Theological Research and Writing
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Course Description:
This is a one credit 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 present a thesis.

The textbook for this course is:

Students may also want to use:

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.

Online components in this course:
Students are expected to log in and participate every week, completing associated readings and discussions in preparation for each assignment, and submitting assignments as appropriate and on time.

Discussions are a graded component in the course, and a robust discussion post will be a minimum of three well-developed paragraphs in length. Responses to classmates will be a minimum of two well-developed paragraphs in length, and contribute meaningfully and productively to the discussion.
Class meetings: on three Saturdays, from 10:30 am to 12:35 pm.
There will be three class meetings consisting of 135 minutes apiece. Each will be devoted to a specific portion of the writing process. Each student will complete significant preparation for these meetings so that they are as productive and efficient as possible. They are as follows:

2/6 – Selecting topics, thesis development, assignment guidelines and how to follow them (and clarify them when necessary), research resources and how best to navigate them, assessing credibility of sources, citing in Chicago style, avoiding plagiarism, and annotated bibliography assignment. Some discussion of paper structure and how to balance argumentation, research, and analysis appropriately, with emphasis on outlining the argument as research refines topic and thesis.

3/5 – Moving from outline and research to draft, including structure, conventions, argumentation, adding research as necessary, peer review and collaboration.

4/23 – Revision and editing, including targeted grammatical concepts, reverse outlining, adding research as needed, adjusting argumentation in response to counterarguments and research, strengthening wording and appropriate academic language.

Assignments:

Participation: 25% of your grade will be based on robust participation in all discussions and short assignments in our Canvas classroom.

Annotated Bibliography: 25% of your grade will be based on the Annotated Bibliography assignment, which will be a useful form to master as well as excellent preparation for the writing of your research paper.

Draft and Collaboration during drafting process: 15% of your grade will be based on your drafting process and collaboration with classmates in peer review.

Revised, final draft: 35% of your grade will be based on your successful revision and response to feedback, as demonstrated in your final draft of the research paper.

Schedule and Assignment Descriptions with Rubrics:

The detailed schedule with weekly readings, assignments, and posting requirements (as well as overviews of the concepts you should be learning about) will be posted in our classroom. You will also see detailed assignment descriptions and rubrics for major assignments (Annotated Bibliography and Research Paper), though the latter will include working with the instructor of any other class you are writing for in this writing course (as the rubric will indicate).

Policies:
Lateness to in-person class meetings will be problematic, so do be on time. There is no policy associated with those meetings aside from the expectation that you will work with a classmate to get notes on what was covered and not ask me to repeat the 135-minute session via E-mail. Missing more than one will make passing this course very difficult, so make every effort to be present, early if possible, and fully prepared in terms of readings and any preparatory work that we will be building on in those sessions.

Lateness in posts, short assignments, or drafts will result in a 10% penalty to the grade of that assignment per day that it is late. After five days it will not be accepted for credit, though you may be in touch about feedback apart from credit if you feel that would be beneficial to your education (I will review requests on a case-by-case basis). If you have extenuating circumstances, always be in touch at least 48 hours before a due date for an extension (with no penalty) on a particular due date, or let me know if an emergency arises that is last-minute and prevents your submission from being timely. Again, on a case-by-case basis there will be review of these instances.

Lateness on final assignments as the end of the course may result in a zero, as grades will be calculated and submitted promptly. If you are not in touch in advance regarding an extension, Incomplete grade for the course, or other circumstances, I will enter a zero for any missing work at that time.

Drafts will never be assessed in place of a final draft. You must submit revisions promptly as assigned, and even if a draft in progress is quite strong, I will not grade it in lieu of a final paper should you not submit that final paper.

All assignments should be submitted in .doc, .docx, or .pdf file formats to allow for ease of navigating writing, feedback (including in-line comments), and peer work throughout the term.

Academic honesty and integrity should never need to be raised in this course, because you will steer so far from even a hint of plagiarism. We will be covering avoiding plagiarism in detail, as part of the course, but do review these examples of plagiarism:

1. Ideas, facts, or information from sources (even if you change every word in your own writing) that are not clearly and accurately cited as paraphrases or quotes.
2. Any use of wording or quotation that is not properly in quotation marks and cited (in Chicago Style, as per the assigned handbook and associated resources).
3. The re-submission for credit of any work you previously turned in for academic credit in your education without explicit permission from all instructors involved (present and past instructors).
4. Any submission of work as if it is your own when you have not developed and written it yourself. E.g., a friend or family member dictating writing to you as you type would violate this policy.