

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte
IS502: Seminar in Research and Writing
Wednesday evenings March 7, 14, 21, 2012
6:30- 9:15 p.m.
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.

Gordon-Conwell Mission

IS502 addresses two aspects of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s mission and purpose by preparing students for academic excellence in their research and writing, and practicing writing skills that will enhance not only their academic work but their ability to communicate in ministry settings.

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 or by phone at (704)940-5821.

Course Requirements and 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:** Students should select a course syllabus that contains a research paper assignment from one of their Spring 2012 courses. (TH501; TH502; and CH502 are good choices. Counseling students are encouraged to select one of their counseling courses.) This assignment will be due at the beginning of the second Wednesday evening class. 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 the 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 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.

Required Textbooks and Materials:

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 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*. 7thed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 466pp. ISBN: 978-0-226-82337-9.

Or

Broomfield, Richard. *How to Cite APA Style in Psychology, Social Work, Education, and the Social Sciences*. Boston: Basil Books, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-4507-4758-5

Counseling students should purchase the *How to Cite APA Style* while everyone else should purchase the Turabian *Manual for Writers*. In addition, counseling student should plan to purchase the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* early in their program. It will be essential for citation. Students are expected to have a working knowledge of *Turabian* or *APA Style* depending on the degree program in which they are registered.

3. Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Essential Guide to Writing Non-Fiction*. 6thed. (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 through the IS503 Sakai site and on the reserve shelf at the circulation desk in the library.

Reserve copies 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 will meet on three Wednesday evenings in March (7, 14, 21) from 6:30 to 9:15 p.m.

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

Due Date and Late Work

All course assignments must be completed and mailed to the course instructor with the course report form no later than **Tuesday, May 15, 2012**. 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.**

Students should complete assignments by the due date. If a problem emerges because of illness or family, students should contact the instructor before the due date for specific guidance.

Attendance Policy

Because IS502 is an integrative seminar, students are required to attend each of the three class meetings. If you are unable to attend the entire seminar, please drop this section and take the seminar at a different time.

Document Formatting and Citation Style Requirements

All papers should be typed in 12-point Times Roman (unless otherwise approved by the instructor) with standard one-inch margins on all sides. Right margins should be “ragged right” while left margins should be “flush left.” Page numbers are required on all papers longer than one page and should be placed in conjunction with the standards for the style manual you use. For Turabian, the instructor prefers that page numbers be placed bottom center. All papers should have a cover page prepared according to the style manual that you are using.

Academic Standards

Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

ADA Policy

The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations, should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Cancellation of Class

In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancellation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

Extension Policy

Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the “last day to submit written work”, as noted on the seminary’s *Academic Calendar*, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

Grades

Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades. Those individuals, who need an official grade report issued to a third party, should put their request in writing to the Registration Office. Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade.

Returned Work

Submitted course work will be returned to the student provided s/he provides a self-addressed and postage paid envelope with his/her final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed once the grade has been assessed and issued.

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)

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

2. I have attended the three Wednesday class sessions in their 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: