

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
DM702 | Research Design and Methodology (3.0 credits)
Spring 2025



Instructor: Mai-Anh L. Tran, PhD
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Appointment by email

Modality: Bichronous, comprising asynchronous coursework with 3 synchronous online class meetings (Friday, Feb. 21, Mar. 21, Apr. 25, 9:00AM-3:00PM CT, with breaks), and one-on-one appointments with instructor. Participants may request additional one-on-one conversations with instructor at any time in the semester.

* There will be a voluntary virtual, recorded “Meet & Greet” session on Feb. 7, 2025, 10:00-1:00AM CT. Participants are welcome to join to make acquaintance and ask questions to help their preparation for the course.

SYLLABUS

(As of January 27, 2025)

Course Description¹

This is a seminar on research methodologies and design relevant for Doctor of Ministry (DMin) projects. It presupposes that DMin research is practical theology in nature and is interdependent upon the “*formalized curiosity*” (as expressed by anthropologist Nora Zeal Hurston) of social scientific inquiry and the *decolonial* commitments of theological inquiry. The course introduces participants to research methods and practices that equip Christian religious leaders to better understand, evaluate, and respond to concrete situations, settings, and contexts that make up the *habitus* and *habitats* of religious experience, affinity, and practice within broader cultural-religious-ecological landscapes. Such insight will contribute to the practical wisdom and imagination for religious leadership and can generate new theological insight for the Church and its faithful witness-bearing and transformative action in the world.

¹ With thanks for the shared and adapted materials from previous iterations of this course’s syllabi, development by Dr. Margaret Ann Crain and Dr. Evelyn Parker.

In this course, participants will examine theological and philosophical bases, goals, and methods of *qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods* of research, drawing on literature from the fields of (inter)cultural studies, congregational studies, Christian religious education, practical theology, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and educational evaluation. Participants will also learn and construct basic elements of research design, including research questions, experimental methods, reliability and validity, data collection, data analysis, and ethics—essential components for a DMin research project.

Learning Outcomes

Through this course, participants will gain knowledge and insights to do the following:

1. Identify the interdisciplinary and correlational nature of practical theology and qualitative research.
2. Define, differentiate, and critique various qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods of research and their appropriateness for practical theological research.
3. Articulate the philosophical, theological, and methodological assumptions that constitute the foundations of their own practical theological research projects.
4. Describe and analyze how social identity, location, and reflexivity of the researcher shape their research approaches.
5. Draft a working DMin project proposal for their intended research topic, in which they articulate the following:
 - a. clear research question;
 - b. thick description of research setting, situation, and context;
 - c. data collection method;
 - d. ethical considerations for research with human subjects;
 - e. theological and biblical foundations.

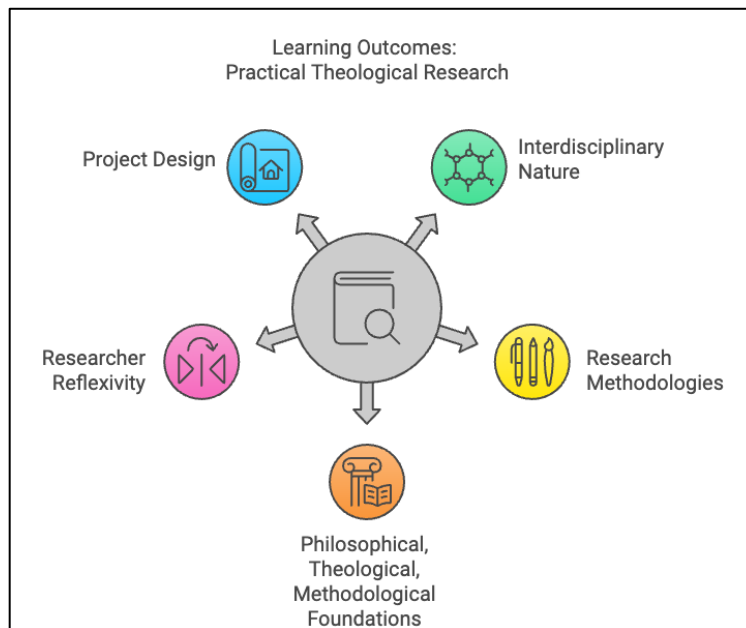


Figure 1: Generated by Napkins AI

Course Texts

Required common texts (prices as of 11/01/2024)

1. Court, Deborah. *Qualitative Research and Intercultural Understanding: Conducting Qualitative Research in Multicultural Settings*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. (ebook Amazon \$51.67)
 - Styberg library has ebook.
2. Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2024. (Kindle \$57.60)
 - Styberg library has 4th ed. in reference.
3. Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. 2nd rev ed. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2023. (Amazon \$27.85)
 - Styberg library as 1st ed. in circulation.
4. Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. London & New York: Zed Books, 2012. ISBN: 9781848139503. (eBook \$19.99)
 - Styberg library as 2nd ed. online.
5. Swinton, John and Harriet Mowatt. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: SCM Press, 2016. (Amazon \$25.49)
 - Styberg library as 2nd ed. online.

