

Research and Writing in Theology

CS 3350—Course Syllabus

Fall 2017

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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).

The course is designed to meet student needs and is thus subject to revision throughout the semester. As students express needs in specific areas of theological research, the course will adjust to those needs. Assignments and due dates will not change.

Objectives:

Research:

1. Describe several types of resources for theological research in the various disciplines of theological study and Identify several specific examples of these resources.
2. Understand and effectively use search strategies of OPAC and various databases as well as the World Wide Web to find, evaluate, and employ sources for research.
3. Develop an appropriate topic for research from the sources.

Writing:

4. Identify and demonstrate the specific style and purposes of scholarly writing.
5. Critically analyze scholarly argument and engage in the scholarly conversation through writing and engaging in careful citation.
6. Construct and support a thesis in clear, concise academic writing in the traditional form of academic assessment, such as the research paper or essay examination.

Required Texts:

Badke, William, *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way through the Information Fog*, 5th ed. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2014.

Kibbe, Michael. *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2016.

Grenz, Stanley J., and Olson, Roger E. *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of God*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1996.

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance and timely submission of assignments are required.

Participation: 10%

Assignments/Quizzes: 20%

5 page Book Review on Grenz & Olsen, Who Needs Theology: 20%

Annotated Bibliography: 10%

Final Paper/Project: 40%

The course will have regular assignments as well as in class research and writing work. These will culminate in a final paper. The weekly work will build toward this final paper.

Read Grenz & Olson, Badke, and Kibbe throughout the semester. The readings and page numbers below are subject to change/updating in class.

Plagiarism and citation of sources:

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work as your own and is a form of theft. *This includes material composed by other students, purchased from an online paper service, or copied from published books and articles or from the Internet.* If in any assignment you employ material written by someone else, you must give the author proper credit, *documenting the source with an appropriate citation and marking any words directly quoted with quotation marks (or with indentation if four or more lines are quoted).* Failure to appropriately credit the sources you use will result in a reduction in your grade for the assignment in question and/or the requirement that you revise the assignment. *Intentionally representing another person's work as your own will be grounds for academic discipline, including your possible dismissal from the School.* For more information on how to acknowledge sources properly and avoid plagiarism, refer to the School's "Guide to Written Work"

(http://www.austingrad.edu/images/Resources/student/guide_for_written_work.htm).

Schedule:

Week 1 (Sep 5): Introduction to the course; English Proficiency Exam 1

*Week 2 (Sep 12): **Introduction to the scholarly conversation:** Reading, research, studying and writing in theology; Note-taking, studying, and test-taking strategies; Aims of Reading, Research, and Writing in a “post-literate” world.*

Kibbe, introduction

Grenz & Olson, chapters 1–3

Quiz over Grenz & Olson reading

For class discussion: Some people argue that formal writing, like the formal study of theology, takes away a person's vitality: in theology, of a person's faith, and in formal writing, from a person's ability to express themselves. Discuss why, like formal theology, formal writing is important for Christian thought and practice.

*Week 3 (Sep 19): **Listening to the scholarly conversation:** Continued from week 3; Reading effectively: Reading for comprehension (summary), reading for analysis (understanding the argument), and reading critically (evaluating the argument); Writing the academic book review;*

Kibbe, chapter 1

Badke, chapter 8

Grenz & Olson, chapter 4.

For class discussion: Be ready to discuss two of the objections that Grenz & Olson mention regarding theology (be able to summarize Grenz & Olson's response to these objections, and then evaluate these responses).

*Week 4 (Sep 26): **Finding the scholarly conversation:** Print Resources for Biblical Studies: word studies; reference works; commentaries; serials.*

Kibbe, chapter 2, Appendix C

PRINT SEARCH STRATEGIES HANDOUT

Badke, chapter 5

ABD and Johnson readings on Canon (we'll find together in class)

Assignment: Library Orientation Worksheet **in-class work**; beginning of annotated bibliography

*Week 5 (Oct 3): **Finding the scholarly conversation, cont'd.:** Digital Resources for Theological Study—ATLAS, databases; Google, source evaluation, search strategies; Digital Resources for Biblical Studies: Bible Search software.*

Badke, chapters 3 & 6 (reference 3–7)

In class assignments, beginning paper research work (Starting annotated bib).

Week 6 (Oct 10): Constructing an annotated bibliography; In class work: collecting sources

Handouts

Grenz & Olson, chapters 5–6

Class discussion on Grenz & Olson

*Week 7 (Oct 17): **Joining the scholarly conversation:** Sources for Research: Understanding primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, print resources for theological study (moving from reference to discreet works); Starting the research process: From Topic → Question → Problem*

Kibbe, chapters 3–4

Grenz & Olson, chapters 7–8

*Week 8 (Oct 24): **Reading Week: Book Review Draft Due on Return.***

*Week 9 (Oct 31): **Engaging the scholarly conversation:** Using sources (plagiarism, quoting, drawing from sources; notes/notecards).*

Grenz & Olson, chapter 9

Assignment: In class

English Proficiency Exam 2

*Week 10 (Nov 7): **Engaging the scholarly conversation, cont'd.:** Basics of scholarly writing: Style & Grammar, organization.*

Kibbe, chapter 5, Appendix A

Assignment: In class work toward paper

*Week 11 (Nov 14): **Citing the scholarly conversation:** Basics of citation style; When to cite; etc.*

Kibbe, Appendix B

Graff, 175–192 (handout)

Assignment: In class work

*Week 12 (Nov 21): **Organizing your part in the scholarly conversation:** Outlining; Notes; Formal writing → from outline to paper; Writing the Exegesis paper*

AGST Guide for Writing an Exegesis,

http://www.austingrad.edu/images/Resources/student/Exegesis_Guide.pdf

Booth, 108–118 (handout)

November 23: THANKSGIVING

*Week 13 (Nov 28): **Engaging the Academic Conversation:** Using MS Word; Writing the exegesis paper, cont'd.; Analyzing argument; Critical engagement*

Experiment with MS Word a bit before coming to class

Booth, 120–138 (handout)

Handouts

In class work

*Week 14 (Dec 4–8 Finals week): Finals week: **Final Paper due December 8***