SYLLABUS

IS 502 CA SP-14: Theological Research and Writing

Instructor: Dr. Robert Mayer

Teaching Assistant: Mary Reitano, M.A.

Contact Information

If you have any questions as you move through this course, please contact your Writing Tutor. Working with a Writing Tutor and receiving feedback throughout the course is a requirement of IS502.

If you have not been assigned a Writing Tutor, please contact Mary Reitano promptly at mreitano@gordonconwell.edu

Course Description

IS502CA is an online course, with modules and assignments you are required to complete in Sakai. All assignments are not graded; however, you must complete all modules and assignments to receive a passing grade in the course. There is no live instruction or campus residency requirement. Your primary interaction will be via email with your personally assigned writing tutor. Ms. Reitano, Teaching Assistant, is also available to help you if initial contact with your writing tutor does not resolve an issue.

If you have technical issues, please first ask your tutor, who may also elevate the question to Ms. Reitano. If we cannot resolve it, we will bring in IT support through the Help Desk. You may also contact the Help Desk directly if time is of the essence. Sometimes, students have trouble opening links—please let us know if this happens to you, because the links take you to essential course materials.

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 various topics and issues they encounter both in academic study and in the practice of ministry.

Gordon-Conwell Mission

This course satisfies the following institutional learning objectives:

Demonstrate constructive and critical thinking about Christian ministry in light of biblical, theological, and historical scholarship in accordance with historic Christian orthodoxy.
Relation to Curriculum

Relation to Curriculum: IS502 is a one credit hour course, required of all Gordon-Conwell students. Charlotte students must complete this course within their first year.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge

This course assumes that students have taken an undergraduate writing course and are familiar with the basics of good composition and mechanics. Students who do not feel confident in their knowledge of these elements should take some time to review writing fundamentals through writing handbooks or websites.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand foundational principles for organizing and conducting graduate-level research.

2. Demonstrate their ability to develop a research topic and conduct effective research.

3. Demonstrate their knowledge of graduate-level academic writing standards and process.

4. Become familiar with proper citation of sources and the style manuals that govern the citation process.

5. Learn how to recognize plagiarism, both intentional and unintentional, and avoid it in preparation of their research papers.

6. 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.

Module Topics

The following are a listing of the module topics in this course.

1. Academic Research: This module will introduce you to the process for selecting a research topic, and organizing and conducting research. In this module you will also come to understand the proper use of source material, citation styles, and ways to avoid plagiarism.

2. Academic Writing and Introduction to Theological Thinking: This module will allow you to practice the stages of the writing process as you construct your own draft. Particular attention is paid to organization, revision, and style. We will also briefly
review some of the unique assumptions that Gordon-Conwell embraces as part of its understanding of evangelical theological education.

3. Writing Theologically: Theological education is a unique discipline with its own philosophies, methodologies, and ethos. In this module you will explore what it means to think and write theologically. We will walk students through the process of final revisions on a paper.

Required Materials

Students are required to purchase and read the following three texts:


Course Requirements

This course assumes that the best way to improve our writing is to write. In addition to reading about writing, you will practice the craft of writing at the graduate level. The following are the types of assignments you can expect.

Readings and Multimedia

The content of this course will be presented through three primary means: 1) reading of books on research and writing; 2) websites devoted to writing practice and resources; and 3) a blog that explores various aspects of academic research and writing. There are also videos that introduce each module and the occasional narrated PowerPoint presentation in which Dr. Mayer provides commentary on a particular topic.

Writing Assignments

Throughout this course you will construct a short research paper. In each module you will build your paper step-by-step and receive feedback from a writing tutor at each stage. The culminating assignment is a 5 - 7 page essay on a topic of your choice. You may select a topic from a course you are currently taking or select a topic of interest to you. The topic of your writing is less important than the writing itself.
Grading Policy

This one credit hour course will be graded based on standard Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary grading policy. IS502 is a Pass/Fail class and will be reflected on transcript as a “P” or “F.” However, students need to pass IS502 with a numeric grade of 80 or better, which is a B- or better since research and writing are such essential skills for graduate students.

Late Work

Students must complete the course within the due dates given below. The course must be completed within the first year of a student's program. Failure to pass this course within the first year could result in requirement to repeat course. Assignment due dates are indicated in Sakai (to be posted by 11:55 p.m.) Please note LATE POLICY below:

1) We allow a 72 hour “grace period” during which an assignment will not be graded as late (posted between Day 0 and Day 3).

2) From Day 4 to Day 14, each late assignment (without prior approved extension) will receive a 3-point deduction.

3) Assignments posted more than 14 days after the due date (without prior approved extension) will receive a grade of “0” (no credit).

4) Approval of an extension / waiver of late penalty must be obtained in writing from your writing tutor in advance of the due date of the assignment.

Assignment Schedule

IS502 is designed to be completed within one semester. Details of individual due dates will be available within the course in Sakai. The first assignment will be due February 22nd and the final assignment will be due June 7th.

You may post assignments early; they will be graded in order received. It is to your advantage to do so to allow additional time between assignments.

Multiple assignments should not be posted simultaneously--students need to wait for feedback from their tutor to proceed.

Course Policies

Instructor Feedback - Writing tutors will assist the instructor with review of course assignments. Students will receive feedback on their assignments within one week of submission, with the exception of the Rough Draft assignment, for which tutors will have up to two weeks to provide feedback.
Document Formatting and Submission

When submitting assignments, please follow these criteria for formatting and saving documents.

Font Choices: Times New Roman or Cambria or Arial

Font Size: 11 or 12

Spacing: Double-spaced

File Name: Firstinitial_Lastname_Module#_Lesson#_MMDDYY (example: Jsmith_M2L3_010101)

Additional Course Policies

For additional policies that apply to this course, please refer to Syllabus Addendum below.

Syllabus Addendum

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 cancelation 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 makeup. 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**

Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. 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 (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

**Returned Work**

Submitted hard-copy course work will be returned to the students if they provide a self addressed and postage paid envelope with their final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed after the grade has been assessed and issued.