



**THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing/  
BSSE6300 Biblical Studies Research and Writing  
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Fall 2023  
Fridays 8:00-10:50 a.m. (8/25, 9/15, 10/13, 11/10)**

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### **Mission Statement**

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

### **Course Description**

This advanced seminar in research and writing is intended to help prepare students for postgraduate work and future publication in theologically related fields (e.g., theology, philosophy, church history, biblical studies). In this course, every student will prepare a final, summative writing assignment in his or her degree concentration.

Those with concentrations in theological or historical studies **may request approval from the division** to adapt this summative writing assignment into a formal thesis. Particular attention will be given to the different models of reasoning in research, the crafting and assessment of arguments, elements of form and style, and final editing. Only students within eighteen hours of graduation may take this course.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

The student, by the end of the course, should:

1. Show competence in the various stages of writing, reviewing, and final editing.
2. Demonstrate the ability to do advanced research in a theologically related field.
3. Use argumentation and resources effectively in theological writing.

### **Course Teaching Methodology**

The course will involve the following methodologies:

- Lectures
- Assigned Reading
- Group brainstorming sessions
- A summative writing project (the “thesis” project)

- Assessment of Other Students' Writing

### **Required Texts**

Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Yaghjian, Lucretia B. *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. 2d ed. New York: Continuum, 2015.

### **Recommended Texts**

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. *The Craft of Research*. 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Collins, Billie Jean, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko. *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd. Ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014.

Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesis*. Translated by Caterina Mongiat Farina and Geoff Farina. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015.

Kibbe, Michael. *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.

Strunk, William, Jr. and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 1999.

Sword, Helen. *The Writer's Diet: A Guide to Fit Prose*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Sword, Helen. *Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Ninth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **0. Old Research Paper Submission (0%)—Due the First Day of Class!**

At the beginning of class, all students are required to submit a graded research paper from a recent class in the division of their major. The professor will assess these papers and consult with the student about strengths, weakness, and areas needing improvement. These papers will also be used as points of comparison in the **assessment of the summative writing assignments** and the **course as a whole**.

## **1. Participation (25%)**

Students are required to attend all four meetings (either electronically or in person) and participate in class discussion. In addition, there will be a number of items that will count as participation grades.

### **1.1 Reading Reports**

Every student is required to read *Stylish Academic Writing* in its entirety and selections from *Writing Theology Well*. Students will highlight and make annotations in the books, then compile a **list of important issues** extracted from each selection of reading.

There are **no requirements** as to word count or page count. Students must demonstrate evidence of interaction with the work that pays particular attention to (1) things you may not be aware of in writing and research or (2) areas that you know are weak spots in your own writing.

### **1.2. Dissertation Assessments**

Every student is required to assess **two quality** dissertations and/or theses in classically theologically related fields (e.g., theology, biblical studies, philosophy of religion, etc.). At least one of these dissertations must have been written at another institution.

These assessments **do not require close readings of the dissertations or theses**. Rather, students are expected to look over these documents, read specific sections, and answer the following questions about them.

- (1) What is the thesis, hypothesis, or guiding research question of the project?
- (2) Is the approach of the author *deductive* or *inductive*?
- (3) What are the stated assumptions of the author? Qualifications?
- (4) Assess the *types* of resources used—articles, books, essays, etc. Roughly describe the ratio of primary sources to secondary sources, English sources to second language sources, etc.
- (5) Describe the *structure* of the dissertation itself. What is the main purpose of the author in each individual chapter?
- (6) Assess the *critical analysis* and *conclusions* sections in the project. What *types of critique* are utilized?

## **4. General Topic (5%)**

Students, in conversation with the course and instructors and another faculty member in the division of their major, must choose a general topic for their summative writing project.

## **5. Thesis / Research Questions / Bibliography (5%)**

Dependent on the model of research taken up—deductive or inductive—students are required to write a hypothesis (deductive) or thesis (inductive) and the structure of the argument (deductive)

or research questions (inductive). These must be approved by the course instructor and the professor(s) engaging with the student.

#### **6. Bibliography (5%)**

Students will submit a preliminary bibliography of sources that will be used. This preliminary bibliography will be evaluated on the quality of its resources. Bibliography-padding is discouraged. The student should only list sources that he or she believes that they will be able to use and engage with within the writing process.

#### **7. Outline (5%)**

Students should provide an outline of their summative writing paper structure, including chapter, section headings, and specific arguments/guiding research questions. This outline will be reviewed by the professor before the summative writing project can commence.

