



## Research Methods

(PhD - CH/TH G100; MA - CH/MS/NT/OT/TH 6ZA6)

**Class Schedule.** Monday @ 8:30am-10:20pm

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### **Course Description:**

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 and publication.

### **Course Objectives**

#### **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.

#### **Doing:**

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

#### **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.

### **Required Textbooks**

- 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.
- Porter, Stanley E. *Inking the Deal: A Guide for Successful Academic Publishing*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010.
- Readings emailed or handed out in class

### **On Reserve at the Library**

Bolich, Gregory G. *The Christian Scholar: An Introduction to Theological Research*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986.

Thomas, R. Murray, and Dale L. Brubaker. *Theses and Dissertations: A Guide to Planning, Research and Writing*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2000.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

### **Required Computer Program**

One of the following computer programs are required for this course:

- **Endnote** –(does not have to be the latest version). Available at *Titles* Bookstore at Student rate discount
- **RefWorks** – free for all McMaster students
- **Other bibliography software** –must be approved by the professor

### **Course Evaluation:**

*The assignments and their weights are as follows:*

#### **1. 20%. Annotated Bibliography: Due: September 23**

Using a bibliography computer program, the student will begin to build a database of bibliographic resources in a specific area of research. These resources will be compiled into a bibliography of relevant books and articles that provides the necessary data regarding publication (see MacDiv style guide). As well, following each bibliographic item, the student will provide their own 'annotations'; that is, 100-200 words explaining the author's thesis and what evidence or arguments used to support it. (Annotations should be recorded in the bibliography program for later use.) Annotations must show that you have read and understood the article or book and assess the relevance of the item for your own research project.

**PhD requirements:** 15 books + 10 articles

**MA requirements:** 7 books + 5 articles

Assignments *must* list the bibliographic program used in compiling the bibliography.

*Optional: Attend the **Endnote Workshop** on September 16, 12:20-1:20pm.*

**2. 20%. Book Review:** 6 pages. Due **September 30**

This paper will review a recent book (maximum 10 years old) in the student's specific research field.

The review will:

- Summarize the content
- Relate its content to current scholarly literature and debate
- Critically assess its arguments and positions

**3. 20%. Summary of Research Methodology.** 6 pages.

**Due dates:**

- **October 14** (New Testament & Historical, Theological Studies)
- **October 21** (Ministry Studies, Old Testament Studies)

Following lectures on discipline-specific (i.e., Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, History, Practical Theology /Ministry studies) methodologies by guest lecturers from the MacDiv faculty, students will write a paper on methodological issues in their chosen discipline. This paper will summarize issues of methodology in their academic field with special reference and application to a student's particular area of research interest. This paper will draw on the appropriate lecture as well as additional resources recommended by guest lecturers.

**4. 10%. Research Abstract. 1 page.**

**Due dates:**

- **November 4**

Students will write a short abstract summarizing their proposed thesis topic. This abstract represents a student's initial formulation of their topic, which will be further defined and explored in their research proposal.

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

**MA due date: November 25**

Length of Proposal:

- **MA** – 10-15 pages (not including bibliography)
- **PhD** – 20-25 pages (not including bibliography)

Students will prepare a research proposal based on the abstract submitted beforehand. The proposal will describe the thesis or research question and the methodology intended to be employed. It will include a literature review that critically acts with relevant secondary literature and shows how your proposal responds to this body of research. The proposal will also summarize anticipated conclusions or outcomes. As this proposal is a "work-in-progress," students should identify any difficulties encountered and further questions their research elicits. Proposals will be graded on the logic of their argumentation, their clarity of expression, their understanding of the relevant scholarly literature and the methodology(ies) employed and their potential to contribute to the accumulated wisdom of the field.

### **Additional requirements for PhD students: Presentation**

In addition to the written requirements, doctoral students will present their research proposal orally to the class. Presentations must not consist in simply reading their written proposal but must take the form of a creative 20-25 minute presentation that makes the research accessible and engaging to each student (regardless of their discipline). Following the presentation there will be 10 minutes of questions and interaction.

- Presenters are required to email **to the professor** written summaries (not the actual proposal) of their presentation for fellow students **one week in advance** of their oral presentation.
- Late submissions of written summaries handouts will result in presentation being penalized 10% per day.

### **PhD Grading:**

- Written proposal **15%**
- Class presentation **15%**

### **PhD Due dates:**

Written proposals are due **one week before** oral presentations:

Oral presentations will take place on four dates:

- **November 11**
- **November 18**
- **November 25**
- **December 2**

### **College Style for Submission of Written Work**

All written work is to be submitted in accordance with the McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses, available on the McMaster Divinity College website. <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf>

All papers and assignments are to be submitted in electronic format (a pdf file) only. Email to [pevans@mcmaster.ca](mailto:pevans@mcmaster.ca). If you need a program for creating pdfs go to <http://primopdf.com> or <http://www.pdf995.com> for a free pdf maker. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., [evans.bibliography.pdf](#)). To avoid late marks pdf papers must be received at the **beginning of class** on the day on which they are due (i.e., before 10:31am).

### **Policy concerning late papers**

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances. (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness any request for extensions will take into account the entire class. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 1% per day for the first 7 calendar days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by the last day of class in order to avoid a failing grade in the class.

### **Inclusive language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

### **Classroom Behaviour**

#### **Attendance & Participation**

- Students are expected to be on time to class or ready to give an explanation for their tardiness to the professor.
- Students are also expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance with the professor.
- Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
- All student participation in way of comments or questions must be done without disrespect or ridicule
- Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

### **Academic Honesty.**

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 Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

### **Disclaimer.**

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the respective professor. This syllabus has been prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course. This syllabus follows that of Professor Michael Knowles quite closely, and thanks is expressed to him for permission to use his work.