

PhD CH/TH G100
MA CH/MS/NT/OT/TH 6ZA6
RESEARCH METHODS

Time: Monday, 1:30 – 3:20 p.m.

Location: **TBA**

Facilitator: M. Knowles
DC 214
(905) 525-9140 x27088
knowlesm@mcmaster.ca



Course Statement

This course explores the theory and practice of research methodologies as they apply to post-graduate study within the theological disciplines. Among the specific issues under consideration will be the sources, nature, ethics, and tools of scholarly research; building a cogent argument; presentation formats (proposals, reviews, articles, lectures, etc.); and the transition from research to teaching.

Course Objectives

Cognitive: [KNOWING]

- ▶ To gain familiarity and facility with general and discipline-specific research methodologies.
- ▶ To reflect analytically on the nature of research through guided practice and interaction with peers.

Formative: [BEING]

- ▶ To reflect in personal terms on the rôle of the researcher and scholar as an expression of Christian identity.
- ▶ To be formed as a scholar in the service of particular academic and Christian communities.

Practical: [DOING]

- ▶ To build a critical database of primary and secondary sources for a specific programme of post-graduate research.
- ▶ To formulate a focussed and usable research (thesis) proposal.
- ▶ To acquire facility in the presentation of research in a specific range of scholarly formats.

Lecture/Seminar Outline and Schedule

1. Research

- a. The Components of Research September 14
 - i. Research with human subjects
- b. Building a Database: Bibliographies and book reviews September 21
- c. Library resources and tour (Mills Library/Wong e-Classroom, L107)
- d. Athens vs. Berlin: Learning Styles, Teaching Preferences, and the Theological Enterprise
Annotated Bibliography due September 28

2. Reflection and Method: Field-Specific Hermeneutics and Methodologies

- October 5
- a. Can These Bones Live? Old Testament Research for Christian Scholars (Guest Lecturer)
- b. How Does the Bible Mean? Text- and Language-Based Research (Guest Lecturer)
Book Review due
- [Class cancelled for Thanksgiving Monday, October 12]
- c. Critical Methods in Pastoral Theology (Guest Lecturer) October 19
- d. Ethics, Theological Research, and Developing a Christian Worldview (Guest Lecturer)
Biblical Methodology Summaries due

3. Writing

- a. Developing a Thesis Proposal and Abstract October 26
- b. From Outline to Argumentation
- c. Style, Editing, and Proof-Reading
- d. Plagiarism vs. Proper Documentation (Guest Lecturer)
Theological Methodology Summaries due
- e. Getting into print (Guest Lecturer) November 2
- f. Panel discussion: Publishing as a graduate student (participants TBA)
Abstract due

4. Employment and Teaching

- November 9
- a. Developing a *Curriculum Vitae*
- b. The Transition from Research to Teaching

5. Research Proposals: Work in Progress

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|---|-------------|
| a. Student Presentations (I)
<i>M.A. Research Proposal Due</i> | November 16 |
| b. Student Presentations (II) | November 23 |
| c. Student Presentations (III) | November 30 |
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Graduate Seminars

As an extension of the Research Methods course, the college plans to offer two additional graduate seminars for doctoral students in their first and second years, respectively (dates TBA). These seminars, coordinated by Dr. Phil Zylla, will address the following topics:

First Year Ph.D. Seminar: *From Thesis to Classroom* (first offered Winter, 2010)

- Building course syllabi
- Developing appropriate learning goals, teaching skills, and methods of assessment

Second Year Ph.D. Seminar: *Vocation in Church and Academy* (first offered Winter, 2011)

- Developing long-term goals in research, teaching, and publication
 - Negotiating between personal research interests and institutional teaching requirements
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Resources

Course Text:

Bolker, Joan. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*. New York: Henry Holt, 1998.

Available for purchase from:

READ On Bookstore
304 The East Mall, Suite 100
Etobicoke, ON
M9B 6E2

E-mail: books@readon.ca
<http://www.readon.ca>
Tel: (416) 620-2934
FAX: (416) 622-2308

The course bibliography (which includes reserve materials listed below) can be found on the MacDiv CourseLink page at <http://divinity2.mcmaster.ca:8111/courselink/faculty.aspx?id=2>, accessible via the login password provided by the instructor.

