Course Description

IS502 is a one-credit course 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 Assistant Professor of Theological Bibliography. Dr. Mayer can be reached by Email at bmayer@gcts.edu or by phone at (704)940-5821.
Course Textbooks:


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.


   Or


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.


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).


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.
Class Dates and Time

IS502 will meet on Saturday, June 29 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the Gordon-Conwell, Charlotte Campus

Class Assignments

1. Classroom participation: Students are required to participate in the Saturday class session and online via the GCTS-Sakai course management system.

2. Reading: Students are expected to read the complete text of *How to Think Theologically* and the first two sections (pages 1-92) of *On Writing Well*. 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 (164-215). Students using the APA *Publication Manual* should be especially familiar with chapters six and seven (169-224) on the preparation of reference lists.

3. Reflection paper: Students are asked to prepare a five-page double-spaced reflection paper with footnotes and bibliography due on Friday, August 9, 2013. 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 from *Doing Theology in Today’s World*. The instructor will use this paper to provide you with feedback regarding your writing skills.

4. Library Assignment: **Within two weeks of the class meeting**, students should select a course syllabus that contains a research paper assignment from one of their Fall 2013 courses. (TH501; TH502; and CH502 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.
5. **Book review**: Students will prepare a one-page single-spaced book review of *How to Think Theologically* by Stone and Duke. Good book reviews accomplish two things: First, they concisely summarize the essence of the book including its key ideas. Second, they critically interact with the book in terms of its significance within the field of study and limitations of the work. The instructor will provide a guide for writing book reviews during the class meeting.

**Course Grading**

Students are expected to complete all 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—25%; Reading—20%; Reflection paper—35%, Book review and library assignment—20%.

**Course Outline**

**Section One—Preparation of research papers (Saturday a.m.)**

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

**Section Two—Usage and citation of sources (Saturday a.m.-p.m.)**

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

**Section Three—(Saturday p.m.)**

- 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** by Friday, August 9, 2013. Please submit your library assignment no later than Friday, July 12 by Email to bmayer@gcts.edu. You can mail your reflection paper, book review, 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.
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte
IS502: Seminar in Research and Writing

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)
   *Review of Style Manual*

2. I have attended the Saturday class session: __________

3. I have attached my five page reflection paper: ____________

4. I have attached my one-page book review: _______________

5. I have completed and Emailed the library assignment: __________

6. I have enclosed a stamped self-addressed envelope: ____________

Street Address:

Phone:

Email: