



Birmingham Theological Seminary
2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 776-5650

Research & Design

Semester: Fall 2025

Day & Time: Monday 5:30-8:30pm CST

Professor: Rev. Thad James, Jr. PhD

Email: thad@bts.education

Course: DM4000

Room: Videoconference

Credits: 3

Phone: 205-746-7356

Course Note:

This class will meet weekly the student is expected to set aside a minimum of 3-4 hours each week in preparation for the 3-hour class time. That figure includes readings, writing assignments, and work on your final paper. Note that each lesson may not require the same amount of time designated for coursework. Read the syllabus thoroughly.

Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance

This course consists of online communication and discussions using videoconferencing (v/c) as the means of delivery for lectures and student interaction. Each adult learner is required to participate in the v/c discussions in substantive demonstrations of understanding. To contribute in substantive ways will require that you read and reference the textbooks and materials for this class in each discussion, being specific and detailed. Interact and challenge one another and the readings in the discussions, critical thinking is an integral part of the research process, think through carefully. The intent for this class is to be practical, to be applicable and theologically academic as the research process is established.

"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel..." Proverbs 1:5 NASB

All work must be submitted on the prescribed due dates. Carefully **proofread** your work before submitting, all submissions must be error free.

I am teaching at Africa Reformation Theological Seminary in Mutungo, Uganda for classes on 10/20, 10/27, and 11/3, no class on 10/20 it is Fall Break. Classes will still either substitute professor or I will teach from Uganda. I will be 8 hours ahead.

Course Description:

This course will prepare the adult learner to do the necessary research for his/her dissertation or project. Adult learners will become acquainted with the latest in research methods and research tools. In addition, we will discuss a theological approach to research, writing, and producing resources for the benefit of the church and parachurch organizations.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate and analyze theological research articles by identifying their main arguments, methodological approaches, and theological implications to the practical applications of Scripture.
2. To demonstrate intellectual, biblical/theological, and spiritual growth, showing their ability to apply Reformed interpretive methods to selected research texts/materials.
3. Challenge adult learners to formulate, organize and understand methods of research, design, and communication, to provide evidence through the successful completion of submissions with current issues or debates in the field.
4. Provide adult learners with the knowledge to objectively use resources such as Logos, the Internet, library, journals, and other sources to quantify/qualify valid academic and theological sources.
5. To identify, appraise, and establish a fuller knowledge of what is true, viable, reliable, and dependable based on the usage of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.
6. To investigate, critique, challenge, summarize, and address ethical/moral considerations to theological studies on issues of diverse perspectives with integrity and respect.

Required Texts:

- There are approximately 1500 pages of reading from the required texts plus pdfs. and internet articles to read, research and critique.
- Pdf and internet article links are within the weekly assignments.
- Anderson, James *What's Your Worldview? An Interactive Approach to Life's Big Questions* (Wheaton, Illinois Crossway), 2014
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams *The Craft of Research 4th ed.* (Chicago University of Chicago Press), 2016 (**will be used throughout DMin program**)
- Logos Bible Software
- Pazmino, Robert W. *Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Research* (Eugene, OR. Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2009
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations 9th ed.* (University of Chicago Press), 2018 (**will be used throughout DMin program**)
- Vyhmeister, Nancy J. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology. 4th ed.* (Grand Rapids Zondervan), 2020 (**will be used throughout DMin program**)
- Sensing, Tim *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses 2nd Edition* (Eugene, OR. Wipf & Stock Publishers), 2022
- Pratt, Richard *Pray With Your Eyes Open: Looking at God, Ourselves, and Our Prayers* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey P&R Publishing Reprint) 1987
- Merkle, Benjamin and Adrienne Cheek Miles *Christian Academic Writing* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic) 2024
- *Baucham, Voddie *The Ever-Loving Truth Can Faith Thrive in a Post-Christian Culture?* (B&H Publishing Group Nashville, Tennessee) 2004
- WPA Statement on Best Practices: Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism (included in syllabus)

Collateral or Recommended Texts

- Klink III, Edward, and Darian R. Lockett *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids Zondervan), 2012
- Virkler, Henry *A Christian's Guide to Critical Thinking* (Eugene, OR Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2005
- <https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/MBD> (Making Biblical Decisions)
- <https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BYT> (Building Your Theology)
- <https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BBT> (Building Biblical Theology)

Course Requirements and Assessments:

Submit a **400-word** essay, begin with identifying and explaining your current understanding of research. Tell us what you might select as the topic for your dissertation and why, also type your personal learning objectives for this course This is due **9/9** Email all assignments as word document attachments.

