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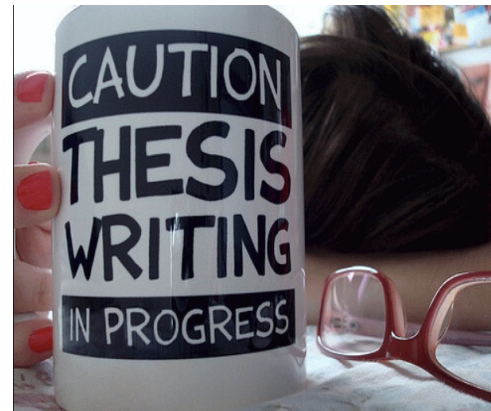
McMaster Divinity College  
Fall Semester, 2022

MS 5RS5 DPT Dissertation Project Seminar

Class sessions: Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:50  
September 14; November 2;  
December 7

Location: TBA

Facilitator: M. Knowles  
DC 214  
knowlesm@mcmaster.ca



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## Course Statement

This seminar will lead students through the process of formulating their dissertation project proposal. In consultation with each student's supervisor, the process will entail rigorous evaluation and critique (including peer assessment) of the proposed project, underscoring the importance of a clear thesis statement, an appropriate research methodology, and logical structure. The primary objective of the seminar is to produce a dissertation proposal that can be submitted for faculty approval.

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## Course Texts and Resources

Graham, Elaine, Heather Walton, and Frances Ward. *Theological Reflection: Methods*. London: SCM, 2005.

Swinton, John, and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: SCM, 2016.

All required textbooks are available from MDC's book service, READ On Books, located in the Hurlburt Family Bookstore at McMaster Divinity College, located in Cullen Hall. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3. Orders can be placed by phone (416 620.2934), text (416 668.3434), or email (books@readon.ca), with

payment by e-transfer, credit card, or cheque; shipping is free for students.  
Other book services may also carry the texts.

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## Schedule and Assignments

The current class schedule envisages at least three in-person/synchronous sessions throughout the semester, one or more meetings between the student and their faculty supervisor, and individual consultations with the course facilitator as required.

All written assignments are to be submitted in duplicate:

- ▶ one copy to the course instructor
- ▶ one copy to your faculty supervisor

1. Introductory Meeting (in person/synchronous) September 14

2. Dissertation Abstract

Compose a brief abstract summarizing the dissertation project. The abstract specifies the area of research, succinctly explains the research question, indicates why further research is appropriate, and identifies likely or hypothesized research outcomes. Subsequent to submission, students will meet with the instructor either in person or via Zoom to discuss the abstract.

- ▶ Written submission (350 words maximum) September 21
- ▶ Follow-up discussion with course instructor (as required) TBA

3. Literature Review

In essay form, review recent scholarly literature that specifically addresses your chosen area of research interest. The review will summarize the arguments of the studies in question, assess and critically interact with this body of research, and indicate how the dissertation project is informed by and contributes to current scholarly debate.

- ▶ Written submission (2,000 words) October 12

#### 4. Research Methodology

Compose the Research Methodology section of the dissertation project proposal. This section must identify and explain the selected methodology in conversation with relevant secondary literature, indicating why this methodology is best suited to the research question and how it promises to provide relevant answers, results, or research outcomes. For the class session on the due date, students will offer an oral presentation of their chosen methodology and its relevance to the research project.

- ▶ In-person/synchronous class session November 2
- ▶ Written submission (2,000 words) November 2
- ▶ Follow-up discussion with course instructor (as required) TBA

#### 5. First Draft of Dissertation Project Proposal

Drawing upon and adapting material from the previous assignments (abstract; literature review; methodology), prepare a draft of the dissertation project proposal. Proposals must evince logical argumentation, clarity of expression, understanding of relevant scholarly literature and methodology, potential contributions to the academic field in question, and timelines for completion. The proposal must also clearly state the research hypothesis and indicate anticipated conclusions or research outcomes. Prior to the due date, each student must submit the draft to and meet with their primary supervisor in order to receive feedback and critique. As a courtesy to your supervisor, please submit the draft at least one week prior to the scheduled supervisory meeting.

- ▶ Submission of draft to primary faculty supervisor TBA
- ▶ Meeting with primary faculty supervisor TBA
- ▶ Revised draft (6,000–8,000 words) November 23
- ▶ Follow-up discussion with course instructor (as required) TBA

#### 6. Dissertation Project Proposal: Final Draft

Revise the draft proposal in light of feedback received to date. Students will present their revised proposals to other members of the class in a creative and engaging manner, explaining the research hypothesis, the need for this project, the methodologies to be employed, and the anticipated outcomes. *Do not simply read the proposal document.*

- ▶ In-person/synchronous class presentations
- ▶ Written submission (6,000–8,000 words)

December 7  
December 7

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## **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>

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## **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.

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## **Style**

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: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide>. To assist with composition and completion of assignments, students are encouraged to make use of [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com) (<https://www.grammarly.com>), along with the academic support services provided by McMaster's Student Success Centre (<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-support>). Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. See also "CRITERIA FOR GRADING OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS," below. All course

assignments must be submitted to the appropriate course page on the Avenue to Learn website.

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### **Cell Phone/Computer Policy**

Students must refrain from conducting cell phone conversations whilst the class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer-generated sound schemes, pagers, or other electronic annunciation systems.

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### **Deadlines and Late Submission Penalty**

Assignments are to be submitted to the Avenue to Learn website by 11:00 a.m. on the due date. Please note that this course is graded on a pass/fail basis.

*The final date for submission of course assignments is December 9, 2022  
Assignments received after this date will not be accepted for grading or credit*

### **Disclaimer:**

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Sept 5 – 9		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
12 – 16	1			Introductory class meeting		
19 – 23	2			Dissertation Abstract		
26 – 30				<i>follow-up meetings</i>		
Oct 3 – 7						
10 – 14	3			Literature Review		
17 – 21						
24 – 28		Hybrid Intensive Week				
31 – Nov 6	4		<sup>1</sup>	Research Methodology/class		
Nov 7 – 11				<i>follow-up meetings</i>		
14 – 19						
21 – 25	5			First Draft		
28 – Dec 2				<i>follow-up meetings</i>	<sup>1</sup>	
Dec 5 – 9	6			Final Draft/Presentations		
12 – 16			Grades due			