Theological Research and Writing - 3PT703 (1 hr. elective)
Rev. Kenneth McMullen, Associate Professor of Theological Bibliography
kmcmullen@rts.edu

This is a one-hour practical theology course on theological research and writing. The course will give special attention to using print and electronic library resources and writing graduate level research papers. It will also focus on the tools and habits which can help students improve their research and language skills for future ministry.

Required Texts


Other helpful texts (not required to purchase; these will be on the reserve shelf in the library):


Purpose of the Course

To help RTS students improve their theological research and writing skills so as to succeed in their program of studies and in writing for their future ministry.

To that end, the course will seek to:
1. Show students the process of successful research utilizing library resources.
2. Enable students to develop effective working bibliographies.
3. Help students understand the different types of papers expected of them in seminary.
4. Teach students how to write an effective thesis statement and how to develop a paper consistent with that statement.
5. Improve student writing and language skills.
6. Demonstrate how to avoid plagiarism in research and writing by proper documentation of sources.
Course elements

Research
- What constitutes research?
- Deciding on a broad topic
- Developing research questions
- Understanding the expectations of the professor/syllabus
- Developing a research plan
- Learning to maximize benefits of library resources
  - Reference books
  - Commentaries
  - Inter-library loan
- ATLA/ATLAS basic searching techniques

Organization / Citation
- The working bibliography
- Citation management tools
- Turabian & SBL basics
- Knowing how to cite information / avoiding plagiarism

Refining and Writing
- Developing a thesis statement
- How to interact with sources of varying views
- Reaching preliminary conclusions / summarizing research
- Refining and completing the paper
- Tools for language / grammar
- Biblical studies papers – important elements
- Theological studies papers – important elements

General Assignments (details in outline below)
- Select a general topic that could be developed into a theological or biblical studies paper.
- Utilize reference tools in the library to refine the topic and submit evidence of tools used.
- Submit a research plan for the topic.
- Submit a working bibliography of at least 20 books and 5 academic journal articles.
- Develop a thesis statement based on the topic and preliminary research.
- Refine the working bibliography.
- Revise the thesis statement.
- Create a basic outline for the paper.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</table>
| Week 1 (Feb. 6) | Defining a topic that could be developed into a theological or biblical studies paper. The unique nature of Biblical & theological research. | Kibbe – pp. 11-53  
Vyhmeister, pp. 111-116 | |
| Week 2 (Feb. 13) | Utilize reference tools in the library to refine the topic and submit evidence of tools used. Developing a research plan. | Turabian, pp. 5-23  
Vyhmeister, pp. 1-7; 99-106 | Turn in initial topic for research. List any sources you used to help select your topic. |
| Week 3 (Feb. 20) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: Commentaries / book catalog / browsing. | Vyhmeister, pp. 118-127  
Turabian, pp. 25-37 | Submit a research plan for the topic. |
| Week 5 (Mar. 6) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: ATLAS journal database – part 2. What is an ‘academic journal’? | Turabian, pp. 38-50 | Submit a working bibliography of at least 20 books and 5 academic journal articles in either Turabian or SBL format (depending on topic). |
| Week 6 (Mar. 13) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: Other databases. | Kibbe, pp. 65-83  
Turabian, pp. 51-65 | |
| Week 7 (Mar. 27) | Other online tools /online books (WorldCat, Google Scholar, Archive.org, Hathitrust.org, etc.). | Turabian, pp. 66-74 | Turn in a thesis statement based on your topic and preliminary research. |
| Week 8 (Apr. 3) | Basic citation guidelines (SBL & Turabian). | Vyhmeister, pp.237-251  
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<tr>
<th>Week 9 (Apr. 10)</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding plagiarism. Note taking. Citation tools for tracking research (Zotero, EndNote, etc.).</td>
<td>Turabian, pp. 81-84 Vyhmeister, pp. 107-110, 153-167 Kibbe, pp. 87-96</td>
<td>Turn in revised thesis statement after feedback from the professor.</td>
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<td>Week 10 (Apr. 17)</td>
<td>Footnoting research – its purpose; when &amp; how to do it</td>
<td>Turabian, pp. 75-80 Vyhmeister, pp. 188-194</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Week 12 (May 1)</td>
<td>Refining your outline – keeping it on topic; what to keep/cut. Knowing when to stop research &amp; finish writing.</td>
<td>Turabian, pp. 102-123</td>
<td>Turn in final bibliography in either Turabian or SBL format (depending on topic).</td>
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<td>Week 13 (May 8)</td>
<td>Various kinds of writing: exegetical, theological, historical, applied ministry.</td>
<td>Turabian, pp. 102-123</td>
<td>Turn in final paper outline based on your thesis statement.</td>
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Grading:
- Initial topic – 5%
- Research plan – 10%
- Working bibliography – 10%
- Thesis statement – 5%
- Revised thesis statement – 10%
- Initial paper outline – 20%
- Final bibliography – 10%
- Final paper outline – 20%
- Readings / class participation – 10%

No final exam! Let the rejoicing begin.
Additional Bibliography

Badke, William. Research strategies: finding your way through the information fog. 5th ed.

[Note: this book is also largely incorporated into part 1 of Turabian.]


Evans, John F. A guide to Biblical commentaries & reference works. 10th ed. Grand Rapids:
Zondervan, 2016. [An excellent tool for anyone’s personal library!]

Pazmiño, Robert W. Doing theological research: an introductory guide for survival in theological

Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association,
2017.

VandeCreek, Larry, Hilary E. Bender, & Merle R. Jordan. Research in pastoral care and counseling:

Yaghjian, Lucretia B. Writing theology well: a rhetoric for theological and biblical writers. 2nd ed. New
York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015.

Theological Research and Writing 3PT703
Spring Semester 2019

Reading Report – please fill out in Canvas
Due by 5:00 PM, May 14th (Tues.).
**Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course: 3PT703 / Theological Research and Writing (1 credit hour)</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professor:</strong> Rev. Kenneth McMullen</td>
<td><strong>Strong</strong></td>
<td>1. Primary focus will be on effective research that leads to clear and effective writing.</td>
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<td><strong>Campus:</strong> Charlotte</td>
<td><strong>Moderate</strong></td>
<td>2. Some of the communication skills in writing will also aid oral communication.</td>
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<td><strong>Date:</strong> Spring semester 2019</td>
<td><strong>Minimal</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><em><em>MDiv</em> Student Learning Outcomes</em>*</td>
<td><strong>None</strong></td>
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<td><em>As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</em></td>
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<td><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></td>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>• strong</td>
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<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<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>• moderate</td>
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<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>• minimal</td>
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<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>• none</td>
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<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>• none</td>
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<td><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></td>
<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>• none</td>
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<td><strong>Preach</strong></td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>• minimal</td>
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<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>• none</td>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></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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<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>• none</td>
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