

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing

Fridays 8/28, 9/25, 10/30, 12/4 · 8:00-10:50 a.m.

Course Instructor
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“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NRSV)

The Mission of the Seminary

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Course Description

This advanced seminar in research and writing is intended to help prepare students for postgraduate work and future publication in theologically related fields. In this course, every student will prepare a final, summative writing assignment in his or her degree concentration. Those with concentrations in theological or historical studies may request approval to adapt this summative writing assignment into a formal thesis. Particular attention will be given to the different models of reasoning in research, the crafting and assessment of arguments, elements of form and style, and final editing. Only students within eighteen hours of graduation may take this course.

Core Value Focus

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has five core values: Doctrinal Integrity, Spiritual Vitality, Mission Focus, Characteristic Excellence, and Servant Leadership. These values shape both the context and manner in which all curricula are taught, with “doctrinal integrity” and

“characteristic excellence” especially highlighted in this course. The core value focus for the 2015-16 year is mission focus.

Student Learning Outcomes

The student, by the end of the course, should:

1. Show competence in the various stages of writing, reviewing, and final editing.
2. Demonstrate the ability to do advanced research in a theologically related field.
3. Use argumentation and resources effectively in theological writing.

Biblical Authority

This course operates under the assumption that the Bible is the inspired, totally true and trustworthy Word of God. While history, tradition, and reason play no small role in the theological task, the Bible holds ultimate authority in Christian doctrine and practice. The course instructor affirms *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000).

Required Texts

It is important for this class (and future endeavors in theological writing) that students *purchase* these books rather than simply borrowing them from another student or the library.

Barreto, Eric. D., ed. *Writing Theologically*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015.*

Strunk, William, Jr. and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 1999.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Eighth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

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

*Those writing in philosophy or philosophical theology *may substitute* this particular book with any one of the texts by Martinich, Mogch, Seech, Vaughn, or Watson listed under the “Additional Bibliography” heading. Those writing in church history or other historically related fields may replace this text with either of the works listed in the bibliography by Cullen or Storey.

Course Requirements

0. Research Paper Submission (0%)

At the beginning of class, all students are required to submit a graded research paper from a previous class in the division of their major. The professor will assess these papers and consult with the student about strengths, weakness, and areas needing improvement. These papers will also be used as points of comparison in the **assessment of the summative writing assignments** and the **course as a whole**.

1. Attendance and Participation (5%)

Students are required to attend all four meetings (either electronically or in person) and participate in class discussion.

2. Reading Reports (10%)

Every student is required to read *Elements of Style* in its entirety and selections from *Writing Theology Well*, and *Writing Theologically* (or a substitute text). Students will highlight and make annotations in the books, then compile a **list of important issues** extracted from each selection of reading. There are **no requirements** as to word count or page count. Students must demonstrate evidence of interaction with the work that pays particular attention to (1) things you may not be aware of in writing and research or (2) areas that you know are weak spots in your own writing.

3. Dissertation Assessments (10%)

Every student is required to assess **two quality** dissertations and/or theses in theologically related fields. **The professor must approve these dissertations before assessment begins.** A non-NOBTS student must write **at least** one of these dissertations. These assessments **do not require close readings of the dissertations or theses**. Rather, students are expected to look over these documents, read specific sections, and answer the following questions about them.

- (1) Is the approach of the author *deductive* or *inductive*?
- (2) What is the thesis, hypothesis, or guiding research question of the project?
- (3) What are the stated assumptions of the author? Qualifications?
- (4) Assess the *types* of resources used—articles, books, essays, etc. Roughly describe the ratio of primary sources to secondary sources, English sources to second language sources, etc.
- (5) Describe the *structure* of the dissertation itself. What is the main purpose of the author in each individual chapter?
- (6) Assess the *critical analysis* and *conclusions* sections in the project. What *types of critique* are utilized?

