



McMaster Divinity College

Research Methods

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

Class schedule: Mondays @ 1:00pm–2:50pm (beginning Sept 13, 2021)

Professor. Dr. Paul S. Evans

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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. 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.

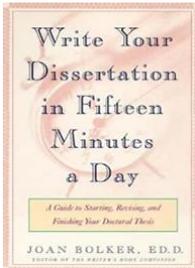
Being:

- 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



Joan Bolker. *Write your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*. New York: Henry Holt, 1998.

Nancy J. Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*. Third Edition. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.



Recommended Books

Kibbe, Michael, *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.

Roberts, Carol and Laura Hyatt, *The Dissertation Journey: A Practical and Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Writing, and Defending Your Dissertation*. 3rd Edition, Revised Edition. ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2019.

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. 5% MDC Style Guide Challenge. In-class test on September 27.

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.

2. 15%. Annotated Dissertation Bibliography: Due: October 9

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 for this bibliography;
2) the bibliography software used to compile the bibliography.

As well, following 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 are 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: 10 books + 5 articles

MA requirements: 5 books + 3 articles

3. 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 **Oct 4-Oct 15**. This will be done via a sign up online via Doodle.

**A first draft of the 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 18**.

**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 23**

4. 15%. Research Methodology. (PhD: 6-8 pages; MA 3-4 pages).

This assignment will be fulfilled in **four** 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 5**. **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. Students will make an in-class presentation of their methodological section. This presentation will include a time for questions and peer feedback.

d. After receiving feedback on their draft method section, students **will rewrite** and finalize their dissertation methodology and submit it to the professor by **Nov 12**.

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 critical review of the literature relevant for their dissertation topic that shows how your proposal responds to this body of research. The review should focus on critiquing earlier work on their topic and highlighting gaps in the research, with the goal of showing the need for the student's own contribution.

b. Students **will meet** with professor Evans via Zoom to discuss their literature review between **Nov 15– 26**. **This will be done via a sign up online via Doodle.**
**A first draft of the literature review 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 literature review and submit to professor by **Nov 29**.

6. 40% Complete Dissertation Proposal Due: December 6

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

Dissertation Bibliography	MDC Style Guide Challenge	Dissertation Abstract	Research Methodology	Literature Review	Research Proposal	Final Grade Total
15%	5%	10%	15%	20%	35%	100%

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.

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://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/MDC-StyleGuide-July-2019-1.pdf>

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 10** 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).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Face to Face Class experiences	1-2-1 tutorials	Assignments due	Mentor meetings
Sept 13	- Class Overview - Creating Bibliographies - Using online & library databases - Using bibliographic software			Meet with primary mentor before Oct 18 to discuss abstract and dissertation ideas
Sept 20	- Formulating a Research Question - Issues of originality - Issues of Plagiarism			
Sept 27	- Writing an Abstract - Formulating a clear thesis - Free Writing		*MDC Style Guide Challenge (In Class Test) on Sept 27	
Oct 4		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and discussion of draft abstract	*Bibliography due Oct 9	
Oct 11	No classes due to Thanksgiving	Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and discussion of draft abstract		
Oct 18	- Student Presentations of Abstracts - Role of a methodology in a research project - Writing a methodology section		*In Class Presentation of Abstract Oct 18	
Oct 25		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and discussion of research methodology	*Abstract due Oct 23	
Nov 1		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and discussion of research methodology		
Nov 8	- Student Presentations of Methodologies - Writing a critical literature review - Situating your work - Making room for your ideas		*In class presentation of Methodology Nov 8 * Final Research Methodology Paper due Nov 12	Meet with primary mentor before Nov 8 to discuss dissertation method issues

Nov 15		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial to discuss draft literature review section	
Nov 22	No classes due to Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting	Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial to discuss draft literature review section	*Literature Review due Nov 29
Nov 29	- Putting the proposal together - Creating a timeline for completion		
Dec 6	- Life as a Graduate Student - Life as a scholar - Writing as spiritual discipline		Final proposals due Dec 6

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/>

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.

Bibliography

Method in Old Testament Study

LeMon, Joel M., and Kent Harold Richards. *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*. Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.

Barton, John. *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Rev. and enlarged. ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

Knight, Douglas. *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2004.

McKenzie, S.L., and S.R. Haynes, eds. *To Each its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.

Tate, W.R. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. 3rd ed. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008.

Method in New Testament Study

Blomberg, Craig L. *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Crossley, James G. *Reading the New Testament: Contemporary Approaches*. Reading Religious Texts. London: Routledge, 2010.

Fee, Gordon D. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Green, Joel B., (ed.). *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Tuckett, Christopher Mark. *Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.

Method in Church History

Bradley, James E. and Richard A. Muller. *Church History: An Introduction to Research Methods and Resources*. Eerdmans, 2016.

Bloch, Marc. *The Historian's Craft*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Bauman, Michael and Martin L. Klauber, eds. *Historians of the Christian Tradition: Their Methodology and Influence on Western Thought*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995.

Heath, Gordon L. *Doing Church History: A User-friendly Introduction*. Clements, 2008.

John Tosh. *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*. London/New York: Longman, 1991.

Method in Systematic Theology

Porter, Stanley E. and Steven M. Studebaker. *Evangelical Theological Method*. IVP Academic, 2008.

Archer, Kenneth A. "The Pentecostal Story: The Hermeneutical Filter for the Making of Meaning," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 26:1 (2004) 36-59.

Franke, John R., *The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

Kliever, Lonnie D. *The Shattered Spectrum: A Survey of Contemporary Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981),

Grenz, Stanley J. and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001),

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Method in Practical Theology

Graham, Elaine, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward; with Katja Stuerzenhofecker. 2nd ed. *Theological Reflection: Methods*. London: SCM, 2019.

Graham, Elaine, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward. *Theological Reflection: Sources*. London: SCM, 2007.

Bennett, Zoë, Elaine Graham, Stephen Pattison, and Heather Walton. *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley: 2019.

Woodward, James, and Stephen Pattison, eds. *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*. Malden: Blackwell, 2000.