

**Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte**

**IS502: Seminar in Research and Writing**

**Section CA: Saturday, August 20, 2011 8:30 am-4:30 pm (Returning Students)**

**Section CB: Saturday, August 27, 2011 8:30 am-4:40 pm (New Students)**

**Robert J. Mayer, DMin, MLIS, Instructor**

**Course Description**

IS502 introduces seminary students to graduate-level research and writing skills with specific attention to academic writing, theological research, proper use and citation of sources, avoiding plagiarism, and usage of style manuals. The seminar also explores the nature of theological reflection and introduces students to the idea of “thinking theologically” about the various topics and issues they encounter both in academic study and in the practice of ministry.

**Relation to the Curriculum**

Effective research and writing skills are essential to successful completion of the graduate degree programs offered at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. IS502 introduces first-year seminary students to graduate-level research and writing and is required for all degree programs. Students completing the seminar receive credit for one of six integrative seminars required in each of the Gordon-Conwell Charlotte degree programs.

**Course Objectives**

Students enrolled in IS502 will:

1. Understand foundational principles for organizing and conducting graduate level research.
2. Become familiar with proper citation of sources and the style manuals that govern the citation process.
3. Learn how to recognize plagiarism, both intentional and unintentional, and avoid it in preparation of their research papers.
4. Begin to develop a framework for ongoing theological reflection that will shape how they integrate Christian faith with academic study and the practice of ministry.

**Course Instructor**

The course instructor is Robert J. Mayer, Senior Librarian and Director of the Gordon-Conwell Libraries. Dr. Mayer can be reached by Email at [bmayer@gcts.edu](mailto:bmayer@gcts.edu) or by phone at (704)940-5821.

**Seminar Textbooks:**

1. Stone, Howard W. and James O. Duke. *How to Think Theologically*, 2d.ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006. 142pp. ISBN: 978-0-8006-3818-4

At the heart of a Seminary education is the ability to think “theologically” about our lives and the daily situations and circumstances we encounter. This short book introduces us to theological reflection—the ability to think Christianly about life, about our surrounding culture, and about the practice of ministry in a variety of settings. In addition to Stone and Duke, the instructor will post two articles on the theological method for you to use as part of your five page reflection paper on this book.

2. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7<sup>th</sup>ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 466pp. ISBN: 978-0-226-82337-9.

Or

*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6<sup>th</sup>ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2009), 272pp. ISBN: 978-1-4338-0561-5.

Counseling students should purchase the APA *Publication Manual* while everyone else should purchase the Turabian *Manual for Writers*. These are the standard manuals for their respective fields, and each of you will use one or the other throughout the course of your degree program.

3. Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Essential Guide to Writing Non-Fiction*. 6<sup>th</sup>ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 336pp. ISBN: 978-0-06-171356-9.

This is simply the best book on learning how to write non-fiction on the market today. For 30 years, the author taught writing to college freshman at Yale University and thousands of students and writers (your instructor included) have benefited from his wise advice. For purposes of this class, you will be responsible for reading the first two sections of the book from pages one through ninety-two (1-92).

4. Woodbridge, John D. and Thomas Edward McComiskey, eds. *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991). ISBN: 0-310-44731-3

Two essays from this book are required: *A Systematic Biblical Dogmatics: What is it and How is it to be Done?* by Kenneth S. Kantzer (pages 463-493); and *On Method and Means in Theology* by Harold O.J. Brown (pages 147-169). Copies will be available on the reserve shelf but may not be checked out of the library in order to give all students

ample opportunity to read these chapters. A limited number of copies of the book will be available for purchase in the bookstore if you would like to purchase a copy.