Recommended

- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. 2nd ed. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022. (Amazon \$39.11)
 - Styberg library has 2nd ed. online.

Choose one for book and methodology review (please consult with instructor if you'd like to consider a text beyond this list)

1. Baker, Dori Grinenko. *Girl/Friend Theology God-Talk with Young People*. 2nd ed. La Vergne: Pilgrim Press, 2023.
2. Chaves, Mark. *Congregations in America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.
3. Chen, Carolyn, and Russell Jeung. *Sustaining Faith Traditions: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion among the Latino and Asian American Second Generation*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.
4. Crain, Margaret Ann and Jack L. Seymour. *Yearning for God: Reflections of Faithful Lives*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2003.
5. Emerson, Michael O, and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
6. Frank, Thomas E. *The Soul of the Congregation*. Abingdon, 2000.
7. Hoge, Dean R., Benton Johnson, and Donald A. Luidens. *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*. 1st ed. Louisville: Westminster/John

- Knox Press, 1994. The study is based on a nationwide selection of persons confirmed in Presbyterian churches who were between 33 and 42 years old in 1989.
8. Ingall, Carol K. *Down the Up Staircase: Tales of Teaching in Jewish Day Schools*. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2006.
 9. Jeung, Russell, Seanan S Fong, and Helen Jin Kim. *Family Sacrifices: The Worldviews and Ethics of Chinese Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
 10. Josselson, Ruthellen. *Revising Herself: The Story of Women's Identity from College to Midlife*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
 11. Lawless, Elaine. *Holy Women, Wholly Women*. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.
 12. Marti, Gerardo. *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church*. Indiana University Press, 2005.
 13. Martinson, Roland D., David W. Anderson, and Paul Hill. *Coming of Age: Exploring the Identity and Spirituality of Younger Men*. Augsburg press, 2006.
 14. Patillo-McCoy, Mary. *Black Pickett Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.
 15. Sadowski, Michael. *In a Queer Voice: Journeys of Resilience from Adolescence to Adulthood*. Temple University Press, 2013.
 16. Thomas, Linda E. *Under the Canopy: Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa*. University of South Carolina, 1999.
 17. Tribble, Jeffery L., Sr. *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
 18. Wright, Almeda M. *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*. New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2017.
 19. Wright, Dana E. *Active Learning: Social Justice Education and Participatory Action Research*. Routledge, 2015.

Online training for ethical research practices & data coding software:

- Northwestern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) resources: <https://irb.northwestern.edu/resources-guidance/>
- Protecting Human Research Participants (PHRP) resources: <https://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>
- NVivo data organizing software: <http://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products>
- HyperResearch tool for QR research: <http://www.researchware.com/>

Assignments

A. Warm-Up Exercises & Small Group Conflab: A series of exercises (posted on Moodle) to be completed and uploaded to Moodle by designated deadlines. You will share your work with the rest of the class to view and engage. These will be evaluated on Complete/Not Complete basis. Instructions and deadlines will be posted on Moodle.

They include:

- “Artist statement” with image.
- Philosophical assumptions worksheet.
- Research statement.
- Digital poster board on methods (in small groups).
- Peer review (in small groups).

B. Data Collection² Practice & Research Journal: Pick a method of data collection from options below (or beyond, in consultation with instructor). Choose a specific site and/or research subject(s) and try out the method. *Please see Garrett’s Human Subjects Policies & Procedures (on Moodle) for principles that guide your engagement with “human subjects” for course assignments.*

For this assignment:

- Keep a journal of your field notes and reflective memos to document learnings from the practice of gathering data in the method chosen. You will submit this journal, along with all instruments and data created for this exercise. (Journal may be 5-6 pages double-spaced. Assignment evaluated on Complete/Not Complete basis.)
- Focus on capturing and reflecting on “thick, rich description,” but refrain from analyzing the data. You may want to note your journal emerging interpretive themes, but don’t engage in analysis. Consider the possibilities and limitations of using this method for your research topic.
- You may select from one of the following options:
 - Focus group
 - Case Study
 - Autoethnography
 - Life history interview
 - Congregational timeline
 - Neighborhood walk
 - Digital ethnography (social media or online platforms)
 - Artifacts (e.g., furniture, art, found objects, liturgical elements, archival materials)
 - Video or photographic documentary
 - A survey of mixed quantitative and qualitative questions

² Insight from scholar of ethnographer, Margaret Ann Crain: Data collection “involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives.” Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 5.

