

# ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## THED 646 Theological Studies Seminar

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### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

As the capstone academic experience for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies, this course is designed to guide and assist the student in preparing a major seminar paper. The required research, interpretation, and writing provide the opportunity for demonstration of competencies within chosen concentrations of study.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the successful completion of this course, each student should be able to:

1. sharpen critical and analytical skills for refining a topic and completing a major project;
2. engage independently in research and writing in their area of theological studies;
3. reflect critically on the available scholarship in a particular area of study, assessing strengths and weaknesses, and synthesizing appropriate implications for contemporary leadership;
4. participate constructively in critical analysis of peer research and writing;
5. demonstrate competency to complete an approved masters thesis in their area of study;
6. serve the church more effectively through the contribution of a substantial piece of theological research and written reflection with potential for ongoing application.

#### **TEXTBOOK**

##### *Required reference:*

Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Revised John Grossman and Alice Bennett. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996. (All papers are to follow the documentation method described in chapters 8 and 9, employing footnotes).

##### *Recommended reading:*

Vyhmeister, Nancy J. Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attendance and participation in all class sessions is required of each student. In that the number of class sessions is limited, the student should not be absent from any meetings of the class.
2. The consistent meeting of established due dates in the preparation and presentation of the paper is expected of each student. Those dates are included in the outline below.
3. Each student will prepare and successfully complete a seminar paper in a chosen area of study based on the examination and interpretation of primary and secondary sources. The paper must be 30-35 double-spaced pages in length, exclusive of bibliography and appendices. The due date for the paper is included in the outline below.
4. Each student will provide a copy of the paper, both as it is being written (about one-fourth of the total paper each week, and in its complete form on the final week. The provision of copies of the paper for every student will allow for the entire class to profit from working through each other's work. The expense of copying will be borne by the student.
5. Each student will participate in the evaluation of the drafts of the papers of his/her peers as a literary critic (to consider the conformity to the Turabian manual, grammatical and compositional concerns, etc.) and as a content critic (to consider the presentation of the material, the logic of the arguments, the usage of resource material, the cogency of presentation, etc.).

## **COURSE METHODOLOGY**

There will be a limited number of lectures and dialogue relative to the research and writing of seminar papers. The student will do individual research and writing of their papers, and there will be classroom critique and review of papers. The professor will be available by appointment for private consultations with the students during the process.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Pre-Session: Topic Selection**

- Prior to coming to class, students should select a topic for their paper. (The topic must be approved by the professor prior to submitting the proposal at the first class.) Students should take care to select a topic for which they are passionate about learning, and that can contribute to their personal life and ministry context. They should ensure that enough resources will be available to complete the paper adequately.
- Once the topic has been selected, students should prepare a proposal for the paper.
- Begin developing a working bibliography

### **Week 1: Proposal (4-5 pages)**

- The research proposal is the formal statement of what the research project is intended to accomplish, prove, defend, etc. It analyzes the intended project in terms of methodological approach, required and available resource, tentative outline of the project, and intended results. It is expected that the proposal will be 4-5 pages in length, exclusive of the bibliography.

*Proposal should include:*

1. **Title** – a concise statement of 15 words or less, describing the paper
2. **Thesis** – a concise statement of the purpose of the paper (what is being asserted, proven, disproved, etc.)
3. **Rationale for study** – Why bother studying this topic? What problem needs to be addressed, or what areas can be enhanced through devoting research to this area? A concise explanation of the topic in terms of its relevance, importance, value, difficulty, etc. How will this study serve the student’s ministry or the Church at large?
4. **Limitations on the study** – due to time and space limitations, what areas will not be covered? Make a clear statement of what issues will and will not be covered. (Will the focus of the project inherently leave out areas that should, under different circumstances, be covered?)
5. **Methodological approach of the project** - will this be purely research and analysis? Will application be included?
6. **Tentative outline of the project** - It is important that at the beginning you have some idea of the areas which will be covered in the project. Your outline will flesh out the outline included in this syllabus, normally with 4 sections and appendixes.
7. **Timeline** - a schedule of proposed time commitment to the completion of the project (again, you will follow the timetable delineated in the course outline.)
8. **Preliminary bibliography** - survey the library and other avenues of resources to make sure that you will have enough material to accomplish your goals. Don’t forget the other libraries in town to which you have access. Begin a listing of the materials you have found which will be useful in the project. This bibliography may grow, or shrink, in the process of your work, but it gives you a starting point.

