

THEO 5102: Research Methods

North Park Theological Seminary
Fall Semester 2017, 3 credit hours

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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 emphasizes assigned readings and assignments on the practice of research as well as readings in your research subject.

Students will become skilled in:

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

Course format: The course will be a hybrid, partially on-campus and partially online. We will gather on campus on three Saturdays for all day (9 am-5 pm; lunch is **not** provided) sessions: September 16, October 21, and November 18. Prior to, in between, and after the Saturday sessions, we will work online, with material posted by me, student assignments shared online, and discussions of my material and yours.

Requirements & Assignments: While the students will be introduced to a variety of research methods, the goal is to become skilled in a specific research area. Students interested in interdisciplinary work should show how they are integrating areas of research. Most of the assignments should serve to develop each student's specific area of research interest. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59 pm (Chicago time) on the date indicated.

1. Class Participation

This course is primarily a seminar course, with emphasis on student collaborative work and discussion, with students providing mutual assistance with their research. This requires that students complete the readings and assignments prior to on-campus sessions and come prepared to discuss the scheduled subject. Note that there are some weeks when there will be no new assignments due, in order to provide extra time for independent work on your respective research project.

Each student will be required to respond substantively **at least twice** to the thread of discussion for each item of material shared online by me or other students. Brief postings of "I agree/disagree" or "That's good [or bad, correct, incorrect, etc.]" are inadequate. You should comment specifically on strengths or weaknesses, on matters of agreement or disagreement, on questions or points needing clarification, etc. Provide reasons for your response, whether positive or negative. Please let me know if you have questions about this. The goal is to replicate a version of the kind of substantive discussions from an on campus, face-to-face course.

For most of the required reading, I will post weekly some discussion questions so that can students to respond to the readings assigned for that week. Please post your responses and reply to other students' posts.

Due to the scarcity of our on-campus, face-to-face gatherings, attendance at all three Saturday sessions is crucial. Any unexcused absences will be an "F" for the day and will affect your grade for the course.

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 because each week you will submit these logs to me. If you do not write your log digitally, you may scan the paper in order to send them via e-mail. Your notes do not need to be sentences, they can be sentence fragments, perhaps in the form of bullet points. Your log should include the following every week:

1. Date.

2. A list of reading you have done on your research subject (NOT the 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 subject 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 style, content (other than that you are reading appropriate sources), or creativity. However, feel free to be creative in your thinking, writing, questions, etc.!

Due: We will check in weekly for this assignment. Your log for the previous week should be sent to me by 11:59 pm Monday (Chicago time) of each week. The first is due Sept. 5 (a Tuesday, because of the Labor Day holiday).

3. Research Exercises

This will include assignments designed to refine students’ research and critical thinking abilities.

Some will be done during on-campus class sessions and evaluated by other students. Some will be done during weeks when we are not on-campus and thus will be posted online to be shared with the class.

Examples include critiquing research articles in various fields, finding recent sources on a subject, 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 are relatively brief and some are longer. All should be typewritten.

**** Unless otherwise noted, for on-campus sessions, bring a copy of all research exercises for each classmate, as we will work on these in class. If you would like me**

to make copies, email them to me by at least 9 am Friday morning before the Saturday on-campus class.

Late exercises will be accepted but will be graded down a full grade for every day they are late.

Due: See course calendar below for specific dates.

4. *Bibliography*

Build a bibliography around your focused subject. Your bibliography should include at least 20 entries. Each entry must be **correctly cited** according to Turabian form or your project will be marked down. For at least 10 of the entries (but preferably all entries), you must include an **annotation**. Use *How to Read a Book*, 46-47 (from chapter 5) as your guideline. Your annotation should answer each of the 4 questions on 46-47 in *How to Read a Book*.

Due: October 21

5. *Syntopical Reading Project*.

This assignment is critical for constructing your thesis and outline for your research paper and builds on a number of the previous research exercises. The key instructional framework for this assignment is chapter 20 of *How to Read a Book*, read previously. 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 *How to Read a Book*, 335-36 (you can also look at *From Topic to Thesis*, 77-85). Further instructions (you only need to turn in the steps that are marked with an *):

Part I

Step 1- Use your bibliography.