4. General Topic (5%)

Students, in conversation with the course and instructor and another faculty member in the division of their major, must choose a general topic for their summative writing project.

5. Thesis / Research Questions / Bibliography (5%)

Dependent on the model of research taken up—deductive or inductive—students are required to write a hypothesis (deductive) or thesis (inductive) and the structure of the argument (deductive) or research questions (inductive). These must be approved by the course instructor and the professor(s) engaging with the student.

6. Bibliography (5%)

Students will submit a preliminary bibliography of sources that will be used. This preliminary bibliography will be evaluated on the quality of its resources. Bibliography-padding is discouraged. The student should only list sources that he or she believes that they will be able to use and engage with within the writing process.

7. Outline (5%)

Students should provide an outline of their summative writing paper structure, including chapter, section headings, and specific arguments/guiding research questions. This outline will be reviewed by the professor before the summative writing project can commence.

8. Summative Writing Assignment (50%)

Students are required to complete a summative writing assignment that serves as a capstone for many theologically related degree plans. The summative writing assessment must be between 12,000-25,000 words in length. It should integrate all of the components of the previous stages of writing and carefully weigh each element's place in the overall project.

After turning in the initial draft, every student will hand in a *revised copy* of his or her summative writing project to the professor. This resubmission is necessary to complete the class and receive a final grade.

9. Presentation of Summative Writing Assignment (5%)

Students are required to submit digital copies of their writing assignment to every student in the class and make an abbreviated presentation of the paper in the final class meeting.

10. Paper Responses (5%)

Every student is required to *read* every single student paper submitted on time. Every student is required to compile an *errata* document for every student paper.

Course Evaluation

This course is evaluated on two levels: the grading of the writing project (in an assessment based on the Seminary’s QEP [Quality Enchantment Program]) and the course’s student learning outcomes approved by the Division of Theological and Historical Studies. Both assessment rubrics are attached to this syllabus.

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—an A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below.

• Attendance and Course Participation	5%
• Reading Reports	10%
• Dissertation Assessments	10%
• General Topic	5%
• Thesis / Research Questions	5%
• Bibliography	5%
• Outline	10%
• Summative Writing Assessment	50%
• Presentation of SWA	5%
• Paper Responses	5%
Total	100%

Conversion to Thesis

Academic M.A. students may request approval to adapt this summative writing assignment into a formal thesis. If approved, the writer of the summative writing assignment will be assigned a faculty supervisor who will oversee the conversion of the summative writing assignment into a thesis. In order for the thesis submitted to the library and ProQuest/UMI, it must be completed and approved no later than 60 days after graduation. Any academic M.A. student choosing to convert their writing assignment into a thesis will be assessed standard fees for binding and database submission, as well as incurring the costs of paper and printing.

Class Policies

1. Attendance and Class Participation

As noted above, attendance and class participation are necessary for meeting the requirements of this class. Students are expected to be attentive and prepared for each class session. Students who are engaged in private conversations or doing work for other classes may be asked to leave the class; repeat violations may result in removal from the course. Rude or disruptive behavior is also not permitted.

2. Laptop Guidelines

Laptops are permitted in class as long as they are used for taking notes or accessing Blackboard materials related to this particular course. *Students using laptops are requested to sit in the front of the classroom for accountability purposes.* Gaming, e-mail, social networking, and web browsing of any kind are strictly prohibited. Failure to heed this policy *will* result in dismissal from the class session; repeat violations may result in removal from the course. *Any student using Facebook during a class meeting may be asked to leave the class, repeat offenders for the remainder of the semester.*

3. Late Work

Because of the nature of this class, no late work is permitted without explicit approval of the professor. If you cannot meet a deadline or anticipate being unable to do so, notify the professor. No graduating senior will be permitted to graduate unless his or her summative written assignment is handed in a timely manner.

4. Plagiarism

The instructor calls attention to the policy on plagiarism found in the NOBTS Graduate Catalog and Student Handbook. Remember the words of the proverb: *“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out”* (Prov. 10:19).

