

Erskine Theological Seminary
TH 090 Research Methodologies
January Term 2009
Thursdays, January 8 and 15, 9 AM – 5 PM

Course Description:

This non-credit seminar provides advanced guidance on the tasks of choosing and narrowing a research topic, conducting theological research, using technology in research, analyzing one's findings and articulating their significance, and organizing and writing academic-level theological papers or theses.

Required for first-year Th.M. students. Open to others. Offered in January. Zero hours.

Requirements:

1) There will be no written requirements for this non-credit course. Students will show that they have mastered the material of *this* course by presenting high-quality research papers in *other* courses, and especially by presenting a high-quality Th.M. thesis.

2) Students are required to read the following book in its entirety:

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 50th Anniversary Edition. Longman: 2008. This text may be ordered from the Erskine Theological Seminary online bookstore at <http://www.ecampus.com/erskine>.

3) Students are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the layout and contents of the following books, and able to use these books for reference as they write research papers:

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Revised by Wayne C. Booth *et al.* 7th Edition. Chicago: University Press, 2007.

Alexander, Patrick H., *et al*, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999.

Schedule:

Thursday, Jan. 8, 2007 The Process of Advanced Research (Don Fairbairn)

Topics to be covered include the following:

- The goal of an academic research project
- Choosing and narrowing a topic
- Formulating the specific question of the research
- Reading and analyzing primary sources
- Evaluating and critiquing secondary sources
- Appropriate and inappropriate uses of technology in research
- The use of foreign languages in research
- Suggested strategies for taking notes, storing and managing information, and moving from notes to the research paper

Thursday AM, Jan. 15 Advanced Techniques for Finding Sources (Fred Guyette)

Topics to be covered include the following:

- Advanced searches using SCOTTY
- Advanced searches using the ATLA Religion Database
- Introduction to NT Abstracts, OT Abstracts and Rel./Theol. Abstracts
- Introduction to WORLDCAT
- Making the most of special encyclopedias and bibliographies
- What is meant by a “literature review”?

Thursday PM, Jan. 15 Writing the Paper/Thesis (Don Fairbairn)

Topics to be covered include the following:

- Formulating the steps of the argument
- Treating secondary literature thoroughly but non-woodenly
- Matching one’s conclusions to one’s evidence
- Writing an appropriate introduction
- Writing style