Theological Research and Writing
PT 704

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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
Tuesday Morning 10am to noon. Classroom TBA
We will begin each class in our classroom for lecture and discussion. We will end several classes with a “lab” in the library where we will work on small assignments as well as the research paper. Towards the end of the semester you will give an oral presentation of your papers in class.

Assignments
1. Paper (70%). The research paper will be the major focus of this class. At the end of the semester, the successful student will have written a 15-20 page research paper on a topic of their choosing that has been cleared by the professor. Students may use the research for this paper for another assignment as long as they 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. Students must choose a topic that is narrow enough so that it can be adequately explained in a 15 page paper, yet broad
enough for them to find a sufficient number of resources. 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.

- The paper will be 15-20 pages, plus a 1-2 page “Works Cited” section. The works cited section does not count toward the page total and 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 be no less than 4,000 words.
- The paper will utilize at least 15 high quality resources. At least 3 of these resources must be scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. At least one of these 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.) An “A” paper will utilize at least 20 resources; any paper with fewer than 15 resources will not receive a passing grade.
- 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 be at the beginning of the paper. 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 December.
- The paper will follow the guidelines set forth in: Turabian, Kate L. 2007. A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago style for students and researchers. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. You may use either parenthetical or footnote citations, but you must be consistent and your paper must follow Turabian guidelines. Please note, I really, really, really prefer footnotes to parenthetical citation. I will try hard not to judge your paper more harshly if you use parenthetical citation, but I don’t know if I’ll be successful.
- 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. It 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.
  - 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. The first rough draft is due by 5:00 pm on November 5th. It must be emailed to me in Word. This paper 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 on November 12th. You will make corrections based upon my notes and hand in a second draft on November 19th. This time, I will make corrections at the sentence level. I will hand this draft back to you with my notes on November 26th. Your final paper is due on December 4th at 11:00am.

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.”

2. Reading. 10%

The textbook for this course is

Students will also need to use:

Students will also be required to read the One School One Book selection for this year.
Students will read the chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 12 of Yaghjian. Students will also be required to read *Bad Religion* in its entirety. In addition, students will need to read at least 100 pages on their research paper topic. You may substitute extra reading you do during your research for chapters in Yaghjian if you wish. Students will send me an email on December 5, indicating what percentage of the assigned reading they have completed.

You should not read Yaghjian as though she tells you the only or even the best way to write papers. Rather she should give you ideas about how you can write well. Everyone does research a little bit differently and everyone writes with a unique “voice.” The textbook should help you find that “voice” and ensure that you aren’t “off key.” Yaghjian is a theological liberal. I could not find a good “orthodox” guide to theological writing. Please ignore Yaghjian’s theological liberalism and absolutely do not follow her advice on gender neutral language for God.

Another note about the textbooks. 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. You will probably not refer to Yaghjian later in life, so I recommend you read the required chapters from the library copy which will be on the reserve shelf and not necessarily purchase it. *Bad Religion* will also be on the reserve shelf if you choose not to buy this book.

3. Class participation. 20%
There will be small projects during the semester that the class will complete during our meeting times. At the end of the semester, you will give an oral presentation of your paper. For this oral presentation, you will read aloud the introduction and conclusion of your paper. This should take around 7 minutes. You will then summarize the arguments of your paper, which should take about 7 minutes. Finally, you will field any questions that your fellow students may have about your papers, which should take around five minutes. I know this sounds intimidating, but one of the best ways to edit your paper is to read it out loud. This is an excellent way to correct awkward sentences and determine if you have developed a convincing argument. The requirements for the oral presentation are subject to change based upon enrollment numbers for the class at the end of the semester.

4. Extra Credit. If the student attends the evening session of the one school/one book event (Date TBA), they may write a 300 word critical review of the lecture and receive extra credit. The critical review will demonstrate that the student listened attentively to the lecture and understood how it related to the book. The student’s final grade will be increased by one “step” upon successful completion. In other words, if the student has a final grade of C+ and they do the extra credit, they will receive a B- for their final grade. Extra credit assignments are due on November 26.
Key Dates
August 27  First day of class
October 8  Reading Week. No Class
November 5  1st rough draft due date
November 12  Michael returns 1st rough draft
November 19  Second rough draft due. Oral Presentations of paper
November 26  Oral Presentations of Paper. Michael Returns your second rough drafts. Last Day of Class
December 4  11:00 AM  Term paper deadline  All reading for course must be completed by this date.

Office Hours
I am available in my office between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. If this does not work with your schedule, please contact me for an appointment.

Additional Sources


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, avoid plagiarism, etc. They are not in the library, so you will have to purchase.

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 this must be done, we will do so collaboratively and any changes will be designed to help you, clarify assignments, etc.
**MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

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.

*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.

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<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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| 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. |

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<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.)</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>1. Students may choose to write an exegesis paper for their main project.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Reformed Theology</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>1. Students may choose to write a systematic or historical theology paper for their main project</td>
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<th>Sanctification</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1. Students are encouraged to apply biblical ethics and principles of sanctification in the areas of plagiarism and other forms of cheating.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Desire for Worldview</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1. Students learn how studying and writing theology will affect their future vocation and ministry regardless of what shape that may take.</td>
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<th>Winsomely Reformed</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<td>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.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1. Students are taught principles of writing theology boldly and in a spirit of graciousness and love.</td>
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<th>Preach</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1. Students are given experience in public speaking with oral</td>
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2. Significant time is spent covering the writing of exegesis papers, an essential skill for preaching in a Biblical and Winsomely Reformed manner.

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<th>Worship</th>
<th>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</th>
<th>None</th>
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<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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