

The Art and Technique of Effective Academic Writing

**Pacific School of Religion (PSR)
August 9-13, 2010, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

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Course Description:

This one-week writing course is designed to orient students to the primary types of academic writing they will be asked to do during their years at PSR and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), including reflection papers, research papers, critical essays and exegetical papers. The course is intended to help students learn or “dust off” the writing skills they will need to succeed academically while in seminary. Through classroom lectures and discussions, extensive in-class exercises, and brief homework assignments, participants will learn the art and technique of composing critical writing in a U.S. academic setting. Among other topics, this course will cover: developing a topic; identifying reliable resources; reading and note-taking; constructing a thesis; writing and revising the outline, body, introduction and conclusion of a paper; formatting footnotes and bibliography; and preparing an audience-oriented summary of a paper. Participants will also learn how to identify and use the resources of the GTU library. Finally, the course will introduce PSR’s Plagiarism Policy and will offer students strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

Learning Outcomes:

Students completing this course will, to varying degrees, be able to:

- Compare and contrast critical thinking, reading and writing with non-critical thinking, reading and writing;
- Articulate and outline the multiple steps involved in composing various types of academic writing in U.S. higher-education contexts;
- Identify theses in scholarly articles;
- Write a “working thesis”;
- Identify and discuss issues of context and social location in their own critical writing as well as in that of other writers;
- Access and utilize effectively the resources of the GTU library.

Note:

This course is being offered for continuing education units (CEUs) or for academic credit. The CEU option is available to all students and is the preferred option for those unfamiliar with thesis-driven writing and/or western academic writing conventions. Students taking the course for CEUs will have only brief homework assignments during the week of the course and no assignment to submit after the course is over.

Students wishing to take the course for academic credit may do so only with instructor approval. Prior to the first day of class, these students will need to schedule an interview with the instructor, during which time they will discuss the details of their academic writing background. The credit option is intended for those students who have extensive academic writing experience but 1) have been away from academic writing for some time and would like to brush up on their critical-writing skills; and/or 2) wish to have an overview of other types of

academic writing that they have not yet practiced. Students taking the course for academic credit will have more extensive homework assignments during the week and will submit an 8- to 10-page critical-writing paper two weeks after the end of the course.

The differing course requirements for the CEU and credit options are specified further in the next section.

Requirements:

To complete the course successfully, all students are expected to attend all class sessions in their entirety.

Students taking the course for CEUs are expected to complete all in-class work as well as brief reading and written homework assignments.

In addition to fulfilling the above requirements, students taking the course for academic credit are also expected to complete nightly homework assignments designed to help them craft incrementally their final paper. They are expected to submit an 8- to 10-page final paper two weeks after the end of the course. For students doing the credit option, the final paper will count 60% of their final grade; daily homework assignments will count 30%; and class participation will count 10%.

Required Textbook:

All students should bring a copy of the following book to class every day, including the first day:

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Class Schedule and Topics, in Brief:

Monday, August 9, 2010

- Introduction to the course and to one another
- Critical vs. non-critical thinking, reading and writing
- Issues of social location and contextuality vis-à-vis critical thinking, reading and writing
- Different types of U.S. academic writing and their defining characteristics

Tuesday, August 10, 2010

- Finding and using resources
- Touring the GTU library
- Choosing a topic
- Asking questions about a topic
- Understanding what a thesis is
- Identifying theses in others' work, Part I

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

- Identifying theses in others' work, Part II
- Moving from topic to working thesis to thesis
- Taking notes: summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting
- Avoiding plagiarism: PSR's plagiarism policy
- Incorporating quotations within the flow of your writing

Thursday, August 12, 2010

- Creating an outline
- Identifying guiding keywords
- Writing a first draft
- Formatting footnotes and bibliography, Part I
- Works cited and works consulted bibliographies

Friday, August 13, 2010

- Formatting footnotes and bibliography, Part II
- Revising your draft
- Preparing an audience-oriented summary of your paper
- Facing the “real” world of academic writing: Strategies for moving from an assignment sheet to a work in progress