



# Research Methods

Research Methodologies in the Theological  
Disciplines



(PhD/MA - CHTH 6R1000)

**Class runs Sept 9–Dec 9, 2024**

**In person group meetings will be on Mondays @ 9:00am–10:50pm**

**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.

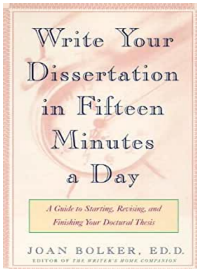
### **Being:**

- 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*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Revised Edition. ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2019.

### **Textbook Purchase**

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

### **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: October 7**

Using a bibliography computer program, students will create a database of recent bibliographic resources (within the last 20 years) 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

## **2. 10% Dissertation Abstract. 1-2 pages.**

This assignment will be fulfilled in **four** parts (with each part weighed for marks).

a. Students will write a short **draft** 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 30-Oct 11**. This will be done via a sign up online via Calendly.  
<https://calendly.com/psevens/abstract>

**\*\*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 class on **Oct 21**.

**\*\*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 25**

## **3. 20%. Research Methodology. (PhD: 6-8 pages; MA 3-4 pages).**

This assignment will be fulfilled in **four** parts (with each part weighed for marks).

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 a **draft** 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 28–Nov 8**. This will be done via a sign up online via Calendly. <https://calendly.com/psevens/research-methodology-consultation>

\*\*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 in class on **Nov 11**. 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 15**.

#### **4. 20% Literature Review (PhD: 8–10 pages; MA 4–6 pages)**

This assignment will be fulfilled in **three** parts (with each part weighed for marks).

a. Drawing on their initial bibliographic work, students will write a **draft** 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 12–19**. This will be done via a sign up online via Calendly. <https://calendly.com/psevens/literature-review>

\*\*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**

#### **5. 35% Complete Dissertation Proposal Due: Dec 2**

Length of Proposal:

- **MA** – 10-15 pages, double-spaced.
- **PhD** – 20-25 pages, double-spaced.

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	Dissertation Abstract	Research Methodology	Literature Review	Research Proposal	Final Grade Total
15%	10%	20%	20%	35%	100%

**Role of Primary Supervisors / Mentors**

As outlined in the schedule below, students must meet 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

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies!

**Upload assignments to the appropriate folder in A2L.** 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 13** 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, for example, the following:

;

NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

### **AODA**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

**A special note about AI:** You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

### **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.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Face to Face Class experiences</b>	<b>1-2-1 tutorials</b>	<b>Assignments due</b>	<b>Mentor meetings</b>	
Sept 9	- Introductions - Class Overview - What is Research? - Schedules			Meet with primary mentor to discuss abstract and dissertation ideas	
Sept 16	- Note Taking & Finding Sources ***The second half of this class will take place in the Wong classroom at Mills Library beginning at 12:00pm and ending at 12:50pm.				
Sept 23	- Issues of Plagiarism - Writing an Abstract - Free Writing				
Sept 30– Oct 11		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and consultation on draft abstract	*Bibliography <b>due Oct 7</b>		
Oct 21	- Student Presentations of Abstracts - Role of a methodology in a research project - Writing a methodology section		*In Class Presentation of Abstract <b>Oct 21</b> *Final abstract <b>due Oct 25</b>		
Oct 28– Nov 8		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial and consultation on research methodology			Meet with primary mentor to discuss dissertation method issues
Nov 11	- Student Presentations of Methodologies - Writing a critical literature review - Situating your work - Making room for your ideas		*In class Methodology presentation Methodology <b>due Nov 11</b> * Final Methodology Paper <b>due Nov 15</b>		
Nov 12– 19		Meet with Professor Evans on Zoom for one-to-one tutorial & consultation on literature review			
Nov 25– 29	CLASS CANCELLED DUE TO SBL CONFERENCE		*Literature Review <b>due Nov 29</b>		

Dec 2	- Putting the proposal together - Creating a timeline for completion		Final proposals <b>due Dec 4</b>	
Dec 9	- Life as a Graduate Student - Life as a scholar - Writing as spiritual discipline			

### **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: Brill, 2010.

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

Knight, Douglas. *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: 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*. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.