#### **8. Summative Writing Assignment, First Draft (40%)**

Students are required to complete a summative writing assignment that serves as a capstone for many theologically related degree plans. The summative writing assessment must be between 10,000-20,000 words in length. It should integrate all of the components of the previous stages of writing and carefully weigh each element's place in the overall project.

#### **9. Presentation of Summative Writing Assignment (5%)**

Students are required to submit digital copies of their writing assignment to every student in the class and make an abbreviated presentation of the paper in the final class meeting. These presentations should be 15–20 minutes in length total.

#### **10. Paper Responses (5%)**

Every student is required to *read* and compile an *errata* document for two (2) student papers.

#### **11. Summative Writing Assignment, Revised Copy (10%)**

After turning in the initial draft, every student will hand in a *revised copy* of his or her summative writing project to the professors. This resubmission is necessary to complete the class and receive a final grade.

### **Course Evaluation**

This course is evaluated on two levels: the grading of the writing project (in an assessment based on the Seminary's QEP [Quality Enhancement Program]) and the course's student learning outcomes approved by the Division of Theological and Historical Studies. Both assessment rubrics are attached to this syllabus.

Grades will be determined on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale—an A for 93-100, B for 85-92, C for 77-84, D for 70-76, and F for 69 or below.

• Old Research Paper	0%
• Course Participation	25%
○ Reading Reports	
○ Dissertation Assessments	
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• General Topic	5%
• Thesis / Research Questions	5%
• Bibliography	5%
• Outline	10%
• Summative Writing Assignment Draft #1	40%
• Presentation of SWA	5%
• Paper Responses	5%
• Summative Writing Assignment Revised	10%
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<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Conversion to Thesis**

Academic M.A. students in theology may request approval with their division chair to adapt this summative writing assignment into a formal thesis. If approved, the writer of the summative writing assignment will be assigned a faculty supervisor and an additional faculty reader who will oversee the conversion of the summative writing assignment into a thesis. In order for the thesis submitted to the library and ProQuest/UMI, it must be completed and approved no later than 60 days after graduation. *Any academic M.A. student choosing to convert their writing assignment into a thesis will be assessed standard fees for binding and database submission, as well as incurring the costs of paper and printing.*

### **Class Policies**

#### **1. Attendance and Class Participation**

As noted above, attendance and class participation are necessary for meeting the requirements of this class. Students are expected to be attentive and prepared for each class session. Students who are engaged in private conversations or doing work for other classes may be asked to leave the class; repeat violations may result in removal from the course. Rude or disruptive behavior is also not permitted.

#### **2. Laptop Guidelines**

Laptops are permitted in class as long as they are used for taking notes or accessing Canvas materials related to this particular course. Gaming, e-mail, social networking, and web browsing of any kind are strictly prohibited. Failure to heed this policy *will* result in dismissal from the class session; repeat violations may result in removal from the course.

### **3. Late Work**

Because of the nature of this class, no late work is permitted without explicit approval of the professors. If you cannot meet a deadline or anticipate being unable to do so, notify the professors. No graduating senior will be permitted to graduate unless his or her summative written assignment is handed in a timely manner.

### **4. Plagiarism**

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism. Remember the words of the proverb: *“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out”* (Prov. 10:19).

#### **Technical Assistance**

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. [Selfserve@nobts.edu](mailto:Selfserve@nobts.edu) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the [Selfserve.nobts.edu](http://Selfserve.nobts.edu) site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. [canvas@nobts.edu](mailto:canvas@nobts.edu) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System.
3. [ITCSupport@nobts.edu](mailto:ITCSupport@nobts.edu) - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. [www.NOBTS.edu/itc/](http://www.NOBTS.edu/itc/) - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

#### **Help for Writing Papers at “The Write Stuff”**

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

#### **Plagiarism on Written Assignments**

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing  
Lectures, Readings, and Assignments Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topics / Discussion Topics</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
<b>8/25</b>	<b>Introduction</b>  <b>Lecture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of Argumentation</li> <li>• Thesis/Hypothesis</li> <li>• Outline Preparation</li> </ul> <b>Topic Discussion / Brainstorming Session</b>  <i>Class Meeting 8/25</i>	Read Syllabus Read Yaghjian, chs. 2–3 <b>Submit Old Research Paper (0%)</b>
9/14	You are to be working on these assignments and readings in the weeks between the class meeting. We will be discussing your tentative topic and thesis statement on the 9/16 meeting.	Read Yaghjian, ch. 4–12 <b>Dissertation Assessments Due</b> <b>General Topic Due</b> <b>Tentative Thesis Statement Due</b>
9/15	<b>Discussion: Theses/Outlines</b>  <b>Lecture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline Preparation</li> <li>• Voice</li> <li>• Writing Style</li> </ul> <i>Class Meeting 9/15</i>	Read Sword, chs. 1–7
10/12		Read Sword, chs. 8–14 <b>Outline Due</b>
<b>10/13</b>	<b>Lecture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editing</li> <li>• Microsoft Office</li> <li>• Turabian</li> </ul> <i>Class Meeting 10/13</i>	