Final research paper is a personal/reflection critique, evaluation, and assessment. This is a quantitative summary paper in conjunction with your personal learning objectives, what you read/learned from the class, how did it/will it be of benefit to you today and tomorrow and be integrated within your heart and mind? What is the correlation between research & design and Biblical Theology? Be precise and comprehensive, the 10-12 pages should include your understanding, your philosophy, your personal beliefs, challenges, and awareness of the importance of research. What are the potential problems with research and theology, and what is your personal motivation to seek truth? You may use the required text; you should average a minimum of two citations per page, and a minimum of eight reference works other than your textbooks. The paper should contain the following constituent parts: title page, table of contents, introduction, thesis sentence, and your research question. It begins with an introduction and ends with a conclusion. Table of contents and bibliography do not count in page count. Please e-mail the project as a word document attachment.

Also, develop a literature review of five (5) scholarly books, three (3) viable, scholarly internet sources, and three (3) scholarly journal articles pertaining to your potential dissertation topic.

Dec. 19th

***Book Critique:** a **critique** is much more than a summary or a book report; it is an assessment of your understanding of the materials and your personal growth. **(2-3 pages)**

Follow the steps below to evaluate the books strengths and weaknesses:

- Begin your critique with **the bibliographic information (Title, author, publisher, place, and date of publication) of the book.**
- Write a summary of the **main** theme and any **major secondary themes** of the author. Provide enough detail to show that you have read and digested the material.
- Include your **analysis** of the arguments the authors set forth. Your analysis should be focused upon how faithful the authors have interpreted and applied the Scripture.
- **Evaluate** how the authors either succeeded or failed in considering all of Scripture (in other words, is it a systematic argument or simply a use of some isolated proof texts?) **citing instances** from the book to support your evaluation.
- **Explain** why you agree or disagree with their conclusion(s), using the Scriptures to

- support your views. Substantiation is required.
- Conclude with a paragraph that states what you have gained **personally** and **professionally** from reading this book.

Weekly assignments highlighted in yellow are to be written responses 2-pages with Turabian formatting and substantiated with research/footnotes. Due by midnight the day of class. These are graded as Pass, Pass- or Fail, late assignments are not accepted. Proofread work carefully no errors.

COURSE REQUIREMENT	GRADE WEIGHT	COMMENTS
Class readings and preparedness	25%	Class participation is a vital assessment of course objectives
Weekly assignments	25%	Email by 11:59pm on due date
*Book Critique	20%	Understanding of authorial intent
Final Paper	30%	Culmination of semesters objectives
Total	100%	

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards:

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian Chicago standards including the title page. All papers are to be #12 font Times New Roman and Double-Spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Turabian Style Guide for more information on turning in papers and assignments.

The BTS Turabian Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Writing Center webpage: [BTS Research and Writing Center](#)

In addition, the Writing Center runs 2-3 Writing Workshops every semester. They are very helpful and highly recommended. [BTS Research and Writing Center](#)

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

In addition to the BTS plagiarism policy, BTS is implementing a new Generative AI policy. Unless clearly directed by the instructor, the students should submit their own work, independent of artificial intelligence tools. Use of generative AI to write papers or to write significant portions of assignments is considered an ethical violation of our Student Code of Conduct and to be a violation of general academic integrity, which could result in a zero on the assignment and/or a lowered letter grade for the course by the professor. If determined to be an egregious violation, it could lead to further sanctions administered through the Academic Committee, including expulsion from BTS.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DAY	DATE	AGENDA / TOPIC
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Fri. 9/5 Introduction to Course

Readings and Materials

- Read Part I Section 5 *Turabian*
- Chap. 1-2 *Doing Theological Research*
- Chap. 11 *Quality Research*
- Chap Introduction *Qualitative Research*
- Part I *What's Your Worldview*
- Chap. 1-2 *Academic Writing*
- Read Acts 17:10-11 Romans 12:1-2.