- Other? (Please consult with instructor.)

C. Analysis of a Qualitative Research (QR) Approach: Write a review/analysis of a selected text of your choice from the list of exemplars or recommendations. (1200-1500 words, or roughly 5-6 pages double-spaced)

For this assignment:

- Research the author's social location and context. If possible, reach out to them for a phone, video, or email "conversation" about their work and how they arrived at the research methodology and topic. The purpose is to hear the author's perspective on how a methodology is "enfleshed" in real-life practice.
- In your written paper, offer a synopsis of the methodologies explored in the book, and analyze the author(s)/researcher(s)'s philosophical, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. Offer perspective on possible methodological limitations. Reflect on learnings gained from seeing another scholar apply a methodology for their research question(s). Discuss how the method(s) might apply to your own research topic.

D. Draft Human Subjects Review (HSR) Application, Risk Assessment Rubric, & Consent Form: Based on your intended DMin research topic, complete a "draft" version of Garrett's HSR Application, Risk Assessment Rubric, and Consent Form (posted on Moodle, also found on myGETS). If you hadn't intended on engaging human subjects for your DMin research, imagine designing a project in which you would have to engage persons directly. We will conduct mock "ethics review" of each application in class.

E. Draft DMin Proposal Submission Form: Complete a "draft" version of Garrett's DMin Proposal Submission Form. This may very well become a good draft for your actual proposal. Take this opportunity to experiment and take good risks, for the benefit of receiving feedback from the class. (The proposal should be no more than 10 pages.)

As you think about the HSR Application and DMin Proposal, consider the following questions (adapted from M.A. Crain's articulations):

- How did you come to the research problem or question? Upon what literature will your research build? How does your project contribute to the vitality of the Church and wider public, and/or our collective development of practical theology and ministerial praxis? Discuss your epistemological approach to research. What writers enhance your theoretical sensitivity to see and hear the experience in the field? How do you envision choosing a site? How do you envision data collection? How does who you are both resource and limit the research project? What will be your role as researcher and how will that relate to the research? How do you plan to enter the site? What are relevant ethical considerations? How do you plan to process and analyze the data? What thoughts do you have about writing the project?

Course Modules

Meeting Dates/Times	Themes/Topics/Foci	Readings	Assignments Due
Friday, 02/21/25 9:00AM-3:00PM CST	Unit 1 “Vulnerable Observers”: Decolonizing Research(er) Re-orienting horizons of understanding in theological and empirical inquiry; social science research and practical theology; “culture eats strategy for lunch”; roles and responsibilities of researcher: reflexivity; power; insider/outsider dynamic; “listening and speaking nearby”; intersectionality; intercultural consciousness; research and activism.	Smith, <i>Decolonizing Methodologies</i> (Intro, chs. 1-8, 11-12) Swinton & Mowat, <i>Practical Theology & Qualitative Research</i> , Part I (chs. 1-3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Artist statement with image (DUE Feb. 14) <input type="checkbox"/> Research statement <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophical assumptions worksheet
Friday, 03/21/25 9:00AM-3:00PM CST	Unit 2 Tinkering with Organized Reality: Exploring QR Traditions Foundations and principles of qualitative research (QR) traditions; philosophical assumptions; application to ministerial research (“grappling with the riddle”); research ethics (human subjects review), conundrums, accountability, informed consent; G-ETS HSR policies & procedures.	Court, <i>Qualitative Research and Intercultural Understanding</i> , Part I (chs. 1-9) Moschella, <i>Ethnography as Pastoral Practice</i> (Intro, chs. 1-4) Creswell & Poth, <i>Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design</i> (chs. 1-4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of QR approach <input type="checkbox"/> Digital poster board on method
Friday, 04/25/25 9:00AM-3:00PM CST	Unit 3 “Don’t Snap to Guide”: Research Design Selecting research tradition & methods; qualitative data analysis; reliability & validity; theological analysis; writing & presenting research.	Moschella, <i>Ethnography as Pastoral Practice</i> (chs. 6-10) Creswell & Poth, <i>Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design</i> (chs. 6-11) Swinton & Mowat, <i>Practical Theology & Qualitative Research</i> , select from Part II (chs. 6-9) for examples of QR projects.	<input type="checkbox"/> Data collection practice & journal <input type="checkbox"/> Draft HSR application