Step 2- Inspect all your books and sources. (See “Inspectional Reading,” *How to Read a Book*, 31-44).

Part II

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

*Step 2- Bring authors to terms (as Adler refers to it). 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 *How to Read a Book*, ch. 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.

Due November 6.

6. *Research Paper*. Write a 12-15 page research paper on a focused subject. 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 subject for you. In the process of designing your project, you may want to select 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.

Due: Friday December 15, midnight (Chicago time)

Grading Weights

- Class Participation (includes class attendance, preparedness, and online discussion postings): 10%
- Research Log: 20%
- Research Exercises: 20%
- Bibliography: 10%
- Syntopical Reading Project: 15%
- Research Paper: 25%

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

Textbook List

Required:

- Adler, Mortimer J. and Charles Van Doren. *How to Read a Book*. Rev. and updated ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972. ISBN: 0671212095. **(Hereafter: HRB) In the Reference Collection.**
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 4th ed. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780226239736 **(Hereafter: CR) In the Reference Collection**
- Kibbe, Michael. *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016. ISBN: 9780830851317 **(Hereafter From Topic to Thesis) In the Reference Collection**
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Rev. by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780226816388 **(Hereafter: Turabian) In the Reference Collection**
- Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean, and Terry Dwain Robertson. *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*, 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. ISBN: 978-0310514022 **(Hereafter: QRP) In the Reference Collection**

*Selected research articles (to be distributed later).

Recommended Reading:

- Stewart, David R. *The Literature of Theology: A Guide for Students and Pastors*. Rev. ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. **In the Reference Collection.**

Additional Bibliography

Research Methods

- Abbott, Andrew. *Digital Paper: A Manual for Research and Writing with Library and Internet Materials*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Barber, Cyril J., and Robert M. Krauss, Jr. *An Introduction to Theological Research*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.

Bayard, Pierre. *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read*. Translated from the French by Jeffrey Mehlman. New York: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Chernow, Barbara A. *Beyond the Internet: Successful Research Strategies*. Lanham, MD: Bernan, 2007.

Mann, Thomas. *Library Research Models: A Guide to Classification, Cataloging, and Computers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Mann, Thomas. *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Pazmino, Robert W. *Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Education*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009.

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

Writing and Style

Colomb, Gregory, and Joseph Williams. *The Craft of Argument*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. New York: Longman, 2002.

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. 2nd ed. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Yaghjian, Lucretia. *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. Continuum, 2006.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 30th Anniversary Reprint Edition. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.

Biblical and Theological Bibliography

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

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

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*. 16th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Online via Brandel catalog:

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html>

Course Calendar

Key

“Reading” – reading that is to be completed by class.

“Course reading” includes required books and articles.

“Subject reading” includes reading done in your area of research.

Late assignments will be marked down a full letter grade per day.

See above booklist for book abbreviations.

Three Saturday meetings on campus for in-person sessions, 9 am-5 pm:

Sept. 16

Oct. 21

Nov. 18

Week 1: Aug. 28-Sept. 2 ONLINE

Course Overview and Brainstorm

Introductions: Please post a brief paragraph introducing yourself, providing your program, location, and present or anticipated ministry)

Explanation of the syllabus and assignments (Spencer)

Introduction to the course books and required reading (Spencer)

Assignment:

Share at least a paragraph or two on your general subject of interest, as far as you can at this stage.

Postings: Brainstorm your research subject, raise questions about each other’s subjects, and become familiar with each other’s areas of interest.

Week 2: Sept. 3-9 ONLINE

Reading Due:

Sept. 5: *How to Read a Book (HRB)*, ch. 1-7

Sept. 6: *From Topic to Thesis*, Appendix E;

Sept. 7: *Quality Research Papers (QRP)*, ch. 14-15;

Sept. 8: *Craft of Research (CR)*, **skim** ch. 1-2;

2 hours of subject reading (i.e., reading in your area of interest).

Assignment to turn in:

Research logs

To be turned in and posted for discussion:

Research Exercise 1: X-ray of a book.

Choose a book from your area of interest and X-ray the book.

In a few sentences, what is the unity (main point) of the book?

What is its primary claim?