**Week 2: Section 1--Introduction and Statement of the Problem (3-4 pages)**

- Introduction and description of problem/topic being addressed
- Data to prove problem/substantiate need for this study
- Definition of any key terms
- In light of problem, state the purpose of the project

**Week 3: Section 2--Biblical-Theological Foundations (10-12 pgs)**

- What does the Bible have to say about the subject?
- Provide a summary of the biblical teaching pertinent to your topic
- Demonstrate your ability to correctly identify and handle the key biblical passages or themes relevant to your topic
- Demonstrate that your project is firmly grounded in biblical principles

**Week 4: Section 3--Research of General Literature (10-12 pgs)**

- What does the general literature have to say about the subject?
- Provide a summary/synthesis of the current resources pertinent to your topic
  - Demonstrate that you know how to gather appropriate resources, sift through the material, and glean helpful information relevant to your topic.
- Demonstrate that your project is firmly grounded in the latest research

**Week 5: Section 4--Summary Evaluation (Ramifications of this Study) (5-7 pages)**

- Implications of the research for the student's ministry context, or the Church/Christian leaders generally
- Concluding comments/summary of principles, applications
- Recommendations for further study

**Appendices**

- Pertinent supporting data or supplementary material

**Bibliography****COURSE GRADING**

The grade for the course will be the grade assigned for the seminar paper. PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING: (1) Failure to meet the due dates for submission of assigned work in the course will reduce the grade for the course by one movement within a letter grade for each calendar day late. (2) Failure to submit the final draft of the seminar paper on the due date will reduce the grade for the course by one letter grade.

The grade of I (Incomplete) will be granted only for extenuating circumstance upon the written request of the student. Except in the case of severe extenuating circumstances the granting of the grade of I will mean that the course grade, assigned when the work is completed, will be reduced by one letter.

**SPECIFIC DATA**

Syllabus prepared by Cheryl A. Taylor, November 2005.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## AGTS Degree Completion Program

### Sample Project Outline

*Approximate # pages*

#### Proposal

(4-5 pages) Due Wk 1

- Overarching structure of project (most will follow the outline below)
  - This basically becomes the outline for the project.
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#### Front Matter

- Title Page
- Blank Page
- Contents
- Abstract (Summary Proposal)

#### Section 1: Introduction and Statement of Problem

(2-3 pages) Due Wk 2

- Introduction and description of problem/topic being addressed
- Data to prove problem/substantiate need for this study
- Definition of any key terms
- In light of problem, state the purpose of the project

#### Section 2: Biblical-Theological Foundations

(10-12 pgs) Due Wk 3

- What does the Bible have to say about the subject?
- Provide a summary of the biblical teaching pertinent to your topic
  - Demonstrate your ability to correctly identify and handle the key biblical passages or themes relevant to your topic
  - Demonstrate that your project is firmly grounded in biblical principles

#### Section 3: Research of General Literature

(10-12 pgs)

Due Wk 4

- What does the general literature have to say about the subject?
- Provide a summary/synthesis of the current resources pertinent to your topic
  - Demonstrate that you know how to gather appropriate resources, sift through the material, and glean helpful information relevant to your topic.
- Demonstrate that your project is firmly grounded in the latest research

#### Section 4: Summary Evaluation (Ramifications of this Study)

(5-7 pages) Due Wk 5

- Implications of the research for the student's ministry context, or the Church/Christian leaders generally
- Concluding comments/summary of principles, applications
- Recommendations for further study

#### Appendices

- Pertinent supporting data or supplementary material