



McMaster Divinity College

Research Methods

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

Class Schedule. Monday @ 10:30am-12:20pm

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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.

Being:

- To reflect in personal terms on the role 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.

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.

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

Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email 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
- **Zotero** – free download (open source)
- **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 22

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 (secondary sources, not primary sources!) and articles that provides the necessary data regarding publication (see MDC 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. The title page must also note: 1) the area of research or research question in view in this bibliography; 2) the Bibliography software used to compile the bibliography.

PhD requirements: 10 books + 5 articles

MA requirements: 5 books + 3 articles

*Optional: Attend the **Endnote Workshop** on September 15, 12:20-1:20pm.*

2. 5% MDC Style Guide Challenge. In-class test on September 22.

Students will be given a short essay with footnotes and bibliography to correct in light of MDC style. 30 minutes of class time will be dedicated to the test.

3. 15%. Book Review: 6 pages. Double-spaced. Due **September 29**

This paper will review a recent **monograph** (maximum 10 years old) in your specific research field. *This book cannot be an Edited Volume of essays, a Commentary, a Grammar, an Introduction, a Dictionary or a Lexicon.* This book may be an item from your annotated bibliography.

The review will:

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

4. 20%. Summary of Research Methodology. 6 pages. Double-spaced.

Due dates:

- **October 13** (New Testament & Historical, Theological Studies)
- **October 20** (Old Testament Studies, Ministry Studies)

Following lectures on discipline-specific (i.e., Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, History, Practical Theology /Ministry studies) methodologies by guest lecturers from the MDC 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.

5. 10%. Research Abstract. 1-2 pages. Double-spaced.

Due dates:

- **November 3**

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. The abstract must not exceed 150 words for a master's thesis or 350 words for a doctoral dissertation.

6. 30%. Research Proposal: Work in Progress

MA due date: November 24

Length of Proposal:

- **MA** – 10-15 pages, double-spaced (not including bibliography).
- **PhD** – 20-25 pages, double-spaced (not including bibliography).

Students will prepare a research proposal based on the research abstract which will describe the thesis and the methodology to be employed. It will include a literature review that critically interacts with relevant secondary literature and shows how your proposal responds to this body of research. The proposal will also summarize anticipated conclusions or outcomes. The proposal is a "work-in-progress," so students should identify difficulties encountered and further questions their research elicits. Proposals will be graded on the logic of their argumentation, clarity of expression, understanding of the relevant scholarly literature and the methodology

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 2-3 page summaries / handouts (*not* the actual proposal) of their presentation for fellow students **one week in advance** of their oral presentation. The summary should 'summarize' the dissertation proposal so that students can come to the presentation already with some understanding of the content, approach and thesis being argued.
- Late submissions of written summaries / handouts will result in presentation being penalized 10% per day.

PhD Grading:

- Written proposal **20%**
- Class presentation **10%**

PhD Due dates:

Written proposals are due **on the day of a student's oral presentations:**

Oral presentations will take place on three dates:

- **November 17**
- **December 1**
- **December 8**

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers and assignments are to be submitted in electronic format (a pdf file) only. Email to 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 2% 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.

Gender 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 the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class. (This syllabus follows that of Professor Michael Knowles quite closely, and thanks is expressed to him for permission to use his work.)