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

Complete the above readings prior to the first class.

- Tell us what you might select as the topic for your dissertation and why, also type your personal learning objectives for this course (**400 words due 9/9**).
- Define critical thinking? What is the significance of critical thinking, why is it important?
- What is the connection of critical thinking to theological research?
- Why epistemology and logic in theological research?
- What does critical thinking have to do with the above two passages of Scripture? What are Paul and Luke telling believers?

Mon. 9/15 What is Research?

Readings and Materials

- Chap 1 *Quality Research*
- Part 1:1-2 *Turabian*
- Chap Prologue & 1, 3 *Craft of Research*
- Chap. 3 *Doing Research*
- Chap 1 & 3 *Qualitative Research*
- Chap. 3-4 *Academic Writing*
- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/research_overview/index.html
- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/conducting_primary_research/index.html

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- What is research/what is it not? Why do research?
- Research has been described as a different way of thinking than normal cognitive processes. Do you agree or disagree with this statement and why?
- What is a Worldview and how does a person's Worldview affect their research?
- Compare and contrast the different authors regarding their respective definitions of research.
- What do you understand differently about research than previously?
- Research John 1:1. Why did John use the word Logos (Word), who was the audience and what did it mean to them?
- Investigate the difficulties of fallacies in theological research.

Mon. 9/22 Communication & Evaluating Research Resources

Readings and Materials

- Chap 2, 14 *Quality Research*
- Part 1:3-4 *Turabian*
- Chap 2 *Craft of Research*
- Chap 4 *Doing Research*
- Chap 5 *Academic Writing*
- Read https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html
- Read https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_citation_machines_responsibly.html
- Read [Half of Pastors Support Trump, but Many Are Hesitant to Share Preference - Lifeway Research](#)

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- The internet presents characteristically different methods of communication. Most of the communication now occurs electronically as opposed to face-to-face communication.
- Can we communicate as effectively via the internet (why or why not), and what does one need to know about the internet to do research?
- What makes online communication unique or is it the same as sending a letter?
- What are the pitfalls and advantages in using the internet for research? How does one evaluate resources as to reliability, validity, and viability?
- Is there a standard for acceptable internet resources? If so, what is it?
- Is it more difficult to evaluate the internet as opposed to traditional resources, if yes why, if not why?
- What happens with communication today, texting, Facebook, blogging, e-mails, and emoji's?
- Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-8 what is Paul expressing about communication?
- Searching in Logos will be reviewed.
- What is the justification for exegesis in theological research?

Mon. 9/29 Types of Research

Readings and Materials

- Chap 6, 10 *Quality Research*
- Chap 4, 5 *Craft of Research*
- Chap 4 *Qualitative Research*
- Chap 1 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- Chap 6 *Academic Writing*
- Appendix D *Doing Research*

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- Research begins with the problem; how do we decide the problem for our research?
- When you have a problem, what do you do about it?
- Compare and contrast the contributions of the different textbooks to this subject.
- How does one determine if the problem is real or perceived?
- What is the motivation behind the problem?
- What is your research question?
- What is the importance and relationship of objectivity and presuppositions to the problem?
- Referring to previous weeks' readings, what part does the evaluation of resources play?
- Read/exegete Mark 8:27-29, what is the problem and why? Is the location significant, why?
- What problems does sin propose in theological research?

Mon. 10/6 Citations & Plagiarism

Readings and Materials

- Part 2:15; 3:25 *Turabian*
- Pgs. 79, 136-138, 216, 218 *Quality Research*
- Pgs.93, 203, 206-210, 271-274 *Craft of Research*
- Chap. 5-6 *Doing Research*
- Part 1- Chaps. 2-3 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- Chap 8 *Qualitative Research*
- Chap 7 *Academic Writing*
- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/avoiding_plagiarism/index.html
- <https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/conduct-review-board/academic-honesty-and-plagiarism/index.html>

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- Interact with the authors as to the importance/reasons for citations.
- Discuss how to prevent plagiarism and the possible/potential problems with the failure to cite sources properly.
- Read article *Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism* at the end of the syllabus.
- What knowledge did you gain from the readings?
- Construct the connection of the heart, and prayer, in sin and plagiarism.
Are there cultures where plagiarism is an acceptable practice, be specific?
- What are the ramifications of AI in theological research?