What are the major parts of the book?
How are they organized into a whole? (see *HRB*, chapter 7)

Week 3: Sept. 10-16 Online and On-campus

Sept. 16 On-Campus Session 9 am-5 pm

Library Field Trip

We will go to the Library for an orientation to the library, introduction to the reference section, databases, etc. You will be introduced to how to begin building your bibliographies.

Subjects

I will address the important aspects of coming up with a good subject and ways to refine your subject.

Research exercise 2

Develop an interest sketch of a subject that you are considering researching. Include the general subject you would like to research, why you think it is a good research subject, who would be the intended audience and what you hope to accomplish in researching your subject (see *Craft of Research*).

We will discuss these during our sessions. Students will read each other's subject sketches to assist in clarification and development.

Research Exercise 3 (to be done on campus Saturday)

Reference books are helpful for getting general background information, overviews, etc.

Using five (5) different *Reference* books from the **Reference Collection** on the **first floor the library** (e.g., encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, NOT commentaries or monographs), locate *five additional* sources to which each reference book leads you.

For example, a reference book might have an article with a bibliography at the end. You may list these.

Or, a reference book might define a term that leads you to go to another book that has other sources, etc.

The format is as follows, using full citations for all sources:

1. Reference book 1
 - a. Source 1 (Why did you look at this source?)
 - b. Source 2 (Why did you look at this source?)
 - c. Source 3 (Why did you look at this source?)
 - d. Source 4 (Why did you look at this source?)
 - e. Source 5 (Why did you look at this source?)
2. Reference books 2-5
same as above

This exercise should help you start your bibliography, further familiarize you with the library, think about your research steps, and gain further clarification on your

research subject. Some/most of the sources you find should be included in your Bibliography.

Documenting sources exercise. *Bring your Turabian book to class!

Reading & due dates

Sept. 10: *How to Read a Book*, chapters 8-12;

Sept. 11: *From Topic to Thesis*, “Introduction,” ch. 1;

Sept. 12: *Quality Research Papers*, ch. 11 (and the relevant ch(s). from ch. 2-11);

Sept. 13: *Craft of Research*, ch. 3, 6;

2 hours of subject reading.

To be turned in: Research logs

Week 4: Sept. 17-23 ONLINE

Building Bibliographies

Subject reading check in

Evaluating sources

Research questions

Scholarly Journals

Evaluating Sources

We will work together through your journal research exercises (see below), discussing how to evaluate scholarly journals and how you can use them in your research and writing.

Readings & due dates:

Sept. 18: *Craft of Research*, ch. 4

Sept. 19: *From Topic to Thesis*, ch. 2, Appendix B, C;

Sept. 20: *Quality Research Papers*, ch. 19;

Familiarize yourself with Turabian’s *Manual*, Part II;

4 hours subject reading

To be turned in:

Research Exercise 4

Make a list of 10 interesting questions that will help you to continue to narrow your subject and add to your thesis proposal. Choose the 3 best questions from your list, and be prepared to discuss why. (See *Craft of Research*)

Research Exercise 5

Choose a journal or periodical that you think will be helpful for researching your subject (see the partial list in *From Topic to Thesis*, 123-125 for suggestions). Review the table of contents of two journals per year from the last 5 years (these can be viewed online in the ATLA Religion Database, under “Publications,”

second from the left in the tabs at the top of the ATLA homepage), and answer the following questions:

- (1) What kind of journal is it? How do you know it is reputable?
- (2) What is the general subject that the journal covers?
- (3) What specific subjects has the journal covered in the last 5 years? Can you note any trends in the research?
- (4) Choose ONE article (include the author, title, journal name/volume/date/pages). What is the main question that the article attempts to answer?

Week 5: Sept. 24-30 ONLINE

Problems; Internet Sources
Discussion of how to find good problems.
Discuss internet sources.

Reading:

Craft of Research, ch. 5;
From Topic to Thesis, ch. 3;
Quality Research Papers, ch. 12;
4 hours subject reading.

Assignment to be posted for class discussion:

Identify a couple of internet sites that might be useful for your research.
Also, feel free to identify any sites that you judged unhelpful or poorly done.

To be turned in:

Research Exercise 6.
Brainstorm 3 potential problems your research project might address (see *Craft of Research*).