THSE6300 Theological Research and Writing  
Lectures, Readings, and Assignments Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topics / Discussion Topics</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
11/9		<b>Preliminary Drafts Due</b>
<b>11/10</b>	<b>Presentations</b>  <b>Final Editing / Discussion of Errata</b>  <i>On-campus meeting 11/10</i>	<b>Paper Responses Due</b>  <b>Presentations of Papers</b>
12/1		<b>Final corrected copies due</b>



## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING

The student, by the end of the course, should:

1. Show competence in the various stages of writing, reviewing, and final editing.
2. Demonstrate the ability to do advanced research in a theologically related field.
3. Use argumentation and resources effectively in theological writing.

DOMAIN	LEVEL	INADEQUATE (0 PTS)	BASIC (1 PT)	COMPETENT (2 PTS)	GOOD (3 PTS)	EXCELLENT (4PTS)
WRITING	Ability to write, review, and edit.					
RESEARCH	Ability to do advanced research in theologically related field.					
ARGUMENTATION	Able to make quality arguments.					

### WRITING ASSIGNMENT GRADING RUBRIC (Based on NOBTS Quality Enhancement Program)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>3 – Exceeds Expectations (A papers)</b>	<b>2 – Meets Expectations (B Papers)</b>	<b>1 – Needs Improvement (C Papers)</b>	<b>0 – Inadequate (D-F Papers)</b>
<b>Student composes well developed and logical assignments.</b>	-Logically organized  -Effective and smooth transitions	-Clear organizational structure with some digression  -Basic transitions	-Some level of organization with frequent digressions  -Ineffective transitions	-No apparent organization to the paper  -No or poor transitions
<b>Student composes grammatically correct sentences.</b>	-No grammatical errors	-Few grammatical errors	-Many grammatical errors	-Excessive grammatical errors
<b>Student uses an effective writing style.</b>	-Consistently varied sentence structure  -Communicates concisely  -Proper use of vocabulary	-Frequently varies sentence structure  -Occasional wordiness  -Occasional use of colloquialisms and clichés	-Seldom varies sentence structure  -Frequently wordy  -Frequent use of colloquialisms and clichés	-Does not vary sentence structure  -Excessive wordiness  -Excessive use of colloquialisms and clichés
<b>Student incorporates appropriate supporting material.</b>	-Skillful use of credible, relevant sources	-Consistent use of credible, relevant sources	-Attempts to use credible and/or relevant sources	-Fails to use credible, relevant sources
<b>Student follows prescribed style guides.</b>	-Detailed attention to the prescribed style guide	-Consistent use of the prescribed style guide	-Attempts to use the prescribed style guide	-Failure to use the prescribed style guide

## ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory C. Colcomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.\*
- Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. 2d ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007.
- Cullen, Jim. *Essaying the Past: How to Read, Write, and Think about History*. 2d ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Cutts, Martin. *Oxford Guide to Plain English*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
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- Girden, Ellen R. *Evaluating Research Articles from Start to Finish*. 2d ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001.
- Harris, Robert A. *Using Sources Effectively: Strengthening Your Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism*. 2d ed. Los Angeles: Pyczak Publishing, 2006.
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- Kvale, Steinar. *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.
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- Mauch, James E., and Jack W. Birch. *Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation*. 5th ed. New York: M. Dekker, 2003.
- Mogck, Brian David. *Writing to Reason: A Companion for Philosophy Students and Instructors*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.

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\*This book is a required text in the PhD Research and Writing Class. It would be a valuable addition to your collection.

- Plummer, K. *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983.
- Preece, Roy. *Starting Research: An Introduction to Academic Research and Dissertation Writing*. New York: Pinter Publishers, 1994.
- Seech, Zachary P. *Writing Philosophy Papers*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning, 2008.
- Seely, John. *Oxford A-Z of Grammar and Punctuation*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
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- Storey, William Kelleher. *Writing History: A Guide for Students*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
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- Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Watson, Richard A. *Writing Philosophy: A Guide to Professional Writing and Publishing*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.
- Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009.