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing • Fall 2015 p7

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing Lectures, Readings, and Assignments Schedule		
Date	Lecture Topics / Discussion Topics	Readings/Assignments
8/28	Introduction <i>On-campus meeting 8/28</i> Lecture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of Argumentation • Thesis/Hypothesis Topic Discussion / Brainstorming Session	Barreto, chs. 1-5 Yaghjian, chs. 1-4
9/4		General Topic Due
9/11		
9/18		Dissertation Assessments Due
9/25	Outline preparation <i>On-campus meeting 9/25</i>	Yaghjian, chs. 5-6 Barreto, chs. 6-8 Thesis Statement / Research Questions Due
10/2		
10/9		
10/16		Outline Due
10/19	FALL BREAK <i>“...give him rest from days of trouble...” (Psalm 94:13)</i>	
10/30	Finding Your Voice in Theological Writing Form and Style Issues Discussion: Writing Issues <i>On-campus meeting 10/30</i>	Yaghjian, chs. 9-12 <i>Elements of Style</i>
11/6		
11/13		

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing • Fall 2015 p8

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing Lectures, Readings, and Assignments Schedule		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topics / Discussion Topics</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
11/20		Preliminary Drafts Due
11/27		
12/4	Presentations Final Editing / Discussion of Errata <i>On-campus meeting 12/4</i>	Paper Responses Due
12/11		Final corrected copies due

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING

The student, by the end of the course, should:

1. Show competence in the various stages of writing, reviewing, and final editing.
2. Demonstrate the ability to do advanced research in a theologically related field.
3. Use argumentation and resources effectively in theological writing.

DOMAIN	LEVEL	INADEQUATE (0 PTS)	BASIC (1 PT)	COMPETENT (2 PTS)	GOOD (3 PTS)	EXCELLENT (4PTS)
WRITING	Ability to write, review, and edit.					
RESEARCH	Ability to do advanced research in theologically related field.					
ARGUMENTATION	Able to make quality arguments.					

WRITING ASSIGNMENT GRADING RUBRIC (Based on NOBTS Quality Enhancement Program)

Criteria	3 – Exceeds Expectations (A papers)	2 – Meets Expectations (B Papers)	1 – Needs Improvement (C Papers)	0 – Inadequate (D-F Papers)
Student composes well developed and logical assignments.	-Logically organized -Effective and smooth transitions	-Clear organizational structure with some digression -Basic transitions	-Some level of organization with frequent digressions -Ineffective transitions	-No apparent organization to the paper -No or poor transitions
Student composes grammatically correct sentences.	-No grammatical errors	-Few grammatical errors	-Many grammatical errors	-Excessive grammatical errors
Student uses an effective writing style.	-Consistently varied sentence structure -Communicates concisely -Proper use of vocabulary	-Frequently varies sentence structure -Occasional wordiness -Occasional use of colloquialisms and clichés	-Seldom varies sentence structure -Frequently wordy -Frequent use of colloquialisms and clichés	-Does not vary sentence structure -Excessive wordiness -Excessive use of colloquialisms and clichés
Student incorporates appropriate supporting material.	-Skillful use of credible, relevant sources	-Consistent use of credible, relevant sources	-Attempts to use credible and/or relevant sources	-Fails to use credible, relevant sources
Student follows prescribed style guides.	-Detailed attention to the prescribed style guide	-Consistent use of the prescribed style guide	-Attempts to use the prescribed style guide	-Failure to use the prescribed style guide

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. 2d ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007.
- Cullen, Jim. *Essaying the Past: How to Read, Write, and Think about History*. 2d ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
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- Mogck, Brian David. *Writing to Reason: A Companion for Philosophy Students and Instructors*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.

[†]This book is a required text in the PhD Research and Writing Class. It would be a valuable addition to your collection.

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