On Reserve:

- Barber, Cyril J. and Robert M. Krauss, Jr. *An Introduction to Theological Research: A Guide for College and Seminary Students*. 2nd edition. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000. MILLS Reserve BR 118 .B28 2000
- Bolich, Gregory G. *The Christian Scholar: An Introduction to Theological Research*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986. MILLS Reserve BR 118 .B558 1986
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory C. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. MILLS Reserve Q 180.55 .M4 B66 2003
- Thomas, R. Murray, and Dale L. Brubaker. *Theses and Dissertations: A Guide to Planning, Research and Writing*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2000. MILLS Reserve LB 2369 .T458 2000
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Assignments

This course is designed to assist the student in developing the skills require to undertake research in a specific field of interest. To that end, the assignments are structured to help students develop:

- a. A functional database of primary and secondary sources;
- b. Practice in critical reflection on leading works in one's chosen field;
- c. A workable research proposal in the student's area of interest;
- d. Basic facility in the dissemination of research to church and academy.

1. Annotated Bibliography

PERCENTAGE OF FINAL GRADE
20%

The goal of this assignment is to initiate the process of assembling a database of sources for one's chosen area of research. The student will provide an initial bibliography of relevant books and peer-reviewed articles. For each item, provide bibliographic data in standard academic format, followed by a brief description and evaluation of the argument, together with an assessment of its relevance for your own research (100–150 words per entry, not including bibliographic data).

Length: PhD: 10 books + 10 articles
MA: 5 books + 5 articles

Due: September 28

2. Book Review

20%

Prepared as though for publication, the review will describe the content of a recent book in the student's field of research, relate the content to the current state of scholarly discussion, and assess its contribution to that debate.

Length: 1,500 words

Due: October 5

3. *Summary of Research Methodology* 20%

Each faculty lecturer will offer a basic introduction to methodological issues in their respective fields (i.e. Hebrew Bible; New Testament; Theology/Ethics; Pastoral Theology). On the basis of this introduction (and using any additional resources identified by the lecturer), summarize the critical methodological issues in your academic discipline, with special reference to your particular area of research interest.

Length: 1,500 words

Due: October 19 (Biblical Studies)
October 26 (Theological Studies)

4. *Abstract* 10%

The first step in presenting a paper at an academic conference is usually the submission of a short summary of the proposed presentation outlining the central thesis, research methodology, and anticipated conclusions. In the context of this course, the abstract is meant to represent the initial formulation of a possible dissertation topic.

Length: 300 words

Due: November 2

5. *Research Proposal/Presentation: Work in Progress* 30%

Each student will prepare a brief research proposal based on the abstract submitted earlier. The proposal will explain the research question or hypothesis and the proposed research methodology, offer a summary of relevant secondary literature (which may include counter-proposals to the hypothesis), outline the structure and development of the research programme, and briefly delineate the anticipated conclusions or outcomes. As a “work-in-progress,” the proposal will identify any difficulties that have been encountered and questions that remain unanswered, as well as explaining the possible relevance of this research to the life and ministry of the church in general. This assignment will be graded on the logic and clarity of the proposed programme of research, the degree to which it demonstrates a clear understanding of field-specific methodologies, and its integration with existing knowledge.

a. M.A. Students

Length: 2,000 words

Due: November 16

b. Ph.D. students

In addition to the written format outlined above, each doctoral student will present their research proposal as a teaching module to the class. Rather than simply reading the text of their written submission, each student will take 10 minutes to summarize their proposal and anticipated conclusions (however preliminary) in an accessible, creative, and engaging manner, then interact with class members for a further 5 minutes (15 min. total).

Again, students should give an account of particular challenges, unanswered questions, and the broader implications of their research. The assignment will be graded on the quality of the presentation as a whole (structure, argumentation, clarity, creativity, class interaction) and its ability to explain the research process.

Grading: Written/class presentations 15 + 15 = 30% Due dates: November 16, 23, 30

Style

All assignments are to be typed in double-spaced format, with footnotes and bibliographic references conforming to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses* (<http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuide.pdf>). Failure to observe appropriate format and style will result in grade reductions. See also “CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS,” below. Electronic submission of assignments will not be accepted.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one’s academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the McMaster Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php

Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College is committed to employing inclusive language for human beings in worship services, written materials, and all publications. With regard to biblical texts, the integrity of original expressions (including references to God) should be respected; the NRSV and TNIV provide appropriate examples of the use of inclusive language for human subjects. With the exception of direct quotations from historical documents, inclusive language is to be used in all assignments submitted for academic credit.

Late Submission Penalty

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the designated due date. Assignments submitted thereafter will be assessed a penalty of 1% per calendar day (without limit).

*The final date for submission of all course assignments is the last day of classes, December 4
Assignments received after this date will not be accepted for grading or credit*

Disclaimer:

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

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CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content	Argument	Presentation
90–100 A+ 85–89 A 80–84 A–	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements	Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions	Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation
77–79 B+ 73–76 B 70–72 B–	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements	Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion	General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax
67–69 C+ 63–66 C 60–62 C–	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements	Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements	Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style
57–59 D+ 53–56 D 50–52 D–	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing	Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion	Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors
0–49% F	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing	Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation	Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax