, you will need to learn how to develop and deliver a thesis.

Goals:

1. Students will understand how to use library resources and services effectively.
2. Students will learn about the kinds of writing and research projects they will be completing in seminary and how best to complete this work.
3. Students will learn how to develop a concise thesis statement and defend it.
4. Students will recognize what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.
5. Students will learn how to compile and manage bibliographies.
6. Students will write a graduate level research paper.

Class Meetings

TBD

In addition we will have 6 Canvas modules that you will be expected to participate in. I will post a video in each module and each module will have an assignment for you to complete. The assignment will either be a question about the lecture, a brief assignment, or a reading assignment. We will start the modules 6 weeks before class starts (November 27) and you will need to complete the 6 modules before class starts on January 8

Assignments¹

1. Paper. The research paper will be the major focus of this class. At the end of the semester, the successful student will have written a 10-12 page research paper on a topic of their choosing that has been cleared by the professor. You may use the research for this paper for another assignment as long as you have the permission of the other professor. The paper you hand in for me, must meet all of my requirements which are listed below. You may not hand in an assignment you are completing for another class if it does not meet my criteria for this class. You must choose a topic that is narrow enough so that it can be adequately explained in a 12 page paper, yet broad enough for you to find a sufficient number of resources. You will develop this topic into a thesis statement (much more on that later) I am not going to give you examples of thesis statements to choose from because one of the goals of this class is to teach you how to develop thesis statements on your own.

¹ The RTS grading system can be found on page 51 of the [catalog](#)

- The paper will be 10-12 pages, plus a 1 page “Works Cited” section. The “Works Cited Page” and the “Title Page” do not count toward the page total. The “Works Cited Page” will include only items that have been used and referenced in the paper. The title page is also not to be included in the page total. The paper will be double spaced and the body will contain no fewer than 2,500 words.
- The paper will utilize at least 10 high quality resources. At least 1 of your resources must be a scholarly peer-reviewed journal article. At least one of your sources must be an inter-library loan and marked with an asterisk. (I want everyone to be familiar with ILL’s by the time they finish this class.)
- The paper will have a thesis statement. The thesis statement will be clear and concise and will tell the reader exactly what the paper is about. The thesis statement will make an argument and not just be a summary statement. The entire paper will be centered on proving this thesis statement. We will discuss developing a good thesis statement at length during the semester. In fact, you might say that developing a thesis statement is the thesis of this entire course. You will be sick of hearing me say “thesis statement” by the end of the course.
- The paper will follow the guidelines set forth in: Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. Please note this is the 9th edition of Turabian. You will be using the “Notes-Bibliography” style found in chapter 17 of Turabian, not the “Author-Date Style” found in chapter 18.
- This is how your paper will be evaluated:
 - An “A” paper will evidence strong research and demonstrate excellent writing skills. To receive an A, you must meet all the draft deadlines which are described below. An “A” paper will be organized around an excellent thesis statement. It will contain no typos or grammar errors. To get an idea of what an “A” paper looks like, read an article in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.
 - A “B” paper will meet the basic requirements and will be well-written. There might be some room for improvement, but a “B” paper will still be excellent.
 - A “C” paper will meet the basic requirements and contain a few errors such as typos or poorly constructed sentences. There will be lots of room for improvement with a “C” paper.
 - A “D” paper will meet the basic requirements but will contain many errors and be difficult to follow.
 - You will receive an “F” on your paper if you do not meet the basic requirements, you plagiarize, you do not stick to a clearly worded and concise thesis statement, or your paper is very poorly written.

When I evaluate your paper I will be looking at style, sources and content...with the heaviest emphasis upon style. Here are some questions I will use when evaluating your paper:

1. Did you use credible sources?
2. Did you use credible sources well (proper use of quotes, good integration of material, effective summaries, etc.)?
3. Did you stick to the thesis statement?
4. Does the paper have a logical flow and coherence?
5. Does your paper demonstrate paragraph unity?
6. Are your sentences clear and concise?
7. Does your paper have a good “academic look and feel?”
8. Have you proven your point?

