

Research and Writing in Theology

CS 3350—Course Syllabus

Fall 2011

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Course Description:

The course is designed to provide an introduction to the knowledge, tools, and skills required for a disciplined study of Theology and preparation for ministry. The class will also work with strategies for developing effective study habits and test-taking skills. This will include developing reading-comprehension and writing skills through assignments and exercises throughout the semester. Additionally, students will acquire research skills necessary for theological study.

The course is an essential stepping-stone for taking up the disciplined study of Theology at Austin Grad. It is meant to assist students in acquiring skills for knowing and passing on the Christian faith. It will therefore assist students in three basic areas: 1) reading comprehension and rhetoric/argument analysis (knowing and understanding). 2) It will provide research methods, tools, and strategies for theological study (understanding and practicing). 3) Finally, the course will assist students in writing cogent, logical, analytical, and propositional academic papers, which is the foundation for communicating the Christian faith (practicing and passing on).

Objectives:

1. By the end of the course the student will demonstrate an ability to critically read and analyze various texts.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to use various tools for research, including the library, internet, databases, etc.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to think critically and write logically, well-argued papers.

Required Texts:

Adler, Mortimer, and Van Doren, Charles. *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, rev. ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Gordon, T. David. *Why Johnny Can't Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers*. Philipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2009.

Sebranek, Patrick, *et al.* *Write for College: A Student Handbook*. Orlando: Great Source Education Group, 2007.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th rev. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance and timely submission of assignments are required.

Participation: 20%

Assignments/Quizzes: 30%

Composition and Grammar Proficiency Exam: P/F

5 page Book Review on Gordon, Why Johnny Can't Preach: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

The course will have several weekly assignments as well as in class research and writing work. These will culminate in a final paper. The student will choose a modern Bible translation and write a paper about its history, translation philosophy, how it compares to other translations, etc. The weekly work will build toward this final paper.

Schedule:

§ Reading and Writing effectively.

Week 1 (8/24): Introduction to the course: Reading, research, studying and writing in theology; Note-taking, studying, and test-taking strategies; English Proficiency Exam 1

Week 2 (8/29 and 31): Continued from Week 1; Aims of Reading, Research, and Writing in a "post-literate" world.

Adler, 8-20

Gordon, 1-42

Turabian, 3-11

Assignment: "My journey of faith," or what brings you to study theology? 1 page

Due 8/31

Week 3 (9/5 and 7): Reading effectively.

Adler, 21-56 (by 9/9)

Turabian, 36-47

(Handout), 136-149

*Assignment: Summarize Adler reading. 1 page. **Due 9/7***

Week 4 (9/12 and 14): Beyond texting: Writing effectively.

Adler, 59-95 (by 9/16)

Sebranek, 63-74, 111-124

Assignment: Summary of Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*:
http://www.george-orwell.org/Politics_and_the_English_Language/0.html. 1
 Page. **Due 9/14**

Week 5-6a (9/19, 21, and 26): More than a paragraph or two: writing a longer paper
 Adler, 96-151 (by 9/30)
 Sebranek, 75-109
 In class assignments, beginning paper research work.

Week 6 (9/28): Basic composition and grammar proficiency Exam. If the student does not pass, he/she may schedule individual appointment for retake until the end of the semester or take the last day of course meeting during finals week.

§ *Academic Research: Methods and Tools.*

Week 7 (10/3 and 5): Print Resources for Theological Study (library orientation); Plagiarism; Print search strategies
 Adler, 152-188 (by 10/5)
 Assignment: Library Orientation Worksheet **Due 10/5, in-class work**

Week 8 (10/10 and 12): Print Resources for Biblical Studies: word studies; reference works; commentaries; serials.
 Adler, 234-253 (by 10/12)
 Handouts
 Assignment: In class work toward paper, 10/12

Week 9 (10/17 and 19): Digital Resources for Theological Study—ATLAS, databases; Handouts
 Assignment: ATLAS Search Doc, in class, 10/19

Week 10 (10/24 and 26): Digital Resources for Theological Study—Google, source evaluation, search strategies; Digital Resources for Biblical Studies: Bible Search software.

Handout, 1-14, 32-48, 96-118, **149-152**
 Assignment: Web sources evaluation and inclusion, in class 10/26

Week 11 (10/31 and 11/2): Research Strategy: first steps: from Topic to Question to Problem.

Turabian, 12-35
 Sebranek, 21-38
 Assignment: In class 11/2

Week 11 (11/7 and 11/9): The Research Process: Taking notes, planning, outlining
 AGST Guide for Writing an Exegesis,
http://www.austingrad.edu/images/Resources/student/Exegesis_Guide.pdf
 Turabian, 36-81 (by 11/16)

Sebranek, 318-332

§ Academic Writing

Week 12 (11/14 and 16): Writing the critical book review; Formatting your paper.

Experiment with MS Word a bit before coming to class

Making an effective argument I

Handouts

Week 12 (11/21): Making an effective argument II; Academic writing: a conversation

Week 13 (11/28 and 30): Academic Writing: a conversation cont'd.

Book review of *Why Johnny Can't Preach* due on the 30th

Week 14 (12/5 and 7): Bibliographic Resources for Further development; revising and finalizing a research paper.

Week 15 (12/12): Final Paper due. Final retake of English Proficiency Exam if needed.