<p>Between 4/28/25 – 5/7/25 Small Group Online (or In-Person) Meetings w/ Instructor</p>	<p>Unit 4 <i>Loving Research: “Getting the Story Right, Telling the Story Well”</i> Putting together research proposals. Revisiting ethical considerations and <i>telos</i> of theological research.</p>	<p>Smith, <i>Decolonizing Methodologies</i> (chs. 10-12) Court, <i>Qualitative Research and Intercultural Understanding</i> (chs. 10-14)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Draft DMin research proposal DUE by last day of spring term, <u>May 7.</u></p>
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Grade Breakdown

Warm-Up Exercises & Small Group Conflab: 15%
 Data Collection Practice & Research Journal: 25%
 Analysis of a Qualitative Research (QR) Approach: 25%
 Draft Human Subjects Review (HSR) Application: 15%
 Draft DMin Proposal Submission Form: 20%

Grading

Relevant rubrics for assignments will be available on Moodle.
All assignments must be submitted to receive a passing grade.

Grade Scale (out of 100 points)

A	94-100	B+	87-89 (88)	C+	77-79 (78)
A-	90-93 (91.5)	B	84-86 (85)	C	74-76 (75)
		B-	80-83 (81.5)	C-	70-73 (71.5)
				D (Failing)	60-69 (65)

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the [Academic Handbook for the current academic year](#). The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one’s coursework:

Writing

- **Academic integrity and plagiarism:** (See 2425 Handbook, 13, 69-75) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- **Writing and citations:** The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory

courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (2425 Handbook, 71)

- **Writing Support:** The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- **Inclusivity/Diversity:** The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected, and ideas are to be freely discussed. All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 2425 Handbook, 10-11)
- **Attendance:** Please note that timely and full attendance in all 3 online synchronous meeting dates is required for a Passing grade. In case of emergency, please contact instructor to discuss implications for completion of the course.
- **Multimedia engagement:** Participants are welcome to use electronic devices for the purposes of engaging with one another and with class materials during our blended synchronous sessions. Please be respectful of our experience by not conducting personal business during class meeting times.
- **Online etiquette:** Virtual attendees should be present with their videos "on" whenever possible, and microphones "off" when not speaking to avoid audio feedback. Should there be urgent matters on your end which require you to go off camera, please let instructor know of your situation. Participants should not remain off camera for an entire class session or join the virtual class only on their mobile phone.
- **Video recordings of class sessions:** Online Synchronous class sessions will be recorded and kept on Teams for participants to review as needed. If class discussions touch upon sensitive topics, we will remind each other to pause the recording as appropriate.

Academic Accommodations

- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving (melanie.baffes@garrett.edu or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a continuing student who has already established accommodations with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Please contact your instructors prior to the first class session so the instructor can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator, Academic Affairs staff, and your professors will see your accommodation letter (2425 Handbook, 13).

- **Late Assignments & Extensions:** Without approved accommodations, late assignment submissions are subject to grade deduction, as appropriate. Formal extensions of end-of-semester work must be applied through the registrar’s office.

AI Policy

This course uses AI in the following ways:

Not Allowed	Allowed with appropriate acknowledgment	Allowed and no acknowledgement needed
Generative AI help with <u>writing</u> (paraphrasing, summarizing, generating language for assignments)	Language translation Language assistance for non-native English speakers Editing, polishing, or revising paper drafts Proofreading Generative AI help with <u>papers</u> (generating topics, ideas, outlines, arguments)	Presentation design Citation generation Research Note-taking Generative AI help with <u>reading</u> (summarizing or outlining reading assignments)
You must consult the professor(s) for uses not mentioned above.		
To properly cite the use of AI in Chicago/Turabian style, access this link: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html .		

HSR principles for classroom Projects (from HSC’s Policies & Procedures)

All courses requiring research with human subjects must include the Research Risk Assessment Rubric in the syllabus and time should be taken in class for the instructor to make Students aware of the possible risks of doing research with human subjects.

In general, classroom research projects will not need to be reviewed by the Human Subjects Research Review Committee because they present low risks to the human subjects. Examples of projects which involve low risk include:

- a)Recording of data from Subjects 18 or older using non-invasive procedures.
- b)Anonymous voice recordings for research purposes.
- c)Participation observation in a public venue such as worship services or other community gathering places.
- d)gathering places.
- e)Study of existing data, documents, or records.

In the case that an instructor determines that the risk of the classroom assignment is sufficient to require HSR approval, the instructor will submit the classroom assignment to the HSC for review. Once passed, the assignment will be considered approved for all Students taking the course provided the Students follow the approved protocols.