Mon. 10/13 A Theological Approach to Research

Readings and Materials

- Chap 7-9 *Craft of Research*
- Chap 7 *Qualitative Research*
- Chap 3 *Quality Research*
- Part II *What's Your Worldview*
- Part III *What's Your Worldview: Materialism*
- Part 1- Chaps. 4-5 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- Read <https://research.lifeway.com/2023/08/22/prosperity-gospel-beliefs-on-the-rise-among-churchgoers/>
- Read [State of Theology - Lifeway Research](#)

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- Why investigate, assess, formulate, and defend your theological research argument?
- 1 Peter 3:15-16 – Does this affect your theological approach to unbelievers/different beliefs?
- Differentiate between Biblical, Historical, Exegetical and Systematic theology, be specific.
- Assess and argue the pros and cons of each.
- Distinguish the theological distinctives of Arminianism, Universalism and Calvinism.
- Support your position from theological research – Thinking, Being, & Sin – Influence on people's beliefs and communion one to another.

Mon. 10/20 Fall Break – No Class

Mon. 10/27 Theological Research & Assessment

Readings and Materials

- Chap 7 *Qualitative Research*
- Chap 19 *Quality Research*
- Part III *What's Your Worldview: Atheism, Atheistic, and Christianity*
- Part 2- Chaps. 6-7 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- Read <https://www.prrri.org/research/the-politics-of-gender-pronouns-and-public-education/>
- Read [Pastors Encourage Racial Reconciliation, Churchgoers Want More Diversity in the Church - Lifeway Research](#)
- Read [Pastors Remain Opposed, Americans Grow More Open to Political Endorsements in Church - Lifeway Research](#)
- **Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)**
- Assess and evaluate the statistics, the theological conclusions and employ methods of prayer to the above articles. Are these concerns in your church?
- What should the role be of theological research and Biblical Theology in the above articles?
- What is the role of sin and pride; Being, Becoming, and Transformation?

Mon. 11/3 Theological Research & Assessment (pt.2)

Readings and Materials

- Chap 10-11 *Craft of Research*
- Part 2- Chaps. 8-9 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- Part III *What's Your Worldview: Deism, Finite Godism, Islam and Judaism*
- Read [The State of Theology](#)
- Read <https://research.lifeway.com/2022/11/01/churchgoers-increasingly-prefer-a-congregation-that-shares-their-politics/>
- Read <https://lifewayresearch.com/2020/09/03/will-people-leave-your-church-over-american-politics/>

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- Assess and evaluate the statistics, the theological conclusions and employ methods of guarding your heart in the above articles. Does sin's seduction enter the above articles?
- What are the arguments and points of view?
- Are the claims and warrants substantiated and reasoned logically and biblically?
- Are the samples and demographics of those surveyed representatively valid for accurate conclusions.

Mon. 11/10 Literature Review: Why? How?

Readings and Materials

- Chap 7 *Quality Research*
- Chap 6 *Craft of Research*
- Part II: 16-17 *Turabian*

- Part 3- Chaps. 10-11 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- <https://www.scribbr.com/chicago-style/annotated-bibliography/>
- <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/literature-review/>

Assignments (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- What is the role of the literature review?
- **What are some methods to use to search for literature related to your topic?**
- List three online databases, three Logos resources and three library resources that would be pertinent resources for your research. (Turabian format)
- Access them and cite five pertinent references and the specific location to obtain them.
- What would be your preparation steps prior to visiting a library or using other research tools to make the most efficient use of your time?
- Be prepared to discuss the believer's duty in prayer.

Mon 11/17 Personal Interviews

Readings and Materials

- Chap 7 *Doing Research*
- Part III *What's Your Worldview: Monism, Mysticism, Nihilism, Monotheism*
- Part 3- Chaps. 12-14 *Pray With Your Eyes Open*
- Chap. 8-9 *Academic Writing*
- **Assignment**
- Interview three people that have earned doctoral degrees.
- Ask the following:
 - (1) What were their greatest difficulties/challenges in the research process?
 - (2) What were the greatest opportunities and benefits from their research personally?
 - (3) What were the greatest opportunities and benefits from the research to their ministries or occupation?
- Did this exercise provide any assistance or encouragement for you?
- Do the rules of mortification enter the process? Consider the majesty of God, do we know Him?

