

**Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Theological Research and Writing – WRIT 502 Z
Course Syllabus – Fall 2021**

Course: Theological Research and Writing – WRIT 502 Z

Meeting Time: Mondays from 6:30 to 8:30 pm

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Course Delivery

This is a Hyflex course that will be taught in person from a classroom on campus (Monday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.). Students have the choice to join in person or online. If students attend more than half of the classes online, it will count as an online course. Please see [Hardware/Software Guide for New Students](#) on myGETS for information on technology requirements for online courses.

Course Description

This course is designed to help seminary students in the techniques of theological research and writing. It focuses on helping students: a) reinforce basic writing *abilities*; b) strengthen reading and notetaking *skills*; c) identify and evaluate relevant research *sources* (library and Internet sources); and d) apply *strategies* for developing various types of papers. This course gives students the chance to practice and develop their writing abilities, build good writing habits, and address any barriers that prevent them from being productive and effective writers.

International students also have access to a resource, “Overview of North American Academic Writing” to familiarize them with North American conventions of academic writing and discover what constitutes effective theological writing in English.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate how to use basic seminary library resources (both print and Internet).
2. Use strategies for reading carefully, engaging critically with sources, and taking notes.
3. Demonstrate how to use Turabian citation style properly.
4. Give an overview of key strategies for structuring and clarifying their writing.
5. Demonstrate how to summarize, paraphrase, and use direct quotations effectively.
6. Describe the steps for developing a strong thesis or argument.
7. Explain the process for reflection, biblical exegesis, and other types of theological writing.

Required Books

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *“They Say/I Say”: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. 4th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-0393631678/ISBN-10: 0393631672. Available from Amazon.com, \$27.50 (paperback); not available for Kindle.

Greene, Stuart, and April Lidinsky. *From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Practical Guide*. 4th ed. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-1319071240/ ISBN-10: 1319071244. Available from Amazon.com, \$48.99 (paperback); \$32.99 (Kindle).

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean, and Terry Dwain Robertson. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-0-310-10666-1. Available from Amazon.com, \$21.49 (paperback); \$14.99 (Kindle).

Recommended Books

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-0226430577/ISBN-10: 022643057X. Available from Amazon.com, \$7.99 (paperback); \$7.59 (Kindle).

Schedule of Course Topics

In this class, students learn and practice a variety of essential research, reading, note-taking, organizing, and writing skills. They also become familiar with strategies for completing various types of writing assignments—including chapter reviews, book reviews, theological essays, discussion-forum posts, theological reflection papers, biblical exegesis, and theological research papers. The class is conducted as a writing workshop, starting with a brief mini-lesson and discussion of writing strategies, followed by an in-depth writing session in which students apply/practice the strategies in brief writing exercises, and, finally, a time for sharing and feedback.

The following is a schedule of course meetings and topics. All readings and resources are detailed on the Moodle course site.

Week 1 (September 13) – Overview of Theological Writing

How theological writing differs from other writing; three basic types of papers; characteristics of academic writing in the US, understanding an assignment and planning your response

Week 2 (September 20) – Theological Research

Nature of theological research; contextual theological research; evaluating research sources

Week 3 (September 27) – Reading and Note-taking Strategies

Strategic reading for academic study; effective note-taking strategies

Week 4 (October 4) – Structure of Academic Writing

Using triads for clarity; three-part structure of a paper/essay; structuring your writing for clarity

Week 5 (October 11) – Writing Strong Paragraphs

Focus of paragraphs; using topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences well

Week 6 (October 18) – Strategies for Organization and Clarity

Organizing principles for paragraphs; using transitions within/between paragraphs and between sections

Week 7 (October 25) – Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting

Presenting an argument as part of a larger conversation; responding/entering into dialogue; using summaries, paraphrases, and quotations effectively

Week 8 (November 1) – Developing a Thesis or Argument

Steps for developing a thesis/argument; qualities of a strong thesis statement; strategies for discovering your thesis; varieties of thesis statements

Week 9 (November 8) – Engaging Your Sources

Ways to respond to sources; process for engaging sources; distinguishing your voice from others' voices

Week 10 (November 15) – Theological Reflection

Understanding theological reflection; sources for theological reflection

NO CLASS (November 22) – Thanksgiving Break

Week 11 (November 29) – Biblical Exegesis

Defining hermeneutics, exegesis, biblical criticism; methods of biblical criticism; process for exegesis

Week 12 (December 6) – From Outline to First Draft

Creating a basic outline; adding details/supporting evidence to the outline; turning an outline into prose

Week 13 (December 13) – Peer Review and Evaluation

Using criteria for evaluation (content, organization, engagement, presentation, clarity)

Course Requirements

This is a pass/fail course, and students must complete these requirements to receive a passing grade:

- 1) *Complete weekly reading assignments.* Each week, students will complete a reading that previews the writing topic explored that week. In addition, there will be a brief *content* reading students will review in preparation for the in-class writing activity.
- 2) *Complete and submit all in-class activities.* In-class writing assignments are not graded but must be submitted to receive credit for the course. Assignments are turned in at the end of each class; students who need more time may submit the assignment before the next scheduled class.
- 3) *Submit one completed paper to the instructor.* Students must submit one completed paper to receive critical evaluation and feedback from the instructor. The paper may be submitted at any time before the end of the semester.

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the [Academic Handbook 2020-21](#). The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of coursework:

Writing

Academic integrity and plagiarism. All Garrett students are required to complete the [Plagiarism Tutorial](#) before the end of their first semester. Professors are required to respond to suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school. (For more information, see page 12 of the [Academic Handbook 2020-21](#).)

- *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 through the [Turabian Citation Quick Guide](#) or the [Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide](#).
- *Writing support.* The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers support for all students' theological research and writing. See [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 are reflected in the classroom and in course assignments; all 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. (For more information, see page 9 of the [Academic Handbook 2020-21](#).)
- *Attendance and lateness policies.* The seminary expects that students will attend all classes. Students who miss more than 20 percent of the class sessions should not expect to pass the class. (For more information, see page 20 of the [Academic Handbook 2020-21](#).)
- *Electronic devices.* Laptops are required for all classes to allow students to complete the in-class writing assignments. Cell phones should be silenced during the class session.

Academic Accommodations

Accommodations. Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar. (For more information, see page 12 of the [Academic Handbook 2020-21](#).)

- *Extensions.* For master's-level students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (For more information, see page 20 of the [Academic Handbook 2020-21](#).)