

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Theological Research and Writing - 3PT6115-R (1 hr. elective)

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Fall 2020 semester

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

- Kibbe, Michael. ***From topic to thesis : a guide to theological research***. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. (pbk: 9780830851317) **EBSCO ebook**
- Silvia, Paul J. ***How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*** (2018 New Edition) (pbk: 9781433829734) (available from Amazon as a digital purchase)
- Turabian, Kate, et. al. ***A manual for writers of research papers, theses, and dissertations: Chicago Style for students and researchers***. 9th ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2018. (pbk: 9780226430577)
- Zinsser, William. ***On writing well: the classic guide to writing non-fiction***. New York: Collins, 2006. (pbk: 9780060891541)

Other helpful texts (not required to purchase; some required readings will be in these titles):

- Brohaugh, William. ***Write tight: how to keep your prose sharp, focused and concise***. Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007. (pbk: 9781402210518) **EBSCO ebook**
- Capitani, Diane and Melanie Baffes. ***Research and writing in the seminary***. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Books, 2014. (pbk: 9780786478644)
- Hibbs, Pierce Taylor. ***Theological English: An Advanced ESL Text for Students of Theology***. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018. (hbk: 9781629956022)
- LePeau, Andrew. ***Write better***. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019. **EBSCO ebook**
- Smith, Kevin. ***Writing and Research: A Guide for Theological Students***. Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016. **EBSCO ebook**
- Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. ***Your guide to writing quality research papers: for students of religion and theology***. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. (pbk: 9780310514022) **EBSCO ebook**

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 professors/syllabi
- 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 & online to refine the topic; 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.
- Interact with articles about the craft of writing

Course outline

| | Topics | Reading Assignments | Assignments |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Week 1 (Aug. 21) | 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 (Aug. 28) | 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 (Sep. 4) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: Commentaries / book catalog / browsing. | Vyhmeister, pp. 118-127 Turabian, pp. 25-37 Silvia, ch.1-3, 5 (pp. 3-46, 59-74) | Submit a research plan for the topic. Turn in Reference book exercise . |
| Week 4 (Sep. 11) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: ATLAS journal database – part 1. | Kibbe, pp. 55-64 ATLA LibGuide: http://rts.libguides.com/ATLA | Complete online discussion based on readings in Silvia, <i>How to write a lot</i> . |
| Week 5 (Sep. 18) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: ATLAS journal database – part 2. What is an 'academic journal'? | Turabian, pp. 38-65 Kibbe, pp. 65-83 | 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 (Sep. 25) | Basic citation guidelines (SBL & Turabian). | Turabian, pp. 66-74 Vyhmeister, pp.237-251 SBL student guide (skim) https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHSupp2015-02.pdf | Turn in a thesis statement based on your topic and preliminary research. |
| Week 7 (Oct. 2) | Avoiding plagiarism. Note taking. Citation tools for tracking research (Zotero, EndNote, etc.). | Turabian, pp. 81-84 Vyhmeister, pp. 107-110, 153-167 Kibbe, pp. 87-96 | Turn in revised thesis statement after feedback from the professor. |

| | Topics | Reading Assignments | Assignments |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| (Oct. 9) | FALL BREAK | NO CLASS | |
| Week 8 (Oct. 16) | Footnoting research – its purpose; when & how to do it | Turabian, pp. 75-80 Vyhmeister, pp. 188-194 | |
| Week 9 (Oct. 23) | Refining your outline – keeping it on topic; what to keep/cut. Knowing when to stop research & finish writing. | Turabian, pp. 102-123 | Turn in initial paper outline based on your thesis statement. |
| Week 10 (Oct. 30) | Various kinds of writing: exegetical, theological, historical, applied ministry. | Zinsser, pp. 3-45; McGraw article, “On Theological Writing” pp. 301-313 [on Canvas] | Turn in final bibliography in either Turabian or SBL format (depending on topic). Complete online discussion based on the McGraw article. |
| Week 11 (Nov. 6) | Basic RTS-Library tools for research: Other databases. | Brohaugh, pp. 16-76, 185-188; “C.S. Lewis’ writing advice” https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/15-pieces-of-writing-advice-from-c-s-lewis “Jack’s Typewriter” https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jacks-typewriter | Turn in final paper outline based on your thesis statement. |
| Week 12 (Nov. 13) | Other online tools /online books (WorldCat, Google Scholar, Archive.org, Hathitrust.org, etc.). | Brohaugh, pp. 77-115 | Complete online discussion based on the C.S. Lewis readings. |
| Week 13 (Nov. 20) | Tools for improving your writing. Writing or typing? Reading to improve writing. | Zinsser 49-91 | |

