

Theo 5102: Research Methods

North Park Theological Seminary
Fall Semester 2011, 3 credit hours
Tuesdays, 1-3:45 pm

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*Syllabus subject to minor changes.

Course Description: An introduction to the sources, methods and communication of research in each theological field. The course focuses on research skills, the integration and synthesis of sources, and the presentation of material primarily through the medium of writing. Faculty in various fields (Biblical, historical, theological, and ministry) will participate in the instruction and assignments as needed. This is a core course for the MATS degree and is required for those students writing a thesis.

Objectives:

This course is designed to be heavy on assignments and the practice of research and light on course reading that is not in your topic area.

Students will become skilled in:

- *finding and evaluating sources, including internet resources
- *analysis and argumentation
- *constructing and answering good research questions
- *building bibliographies
- *utilizing the library
- *critical reading of texts, including putting sources in conversation with one another
- *formulation of good research projects, including focused topics and theses

Students will be introduced to:

- *library resources
- *theological, biblical and ministry sources
- *methods of reasoning in general fields
- *thesis format and style and required thesis template

Requirements & Assignments: While the students will be introduced to a variety of research methods, the goal is to become skilled in a particular area of research. Even students who might be interested in interdisciplinary work should narrow their focus and methodology and be able to show how they are using or integrating areas of research. Therefore, most of the assignments should serve to develop a student's specific area of research interest. (I include a time audit. The rule is, 6 hours/week work outside of class for a 3 credit course. Because some class periods are not scheduled as seat time, you should expect to spend approximately 100 hours over the semester on this course in addition to hours spent in class (96 for a 3 credit course plus a few extra hours due to fewer class periods).)

1. *Class Participation.* This requires that students come to class with readings and assignments completed and prepared for the scheduled topic. Note that there are some classes that we will not meet due to times throughout the course of your project that I think you need extra time for independent work. Further, most class periods are designed in a workshop style, and you will be helping your colleagues in their own research. Because of that, attendance for all class periods is critical. Any unexcused absences will be an "F" for the day and will affect your grade for the course.

Time audit (reading for course): 15 hours

Time audit (reading for your topic & research paper): 25 hours

2. *Research Log.* Throughout this course, you will keep a weekly log of your research activity. You may use a notebook, binder, computer folder, etc., whatever works best for your organization. You must, however, log at least once a week and keep your notes in one place, as I'll be collecting them periodically. Your notes do not need to be sentences, they can be bullet points. Your log should include the following every week:

1. Date.
2. A list of topical reading you have done (NOT assigned reading for the course), including the bibliographic information the first time you enter a source.
3. Notes on anything interesting you found, including notes on the questions that focus your research project.
4. New questions that arose from your reading.
5. Problems that emerge or break-throughs in ideas.
6. 20 minutes of "stream of consciousness" writing. This, like the rest, does not need to be edited at all.

The learning objectives of this assignment include the following:

1. To keep track of your research progress throughout the semester in case you need to find something quickly or retrieve ideas
2. To continue developing organizational skills
3. To hold you accountable to reading every week in your topic area
4. To develop consistent writing habits that aid you in synthesizing what you have been reading
5. To find new questions, new solutions and new problems in your research—all of which cultivate a more refined research question and approach.

This assignment will be graded on consistency, timeliness (I will check them at various points), and following the above guidelines. It will not be graded on writing, content (other than that you are reading appropriate sources), or creativity. However, feel free to be creative in your thinking, writing, questions, etc.!

Time Audit: 1 hour/week (14 hours total/semester). Note this audit is for completing the log only, not the time for the topical reading you will be doing.

Due: We will check in weekly for this assignment, and are due before class every week. The first is due Sept. 8. I will collect them periodically, so bring them to class every week.

3. *Research Exercises*. This will include assignments designed to refine students' research and critical thinking abilities. Some will be done in class and evaluated by other students. Some will be done ahead of time and shared with the class. Examples include critiquing research articles in various fields, finding recent sources on a topic, entering bibliographic information, online searches, etc. Most of these assignments build on one another and are geared toward your final research paper. The length of the exercises varies. Some will take you 20 minutes and some 2 hours. All should be typewritten. ****Unless otherwise noted, bring a copy of ALL research exercises for classmates, as we will work on these in class. If you would like me to make copies, email them to me at least an hour before class.** Late exercises will be accepted but will be graded down a full grade for every day they are late.

Time audit: 10 hours/semester.

Due: See calendar below for specific dates.