You will be required to hand in at least two rough drafts to me (maybe more). You will hand in your “best work” for each rough draft. All paper submissions should be emailed in Word. The first rough draft should represent a completed paper that you would be willing to hand in as a final draft. It should not be rough notes. You will also hand in an outline of your paper with this draft. For this draft, I will be looking at the “big picture” of your paper. Does your paper stick to its thesis statement? Is there a logical flow to your paper? Does your paper have paragraph unity? These are the kinds of questions I will be asking as I mark your paper. I will email your papers back to you, and you will make corrections based upon my notes and hand in a second draft. This time, I will make corrections at the sentence level. I will correct grammar, spelling, word choice, and other problems at the micro-level. One of the assumptions of your professor is that a good research paper cannot be

written quickly. It takes a semester to write a whole paper and I will give you the equivalent of a semester to write your paper. During this time, I will be available to you for advice and help. I also want you to get used to deadlines with this course. I have given you “key dates” at the bottom of this syllabus and I will be strict about following those dates. Our clock starts today, so your final paper is due on September 14 by 10:00am. You will need to meet each “key date” as it will count toward your final grade. Your paper will be worth 80% of your final grade.

One of the goals for this class is to get you in the habit of beginning your research early in the semester so that you have time to find all the sources you may need. During the first part of the “semester,” you will be researching and writing. During the second part of the “semester,” you will be revising. Extensions will not be granted except for dire emergencies. A dire emergency would be the death of a loved one...a dire emergency is not “I have a lot of stuff due this week and need more time.” Unexcused late papers will be docked 1 point for each day they are late.

2. Reading.

The textbooks for this course are

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

Strunk, William and E.B. White *The Elements of Style*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. (note this is the fourth edition. There are many editions of this book...you are free to read another edition if you wish.)

You will also need to use:

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

You are required to read Kibbe and Strunk in their entirety. You must also read chapters 1-7 and 9-14 of Turabian. In addition, you will need to read at least 600 pages on your research paper topic. You will send me an email on the term paper deadline, indicating what percentage of the required reading you have completed. Your email will read “I have completed ##% of the required reading for this class.”

You are not required to purchase these books. I refer to Turabian frequently and think you would benefit from having your own copy. It is on the reference shelf in the library. I also think Strunk is handy to have around and is inexpensive.

3. Class participation.

This will be measured by your completion of assignments in Canvas. Since we are only meeting for a week, attendance at all classes is required.

Office Hours

I am available in my office this week between the hours of 12:00 pm and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After this week I will revert to more normal office hours of 8am to 4pm. If this does not work with your schedule, please contact me for an appointment.

Additional Sources

Ellison, Carol. *McGraw-Hill's Concise Guide to Writing Research Papers*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

Hibbs, Pierce Taylor and Megan Reiley. *Theological English*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2018.

Lester, James D. and James D. Lester Jr. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. New York: Longman, 2010. (13th edition)

Yaghjian, Lucretia. *Writing Theology Well : a Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. New York: Continuum, 2006.

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean and Terry Dwain Robertson. *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

These books are not required nor does your paper have to conform to the styles in these books. They may be useful to you for hints about how to develop a thesis, do research, write a paper, and avoid plagiarism.

Key Dates: The dates below are incorrect and will change...but the assignments are spaced correctly.

December 5	email your general topic to Michael indicating whether you are using this paper for another class. (10 points)
December 12	email your “general sources” to Michael. (30 points)
December 26	email your preliminary thesis statement to Michael. (30 points)
January 9	email your working bibliography to Michael. (30 points)
January 23	1 st draft of paper PLUS OUTLINE due to Michael by 5pm (200 points)
January 30	Michael returns 1 st draft
February 13	2 nd draft due to Michael by 5pm (200 points)
February 18	Michael Returns 2 nd draft
March 6	Final Paper (300 points) and Reading Report (100 points) due to Michael by 10:00am

IMPORTANT NOTE

The printed syllabus you receive on the first day of class may have some differences from the online version. This printed syllabus will supersede any other syllabus or documentation online that you may find. In addition, during the course of the semester, we may need to modify some elements of the syllabus. If we make changes, we will do so collaboratively and any changes will be designed to help you, clarify assignments, etc.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Theological Research and Writing

Professor: Michael Farrell

Campus: Orlando

Date: 4-21-16

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <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>		<u>Rubric</u> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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. Students submit a graduate level research paper of 15-20 pages. 2. Students give a 15 minute oral presentation of paper 3. Lectures and discussion are focused upon developing 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.
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.	Moderate	1. 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	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.)	Moderate	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 given experience in public speaking with oral assignment. 2. 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-	None	

	worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.		
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.