### **Class Dates and Time**

The seminar is a one Saturday integrative seminar at the GCTS-Charlotte campus. Section one will meet on Saturday, August 20, 2011 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Section two will meet on Saturday, August 27, 2011 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### **Class Assignments**

1. **Classroom participation:** Students are required to participate in the entire class session and online via the student web portal in Sakai.
2. **Reading:** Students are expected to read the complete text of *How to Think Theologically*, the first two sections (pages 1-92) of *On Writing Well*, and the two chapters specified in *Doing Theology in Today's World*. Students are also expected to familiarize themselves with the contents of the style manual that they select. Students using *Turabian* should familiarize themselves with chapter 17 (160-215). Students using the *APA Publication Manual* should be especially familiar with the chapter seven (193-224) on the preparation of reference lists. **Note: Students should attempt to read pages 1-92 of Zinsser before the seminar meeting.**
3. **Reflection paper:** Students are asked to prepare a five-page double-spaced reflection paper with footnotes and bibliography due forty-five days after the final class session. The paper should briefly outline and describe three or four principles of theological reflection that will guide your work as seminary students and in the Christian vocational path to which God seems to be calling you toward. Please use *How to Think Theologically* as well as the two articles on theological method posted by the instructor as resources for this exercise. The instructor will use this paper to provide you with feedback regarding your writing skills.
4. **Library Assignment: Before the first class meeting, students should complete the following assignment if possible.** Students should select a course syllabus that contains a research paper assignment from one of their Fall 2011 courses. (TH501; TH502; and CH501 are good choices. Counseling students are encouraged to select one of their counseling courses.) Once you have identified the research assignment, please do the following:
  - a. Identify a specific subject or topic that you wish to research and write a two to three sentence description of your research topic. Please be concise in your description.
  - b. Go to a library and identify two reference book sources and two books that will serve as the foundation for your research. **Please use a library reference shelf to identify your reference sources and not the internet!** In addition,

go to the Gordon-Conwell library web page and find two articles through the GCTS electronic databases. Go to [www.gordonconwell.edu/library](http://www.gordonconwell.edu/library) and click on online databases and online journals on the library page.

- c. Prepare a one-page paper with your three-sentence topic description and a list of your six resources in proper bibliographic form using the Turabian or APA Style manual.

### **Course Grading**

Students are expected to complete all three course assignments as described above and earn a grade of “B” or better in order to receive credit for this Integrative Seminar. Course grade will be computed on the following basis: Class attendance—30%; Reading—20%; Library Assignment—10%; Reflection paper—40%.

**Course Outline:** The Saturday course will be divided into three class sessions and cover the following topics.

### **Session One—Preparation of research papers**

- Defining your topic
- Outlining your research paper
- Developing your writing skills
- Understanding the difference between summary and synthesis
- Editing your writing

### **Session Two—Usage and citation of sources**

- Types of research materials (print versus online sources)
- Assessment of research materials including online resources
- The difference between primary and secondary sources
- When to quote and when to paraphrase
- Introduction to style manuals (Turabian and APA)
- Understanding and using references

### **Session Three—**

- Plagiarism and how to avoid it
- The nature of theological reflection
  - Scripture
  - Tradition
  - Reason
  - Experience
- Translating theological reflection into writing

**All course assignments must be completed** and mailed to the course instructor no later than **Tuesday, October 11, 2011**. You can mail your reflection paper and the attached course completion sheet to Dr. Robert J. Mayer; Harold Lindsell Library; Gordon-Conwell Seminary; 14542 Choate Circle, Charlotte, N.C. 28273. **Please include the course report form and a stamped self-addressed envelope so that the instructor can return your work to you. Both are important for you to receive seminar credit.**

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**Course Report Form**

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID#** \_\_\_\_\_

Please mark a check indicating completion of the class assignments:

1. I have completed the assigned readings: \_\_\_\_\_

*How to Think Theologically*

*On Writing Well* (pages 1-92)

Two chapters from *Doing Theology in Today's World*

2. I have attended the Saturday class session in its entirety: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I have attached my five page reflection paper using footnotes and bibliography:  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. I have included my library assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

5. I have enclosed a stamped self-addressed envelope with my paper: \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**