Week 6: Oct. 1-7 ONLINE

Thesis statement
Article analysis (see below)

Reading:

From Topic to Thesis, ch. 4-5;
Quality Research Papers, ch. 16;
Article, William T. Cavanaugh, "Killing in the Name of God," *New Blackfriars*, 85, no. 999 (September 2004): 510-526 [you can find this in JSTOR; it is not in ATLA]
2 hours subject reading

Thesis statement
Draft a statement of the thesis of your research paper, in a single sentence.

Article analysis:

Analyze Cavanaugh's article, "Killing in the Name of God."
Write a 2-3 page paper addressing the following matters:
Identify contradictions, inconsistencies, incomplete explanations, gaps.
What questions does this article take on?
How does it answer them or not?
Does it leave unanswered questions?
If so, what?

To be turned in:

Thesis statement
Analysis of Cavanaugh, "Killing in the Name of God"

Week 7: Oct. 8-14

Reading and research for semester projects: Bibliography; Syntopical project;
research paper

Reading:

4 hours subject reading

Week 8: Oct. 15-20 Reading Week

Oct. 21 Campus Session 9 am-5 pm

Use of sources
Bibliography

To be turned in:

Bibliography

Build a bibliography around your focused subject. Your bibliography should include at least 20 entries. Each entry must be **correctly cited** according to Turabian form or your project will be marked down. For at least 10 of the entries (but preferably all entries), you must include an **annotation**. Use *How to Read a Book*, 46-47 (from chapter 5) as your guideline. Your annotation should answer each of the 4 questions on 46-47 in *How to Read a Book*.

Week 9: Oct. 22-28 ONLINE

Methods & Argumentation

Workshop: work through the article below, discuss your own method for presenting your research, and discuss writing styles and audience (ppt).

Reading:

Craft of Research, ch. 7-11;

From Topic to Thesis, Appendix A;

Quality Research Papers, ch. 17-18;

Hyun Kyung Chung, "Han-pu-ri: Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," *The Ecumenical Review*, 40, no 1 (Jan 1988): 27-36 [available in ATLA]

Assignment:

Read the article “Han-pu-ri” and analyze its argumentation in a 2-3 page paper. Address the following questions:

1. What is the main argument of the article? What is the author arguing for? Against?
2. What approach does the author take?
3. How does she make her claims? Support her argument?
4. What does the author assume?
5. Name and evaluate the strengths/weaknesses of the argument.

To be turned in:

Analysis of Chung, “Han-pu-ri.”

Week 10: Oct. 29-Nov. 4 ONLINE

Discussion of Syntopical reading projects

Reading:

Quality Research Papers, ch. 21-22

To be turned in:

Syntopical Reading Project

Week 11: Nov. 5-11 ONLINE

Argumentation, Incorporating Sources

Plagiarism exercise

Peer writing evaluations

Reading:

Craft of Research, ch. 12

Assignment:

Prepare a short (1-2 page) final form document, from your longer research paper, well-written, using correct Turabian style format and develops a small segment of persuasive argument, using sources correctly.

We will review and critique your samples.

Week 12: Nov. 12-18 Online and on-campus

Nov. 18 Campus Session 9 am-5 pm

Sentence Outlines: We will work through your outlines together, to clarify and develop.

Reading sample abstracts (to be distributed earlier)

Drafting an abstract

Reading:

Craft of Research, chapters 13-14

To be turned in:

Sentence outline

Complete a sentence outline of your research paper.

Your outline should include each of the major arguments or sections and then the points you will cover in each section.

Thesis abstract

Students will write a thesis abstract that is between 300-350 words. See sample abstracts for examples.

Week 13: Nov. 19-25 ONLINE

Use this week for writing and editing your paper and preparing a presentation of it or a portion of it. Please contact me with any questions or problems you may have.

Week 14: Nov. 26-Dec. 2 ONLINE

Presentations

Assignment:

Each student will present their work to the class in this or the following week, from a rough draft or a section of the paper, etc. It remains to be determined whether this will be a video or some form of a live Skype (etc.) session with all students present. Either way, the class will respond to each presentation with questions, clarifications, comments, and suggestions, either in live conversation or in posted comments online.

As we approach the end of the semester, I will ask you to think about how we can best help you.

Week 15: Dec. 3-9 ONLINE

Presentations part 2

Final paper due: Friday December 15, 11:59 pm (Chicago time)