IS 502 CC SP-14: Theological Research and Writing - Syllabus

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 IS502CC.

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

Course Description

IS502CC 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-CC introduces seminary students to graduate-level research and writing skills with specific attention to academic writing, theological and social science 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. Counseling students will explore the integration of Christian theology and mental-health practices.

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-CC 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 counseling.

Required Materials

Students are required to purchase and read assignments from the following five texts. The APA Publication Manual is primarily for reference, and you will only be assigned selected chapters from On Writing Well. However, if you would like to get a head start on your reading, the Bromfield; Carter and Narramore; and Stone and Duke books should be read in their entirety. (NOTE: These are NOT in APA Style; full author name provided for ease in purchasing)
Required Materials (continued)


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 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 in counseling psychology and other social sciences. Dr. Mayer and Ms. Reitano will also provide additional commentary on particular topics throughout the course.

Writing Assignments

Throughout this course you will construct a short research paper. 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 particular theme recommended by the counseling department:

“A biblical and theological rationale for the integration of psychology and theology.”

This paper will help you begin to explore the integration of Christian theology and counseling psychology, something that you will be doing throughout your program. Please note that the Carter/Narramore text, The Integration of Psychology and Theology and the Stone/Duke text, How to Think Theologically are designed to be core sources for your research and reflection, and you should use at least three other sources to support your arguments, including academic journals.

Students will also be required to write a one-page single spaced critical book review of How to Think Theologically. Please refer to the material on writing book reviews on the IS502-CC Sakai course site.
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 minimum numeric grade of 80 (which is a B-), since research and writing are such essential skills for graduate students.

Late Work

Students must complete the course within the due dates given above. 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 3 point deduction.

3) Assignments posted after 14 days (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. Please see due dates of individual assignments listed below. Multiple assignments cannot be posted simultaneously--students need to wait for feedback from their tutor to proceed.

Assignment 1 – due February 22nd by 11:55 p.m. - Critical Interaction (10 pts.)
Assignment 2 – due March 8th by 11:55 p.m. - Sources and APA Style
Assignment 3 – due March 29th by 11:55 p.m. - Critical Book Review (20 pts.)
Assignment 4 – due April 12th by 11:55 p.m. - Preparing to Write Your Paper
Please Note: Easter is April 20th
Assignment 5 – due May 3rd by 11:55 p.m. - Rough Draft
Bonus Assignment (optional) – due May 17th by 11:55 p.m. – TBD (up to 10 pts.)
Please Note: Memorial Day is May 26th
Assignment 6 – due June 7th by 11:55 p.m. - Final Paper (70 pts.)
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, unless notified otherwise by writing tutor of reasonable delay. The exception is that we allow a two week period for review of Assignment 5, Rough Draft.

Document Formatting and Submission

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

Font: Times New Roman or Cambria or Arial

Font Size: 11 or 12

Spacing: Double-spaced

File Name: FirstinitialLastname_Module#Lesson#_MMDDYY (example: Jsmith_M2L3_010101)

Additional Course Policies

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

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.