

BTS-5900/3 Research and Methodology [M]
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Tuesday, 2:30-5:15 pm
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Draft Course Syllabus

Course Description: the purpose of this course is to equip students with fundamental skills in theological reflection, research and writing. It will examine theological methods with a particular emphasis on praxis approaches and will assist students in the rudimentary steps of thesis research and writing. The seminar is open to all MA students interested in developing the art of theological reflection and honing research skills, and is not limited to thesis-track students.

Text:

Course Readings will be available on the CMU Student Portal or in the CMU library.

Course Objectives:

1. To improve one's understanding of theology's interpretation through an exploration of various methodologies and approaches.
2. To probe the praxis character of theological reflection through a theory-practice correlation of sources and to acquire the knowledge and skills of theological reflection as method and model.
3. Develop familiarity with theological research tools and understand the process of theological research and writing.
4. To explore the nature of the scholar's vocation in the life of the Church.
5. Any other goals and objectives you may have...

Assignments and Grading

1. Thesis Review

Value: 20%; Due: October 3, 2017; Length: 1200-1500 words

Each student will prepare a review of a thesis or dissertation already written. The selected thesis/dissertation should, if possible, be related to your own projected area of research. The review should be evaluative, considering matters such as:

- The significance and appropriateness of the topic
- The clarity and adequacy of the hypothesis/thesis
- The suitability of the methods of research and evidence of skill in using them
- The strength of the argument and conclusions
- The overall readability and effectiveness of the thesis

- The impact of the thesis on you, and its potential impact for the larger scholarly and Christian community

Use the first several pages of the paper to describe briefly the subject of the thesis, its hypothesis, its method, its main lines of argument and conclusion, and then offer critical observations on its strengths and weaknesses. The thesis reviews will be briefly presented and discussed in class (October 3, 2017)

Note: the following is a link to the Theses Canada Portal, which archives Canadian theses and catalogues them in the usual ways (subject, author, title, etc.), but also by schools, degrees, and offers searches within the text of the theses they have available electronically. It is all free. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/thesescanada/index-e.html>

2. Research Methods Options (Value: 2 x 35%)

Students should choose to do **TWO** (2) of the following options:

2.1 Methods Review

Value: 35%; Length: 2100-3000 words; Due: October 31, 2017

Write a review essay of methodological approaches and developments in a particular area of theological study (eg. Theology, History, Bible, Practical Theology, etc.). The methodological approach should be discussed with the professor. A summary of the Methods Review will be presented through a 20 minute class presentation.

OR

2.2 Theological Reflection Seminar Presentation

Value: 35%; Length: Seminar Paper - 900-1500 words (single-spaced); Due: TBA; Final Reflection Paper – 1200-1800 words (double-spaced); Due: December 5/17.

Students will do a seminar presentation using a model for theological reflection provided or a self-designed model. The written seminar text should be about 3-5 pages (900-1500 words), single-spaced and copies should be made available to the class at least one week prior to the presentation. Following the presentation students should do a fuller reflection on selected social and theological issues identified in your theological reflection seminar presentation. Resources should be used that will help you to deepen the cultural and theological theory of the issue or situation to be analyzed.

Note: a fuller description of this assignment as well as Model for Theological Reflection will be given in class and is available on the Student Portal.

OR

2.3 Research Essay

Value: 35%; Length: 2100-3000 words; Due: December 5/17.

Students may choose to explore a theme related to research and methodology. Students are encouraged to explore themes that may assist in the development of potential thesis areas. Some possible topics may be:

Theology as Critical Correlation
Doing Contextual Theology
Feminist Approaches to Doing Theology
Liberation Approaches to Doing Theology
Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice
Social Action and Theological Reflection
Emerging Interpretations of Contemporary Theology
Reconstructing Christian Theology
Metaphorical Theology
Political Theology
Praxis and the Revised Correlational Method
Praxis Theory and Practical Theology
Anabaptist-Mennonite Methodologies
Phenomenology as Theological Method
Ethnography and Ecclesiology

OR

2.4 Other options in consultation with the professor.

3. Seminar & Class Participation.

Value: 10%

Participation in the seminar includes:

- a. attentive study of each other's work and attentive participation in the seminars;
- b. writing the *Seminar Preparation Statement* (handout) due the day of each seminar presentation;
- c. writing the *Post Seminar Reflection Statement* (handout) within a week after each presentation;

4. Optional Research Skills Assignment

Value: 10%

Two short assignments will be made available for students new to Graduate academic research or those wanting to develop their research skills. Course values will be modified to accommodate students choosing this option.

Summary of Course Requirements and Values:

Thesis Review:	20%
Research Methods Options (2x35%)	70%
Participation and Preparation:	10%

Grade Values (Standard B):

A+ 95-100%	Exceptional	C+ 67-73%	Satisfactory
A 88-94%	Excellent	C 60-66%	Adequate
B+ 81-87%	Very Good	D 50-59%	Marginal
B 74-80%	Good	F below 50%	Failure

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. All grades submitted by CMU's instructors are provisional until they have been vetted by the Dean's Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.
2. Students may submit assignments by email. Upon submission of an electronic assignment the student should receive confirmation via email within 24 hours that the assignment has been received (this does not include weekends). If confirmation has not been received the assignment should be delivered in hardcopy form to the professor's office (B333). All assignments should be submitted in Microsoft Word compatible formats. Electronic assignments must correspond with guidelines for Academic Writing (eg. Turabian/Chicago Style). Assignments submitted electronically will be evaluated and returned electronically via email.

"Theology is a peculiarly beautiful discipline. Indeed, At this point we may refer to the fact that if its task is correctly seen and grasped, theology as a whole, in its parts and in their interconnexion, in its content and method, is, apart from anything else, a peculiarly beautiful science. Indeed, we can confidently say that it is the most beautiful of all the sciences. To find the sciences distasteful is the mark of the Philistine. It is an extreme form of Philistinism to find, or to be able to find, theology distasteful. The theologian who has no joy in his work is not a theologian at all. Sulky faces, morose thoughts and boring ways of speaking are intolerable in this science. May God deliver us from what the Catholic Church reckons one of the seven sins of the monk—taedium—in respect of the great spiritual truths with which theology has to do. But we must know, of course, that it is only God who can keep us from it."

~Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.1, The Doctrine of God*, page 656.