Grading:

- Initial topic – 5%
- Research plan – 10%
- Working bibliography – 10%
- Thesis statement – 5%
- Revised thesis statement – 10%
- Initial paper outline – 10%
- Final bibliography – 10%
- Final paper outline – 20%
- Readings / class participation – 10%
- Online discussions – 10%

No final exam! Let the rejoicing begin.

Online class participation guidelines

Because students will be participating in this class through a remote live connection, please observe the following guidelines for being a part of this 'classroom':

1. Dress appropriately like you would for an in-person class.
2. Find a quiet location from which to view the lecture, preferably in a private place -- ie, not a coffee shop and not a venue with a lot of background noise or activity (I don't want to see your pets, children, etc.).
3. Do not turn off your camera during the class. **You will be counted as absent if this occurs.**
4. Do not move around or leave unless absolutely necessary. This is only a one-hour class, so there are no breaks.
5. Do not eat during the lectures. Even online this is disrespectful to the professor and fellow participants.
6. Mute your microphone unless the professor calls on you to ask or answer a question. It cuts down the background noise for all of us. **In Zoom, [Alt-A] on a keyboard will toggle mute/unmute; holding down the space bar & then releasing it is a temporary unmute.**

Asking questions

I will pause periodically in lectures to solicit questions. Since we will be online, if you have a question, follow these steps:

1. Use the chat function in Zoom, and just type the word **'question'** – that's it. Please do not input the actual question.
2. When I get to a point where I can respond, I will see that you have a question, and I will call on you to state it for all of us to hear. Make sure you are not muted at that point!

Depending on the size of this class, I may not have time to answer every question within the one-hour time period, but I will remain online at the end of the class to take more questions for 15 minutes or so. You are always welcome to send me questions between classes at kmcmullen@rts.edu.

Readings

Given the online nature of this course, it is even more critical for students to complete assigned readings in a timely way. *If you do not complete at least 95% of the readings by the end of the course, you will not receive a grade higher than a B+.*

The **Reading Report** should be filled out in Canvas **no later than 5:00 PM, Nov. 20, 2020 (Fri.)**.

Additional Bibliography

Badke, William. *Research strategies: finding your way through the information fog*. 5th ed. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, LLC, 2014.

Booth, Wayne C., et al. *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
[Note: this book is also largely incorporated into part 1 of Turabian.]

Core, Deborah. *The seminary student writes*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000.

Eco, Umberto. *How to write a thesis*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

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 education*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009.

Puckett, Jason. *Zotero: A Guide for Librarians, Researchers, and Educators*. Second edition. Chicago: 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: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.

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

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: **3PT6115 / Theological Research and Writing (1 credit hour)**
 Professor: Rev. Kenneth McMullen
 Campus: Remote Live
 Date: Fall semester 2020

| <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. Primary focus will be on effective research that leads to clear and effective writing. 2. Some of the communication skills in writing will also aid oral communication. |
| 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.) | • moderate | 1. Research skills for writing about scripture are a portion of what will be examined. |
| Reformed Theology | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | • minimal | 1. Students learn to explain their theological reasoning more clearly in writing. |
| Sanctification | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification. | • none | |
| Desire for Worldview | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. | • none | |
| 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.) | • none | |
| Preach | Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | • minimal | 1. Improving writing & communication skills for preaching is a secondary result. |
| 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. | • none | |