4. *Bibliography*. Build a bibliography around your focused topic. Your bibliography should include 10-15 entries. Each entry must be **correctly cited** or your project will be marked down. For 6 of the entries, you must include an **annotation**. Use *HRB*, p.46-47 (chapter 5) as your guideline. Your annotation should answer each of the 4 questions on p. 46-47 in *HRB*. (*Before turning in your bibliography, you must meet with a faculty member who is most familiar with your topic. In grading the assignment, I get his/her input on whether it includes the most relevant sources, so utilize them ahead of time! Students are also encouraged to meet with Sally Anderson or Laura Burt—faculty in bibliography—in the library for assistance.)

Time Audit: 10 hours.

Due: Oct. 27.

5. *Syntopical Reading Project*. This assignment is critical in constructing your thesis and outline for your research paper and builds on a number of the research exercises. The key instructional framework for this assignment is chapter 20 of *How to Read a Book*. that you have already completed. In this assignment, you will identify key terms and arguments and put sources in conversation with one another. This will aid in identifying and refining your research question. For clarification of the steps, see *HRB* p. 335-36. (You can also look at *WTW*, p. 117ff.) Further instructions (you only need to turn in the steps with an *):

Part I

Step 1- Use your bibliography.

Step 2- Inspect all your books and sources. (See “Inspectional Reading,” *HRB*, p. 31-44).

Part II

Step 1- Using at least 6 of the most relevant sources, identify the most important passages in each source. (You should already have used some of these sources in the *HRB* research exercises.)

*Step 2- Bring authors to terms. What are the central categories and terms that you will use in your papers, and how do your main sources employ, define, describe each term/category? (see *HRB*, chapter 8)

*Step 3- List 3-5 central questions that each of your sources address (directly or indirectly).

*Step 4- Define the major issues and then the minor issues by showing the positions of your authors in context of the central questions of step 3.

*Step 5- Order the questions and issues in such a way as to throw maximum light on the subject. Show how the issues are related.

Approx. time: 12-15 hours (Note that this is in preparation for your research paper.)

Due Nov. 3.

6. *Research Paper*. Write a 12-15 page research paper on a focused topic. Your paper should have a clear question that you answer, should address a problem, and include a full bibliography (see earlier assignment). Ideally your paper will be one of two things: (1) a research paper that you are writing for another course, or (2) a chapter of your thesis. If your current work does not fall into any of these categories, we will decide together on another topic for you. In the process of designing your project, you should have a faculty mentor other than me (unless I am your thesis advisor) with whom you work to design your research paper. This will be either: (1) the instructor of the course for whom you are writing your paper, or (2) your thesis advisor.

Approx. time: 15 hours. This is an estimate, and you should remember that many of the above assignments factor into your paper beyond this estimate.

Due Dec. 10 (or earlier!) .

Grading Weights

-Class Participation (includes class attendance and preparedness): 10%

-Research Log: 20%

-Research Exercises: 20%

-Bibliography: 10%

-Syntopical Reading Project: 15%

-Research Paper: 25%

*I will keep your running total of graded assignments on blackboard so you can keep track throughout the semester.

*Please see the academic handbook for issues of standards and plagiarism.

Book List

Required:

1. Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972. ISBN: 0671212095. (**Hereafter: HRB**)
2. Yaghjian, Lucretia. *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. Continuum, 2006. ISBN: 0826418856. (**Hereafter: WTW**)
3. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. (**Hereafter: Turabian**)
4. Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3rd edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. (**Hereafter: CR**)
5. *Selected research articles (to be given out in class).

Other Recommended:

Barber, Cyril J. and Robert M. Krauss, Jr. *An Introduction to Theological Research*. 2d Edition. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2000.

Bradley, James and Richard A. Muller. *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Colomb, Gregory and Joseph Williams. *The Craft of Argument*. New York: Longman, 2002.

Johnston, William M. *Recent Reference Books in Religion: A Guide for Students, Scholars, Researchers, Buyers, & Readers*. Revised Edition. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998.

Stewart, David R. *The Literature of Theology: A Guide for Students and Pastors*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Weidenborner, Stephen, Caruso Domenick and Gary Parks. *Writing Research Papers: A Guide to the Process*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's: 2005. (**WRP**)

Other Resources

Li, Xia, and Nancy B. Crane. *Electronic Styles: A Handbook for Citing Electronic Information*. 2d ed. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 1996.

Thomas, R. Murray, and Dale L. Brubaker. *Theses and Dissertations: A Guide to Planning, Research and Writing*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 2000.

The University of Chicago Press. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 15th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Library of Congress Headings:

<http://www.tiu.edu/library/instruction/classpages/710/LCSubjHeads.htm>

Library of Congress Classification System:

<http://www.tiu.edu/library/instruction/classpages/710/LCClassSystem.htm>

www.criticalthinking.org/University/univclass/Defining.html

www.calpress.com/pdf_files/what&why.pdf

Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style (includes helpful resources for internet citations):

<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/sources/chicago/>

Church History/Historiography:

<http://frontpage.montclair.edu/brizuelae/Guidelines501.htm>

