Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Hispanic Ministries Program – Nassau, Bahamas
EM/MC605 - Introduction to Theological Studies
Fall (Nov.4-8, 6-10pm; Nov.9, 8am-4pm), 2013

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Syllabus

I. Course Objectives - This course will provide an Introduction to Theological Studies for the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Religion as offered through Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Hispanic Ministries Program. Class members will be exposed to methodologies and techniques necessary to do research and to write academic papers of graduate level quality. This will be accomplished through:

A. Improving Organizing and Thinking Skills (Seminary goals: MDiv., 3-4, 6)
   1. Improving note-taking abilities
   2. Developing organizing and outlining abilities for writing and ministry
   3. Improving reasoning and critical thinking skills for writing
   4. Acquiring a Christian worldview

B. Discovering and applying practical research methods and sources (MDiv., 2, 4, 6-7; MAUM 1-3, 5-6)
   1. Learning how to find useful sources of information
   2. Applying research methods to understand the community and its context
   3. Applying research methods to understand the church and holistic ministry

C. Developing the ability to use libraries and information sources effectively (MDiv., 2, 4, 6-7; MAUM 1-3, 5-6)
   1. Becoming familiar with local library resources
   2. Understanding library classification systems; use of card-catalogs and on-line catalogs
   3. Understanding computer-based information sources
   4. Becoming aware of useful general and theological reference tools

D. Improving basic writing skills (Seminary goals - MDiv., 3, 4, 6-8; MAUM, 5-6)
   1. Correctly citing sources in footnotes and bibliographies
   2. Developing paragraphs effectively and with unity and coherence
   3. Writing sentences with improved style and clarity
   4. Sharpening present grammatical usage

E. Students will learn and be able to demonstrate the Seven Qualities of Good Writing:
   1. Has purpose
   2. Is aimed at an audience
   3. Uses a consistent tone
   4. Demonstrates the author’s authority
   5. Is well organized and follows a pattern
   6. Has an effective format
   7. Is free of mechanical errors

II. Required Textbooks
   • Turabian, Kate L., A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
III. **Course Requirements**

A. **Attendance Policy & Class Participation (20%)** – attendance at all class sessions is critical to the learning process. Students have a half-day (1/2) unexcused absence without penalty. Lateness to either half of the class sessions count as ¼ absence. Class participation enhances the learning process by making space for the diverse voices of knowledge and experiences of the students to become shared wisdom of the community.

B. **Reading Log (20%)** – students are responsible for the readings indicated in the syllabus. Failure to read the material will affect the student’s comprehension of the lectures and capacity to participate during class sessions. The attached reading log **must be submitted with the final paper**. Please note that class lectures do not summarize or review the readings due. Rather, they assume that the reading has been done and build on it. Students should read at least the following before November:

- *How to Think Theologically*
- Chpts. 1,4,7,8,14,15,17,18 of the Vyhmiester book

C. **Research Paper (60%)** – This paper is **due on Dec. 20**. Students will write a 10-15 page research paper based on an issue facing the community where their “home” church is located. The paper will demonstrate how the local church can address the issue. The paper is to include:

1. **Thesis Statement** - state the issue and what you will demonstrate to be an appropriate response by the local church
2. **Historical Analysis** - what is the history of the issue? What are the historical factors that have contributed to the issue becoming what it is today in the community? Has the Church (local and global) historically dealt with the issue? If so, how?
3. **Social Analysis** - This includes using qualitative and quantitative research as well as other kinds of analytical tools, research, and analysis. What does the issue look like today? What have been the short-term and long-term impacts of the issue? Compare the issue at the state and/or national levels. What is a contemporary understanding(s) of the issue both, in the local context, and in society at-large. How is the issue perceived in the community? What are the various ways in which folks in the community attempt to address or deal with the issue? How are various demographic groups impacted by this issue? What happens if nothing is done?
4. **Biblical and Theological Analysis** - parallels, contrasts, etc., from the Scriptures that may speak to the issue. Basic exegetical considerations (including historical, linguistic, theological analysis using key word studies, commentaries, etc.), must be incorporated.
5. **Church Analysis** - Has the Church been effective in its dealing with the issue? What models are/are not useful in the present context? What are responses that the church can take to address the issue? What can happen to the community and to the church if the church does not act?
6. **Footnotes** – using the system that pertains to the *Chicago manual of Style*, provide documentation of your sources. If necessary, you may use endnotes instead.
7. **Works Cited** - a minimum of fifteen (15) sources. At least five (5) of these should be non-reference texts on the issue. While there is no minimal amount required, attention should be paid to the use of primary sources. On-line, open-source reference tools are not to be included in the bibliography.
8. **Appendix** – include worksheets, reference materials, etc. that demonstrate your research & writing process
   i) Appendix includes:
   1. Subject
   2. Topic
   3. Original working hypothesis
   4. Final Thesis Statement
   5. Summary of the Paper
   6. Reading Notes
   7. Word study
   8. Charts, graphs, data, quantitative research, surveys, important material from primary sources, etc.

D. **Grading scale and Plagiarism** – please refer to guidelines as indicated in the GCTS Student Handbook
# Overview of Class Sessions

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<th>Day</th>
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| **Monday**   | o Syllabus review
               o A timetable to manage the research paper
               o A detailed look at the research process
               o Varieties of research papers – compare & contrast, thematic, descriptive, opposing positions, dialogue, expository, persuasive, reaction/response, cause/effect, narrative |
| **Tuesday**  | o Referencing Formats
               § Chicago Style
               § APA
               o exercises |
| **Wednesday**| o Laying the groundwork
               § Deciding on a topic
               § Moving from topic to thesis
               o Exercises
               o Searching for and using sources
               o Working with sources
               § Working bibliography
               § Evaluating sources
               o Note taking |
| **Thursday** | o Writing the paper
               § Organizing and writing
               • The first paragraph & the thesis statement
               § The rough draft
               § Revising the draft |
| **Friday**   | o Sociological Tools for Research and Analysis |
| **Saturday (AM session)** | o Biblical Research tools
               § The text and the context
               o Exercises
               o Doing a word study – the “do’s” and “don’ts”
               o Exercises |
| **Saturday (PM session)** | o Developing a Holistic Ministry Response to Community Issues |