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

Class meets **online** via Avenue to Learn and Zoom: Sept 14–Oct 17  
Class meets **face-to-face** Monday Oct 19: 9:00am–5:30pm; Tuesday Oct 20: 9:00am–1:00pm  
Class continues **online** via Avenue to Learn and Zoom: Oct 25–Dec 11, 2020.

**Professor.** Dr. Paul S. Evans  
**E-mail.** pevans@mcmaster.ca

**Course Description:**  
This course explores the theory and practice of research methodologies as they apply to post-graduate study within the theological disciplines. This course will lead students through the process of creating and completing a dissertation proposal. Topics covered will include: writing a clear thesis statement, demonstrating the need for new research, showing proper documentation, building a critical database of primary and secondary sources for the dissertation, the importance of methodology, building a cogent argument, and writing a focused and usable dissertation proposal.

**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


Recommended Books


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, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3; phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Required Software

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

- **Endnote** – available online as a download through Titles Bookstore at Student rate discount
- **Zotero** – free download (open source)
- **Other bibliography software** with similar capabilities

Course Evaluation:

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

1. **15%. Annotated Dissertation Bibliography**: Due: **Oct 10**

Using a bibliography computer program, students will create a database of bibliographic resources specific to their dissertation. These resources will be compiled into a bibliography of relevant books and articles that provides the necessary data regarding publication (following the MDC style guide). 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.
As well, following 15 of the bibliographic items, the student will provide their own ‘annotation’; 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.

2. 10% Dissertation Abstract. 1–2 pages.
This assignment will be fulfilled in four parts.

a. Students will write a short abstract summarizing their dissertation. This abstract represents a student's 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.

b. Students will meet with professor Evans via Zoom to discuss their dissertation ideas between Sept 28–Oct 16. This will be done via a sign up online via Doodle.
**A first draft of abstract (work in progress) must be emailed to the professor Evans at least two days before arranged meeting.

c. Students will present their abstract in the face-to-face class time on Oct 19.
**The presentation will include a time of questions and answers regarding the topic chosen and the research proposed.

d. After receiving feedback on their draft abstract and presentation, students will rewrite and finalize their dissertation abstract. Due: Oct 24.

4. 15%. Research Methodology. (PhD: 6–8 pages; MA 3–4 pages).
This assignment will be fulfilled in three parts.

a. Drawing on discipline-specific (i.e., Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, History, Practical Theology etc.) books on methodologies (**as listed in the bibliography below), students will write the methodological section of their dissertation proposal that demonstrates an awareness of issues in the literature regarding their chosen methodology with special reference and application to a student’s particular area of research interest.

b. Students will meet with professor Evans via Zoom to discuss their dissertation methodology between Oct 25–Nov 7. This will be done via a sign up online via Doodle.
**A first draft of the method section (work in progress) must be emailed to the professor Evans at least two days before arranged meeting.

c. After receiving feedback on their draft method section, students will rewrite and finalize their dissertation methodology and submit to professor by Nov 14.
5. 20% Literature Review (PhD: 8–10 pages; MA 4–6 pages)
This assignment will be fulfilled in three parts:

a. Drawing on their initial bibliographic work, students **will write** a short review of the literature relevant for their dissertation topic that critically interacts with relevant secondary literature and shows how your proposal responds to this body of research. The review should focus on critiquing earlier work on their topic, highlighting gaps in the research with the goal of showing the need for the student’s own dissertation contribution.

b. Students **will meet** with professor Evans via Zoom to discuss their dissertation methodology between **Oct 25–Nov 7.** This will be done via a sign up online via Doodle. **A first draft of the method section (work in progress) must be emailed to the professor Evans at least two days before arranged meeting.**

c. After receiving feedback on their draft method section, students **will rewrite** and finalize their dissertation methodology and submit to professor by **Nov 14.**

6. 35% Complete Dissertation Proposal Due: **Dec 11**
Length of Proposal:
- **MA** – 10-15 pages, double-spaced (not including bibliography).
- **PhD** – 20-25 pages, double-spaced (not including bibliography).

Students will prepare their complete dissertation proposal utilizing the bibliography, abstract, literature review, and methodology sections previously written. The proposal will introduce the topic and discuss its significance and summarize anticipated conclusions or outcomes of the research. Proposals must evince logical argumentation, clarity of expression, understanding of the relevant scholarly literature and the methodology employed, and their potential to contribute to the chosen academic field.

### Grading Summary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dissertation Bibliography</th>
<th>Dissertation Abstract</th>
<th>Research Methodology</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>Research Proposal</th>
<th>Final Grade Total</th>
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**Role of Primary Supervisors / Mentors**
As outlined in the schedule below, students must meet virtually with their primary supervisor/mentor or committee to discuss their research. This will entail planning ahead with their mentor to arrange dates to meet that fit with the schedule outlined.

**n.b.** Although professor Evans will be providing guidance for student proposals, it is important to remember your research is done under the supervision of your assigned mentor and committee and they must approve your work before it is submitted to the faculty for approval.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Avenue to Learn Modules/Zoom virtual class</th>
<th>Face to Face Class experiences</th>
<th>1-2-1 Zoom tutorials</th>
<th>Assignments due</th>
<th>Mentor meetings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>-Creating Bibliographies -Using databases -Using bibliographic software -Situating your work</td>
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<td>Meet with primary mentor <strong>before Oct 24</strong> to discuss abstract and dissertation ideas</td>
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<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>-Formulating a Research Question -Writing an Abstract -Creating room for your research -Free Writing</td>
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<td>Sept 28-Oct 16</td>
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<td>Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and discussion of draft abstract</td>
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<td>Oct 19</td>
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<td>Bibliography <strong>due Oct 10</strong></td>
<td><strong>PhD Presentations of topic and Thesis Abstracts</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 20</td>
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<td>Oct 24</td>
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<td>Abstract <strong>due Oct 24</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meet with primary mentor <strong>before Nov 24</strong> to discuss dissertation method issues</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 25-Nov 10</td>
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<td>Nov 14</td>
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<td>**Research Methodology Section <strong>due Nov 14</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 15-23</td>
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<td>Nov 24</td>
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<td>Literature Review <strong>due Nov 24</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>- Putting the proposal together - Creating a timeline for completion</td>
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<td>Dec 11</td>
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<td>Final proposals <strong>due Dec 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literature Review</strong></td>
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Style
Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! Email to pevans@mcmaster.ca. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., evans.researchpaper.pdf). To avoid late marks papers must be received by 11:59pm on which they are due. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

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 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by Dec 11 in order to avoid a failing grade in the class. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

Gender Inclusive language
McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

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.

Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.
**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 ~ [https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/](https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/)

**Disclaimer.**

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**Bibliography**

**Method in Old Testament Study**


**Method in New Testament Study**


**Method in Church History**


**Method in Systematic Theology**


**Method in Practical Theology**