Mon 11/24 Enjoy Thanksgiving No Class

Mon 12/1 Final Matters

Readings and Materials

- Part III *What's Your Worldview: Panentheism, Pantheism, Pelagianism, Platonism, Pluralism, Polytheism, Relativism, Skepticism, and Relativism*
- Chap 10-11, Appendices *Academic Writing*
- Read [8 Encouraging Trends in Global Christianity for 2024 - Lifeway Research](#)

Assignment (These are brief yet thorough responses)

- Class will consist of Peer discussions, course review, discussions of past assignments and research obstacles and opportunities.
- **What is the work of the Spirit in mortification, what is our responsibility?**
- What are you holding on to?
- Be prepared with questions and answers.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor beforehand. Students may miss up to three classes with impunity.

[NOTE: Standard BTS Attendance Policy is that students may not miss any more than three classes without a course penalty. Given the reality of distance-based students and video conference options, if students **clearly identify at the beginning of the semester that they will primarily be asynchronous students (depending on the digital recording of class because of a conflict with their schedule)**, then the student may attend without incurring a penalty for their “absences,” providing they are turning in all their work on time. Please see the BTS Faculty Handbook for more information on synchronous and asynchronous video conference students and policies and the commitments a faculty member agrees to when they teach a video conference or a live hybrid class]

Class Policies and Procedures:

- BTS highly recommends using handwritten note taking methods in class and keeping computer usage to a minimum.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.
- All assignments must be submitted by email by 11:59 (CDT/CST) on the due date.
- Late assignments will incur a -3-point deduction per weekday after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor.
- Missed tests/exams may only be made up with an excused absence, preferably in advance of class. Excused absence tests/exams must be made up before the final day of the semester.

Video Conference Policies and Procedures:

- Please utilize the BTS “Best VC (Video Conference) Practices” information for the course.
- Laptops/Desktops are the preferred method of attending a video conference course. Information will be shared on the screen, so phones will be less useful.
- In Video Conference, it is preferable for the student to keep their video on (when possible) so that students and faculty may engage with one another. Extended periods of dark screen will result in follow-up and potential removal from class.
- Other electronics should be used sparingly.

12/30/2019

Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices

Plagiarism has always concerned teachers and administrators, who want students' work to represent their own efforts and to reflect the outcomes of their learning. However, with the advent of the Internet and easy access to almost limitless written material on every conceivable topic, suspicion of student plagiarism has begun to affect teachers at all levels, at times diverting them from the work of developing students' writing, reading, and critical thinking abilities.

This statement responds to the growing educational concerns about plagiarism in four ways: by defining plagiarism; by suggesting some of the causes of plagiarism; by proposing a set of responsibilities (for students, teachers, and administrators) to address the problem of plagiarism; and by recommending a set of practices for teaching and learning that can significantly reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. The statement is intended to provide helpful suggestions and clarifications so that instructors, administrators, and students can work together more effectively in support of excellence in teaching and learning.

What Is Plagiarism?

In instructional settings, plagiarism is a multifaceted and ethically complex problem. However, if any definition of plagiarism is to be helpful to administrators, faculty, and students, it needs to be as simple and direct as possible within the context for which it is intended.

Definition: *In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.*

This definition applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers. Most current discussions of plagiarism fail to distinguish between:

1. submitting someone else's text as one's own or attempting to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source, and
2. carelessly or inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source.

Such discussions conflate *plagiarism* with the *misuse of sources*.

Ethical writers make every effort to acknowledge sources fully and appropriately in accordance with the contexts and genres of their writing. A student who attempts (even if clumsily) to identify and credit his or her source, but who misuses a specific citation format or incorrectly uses quotation marks or other forms of identifying material taken from other sources, has not plagiarized. Instead, such a student should be considered to have failed to cite and document sources appropriately.

What are the Causes of Plagiarism and the Failure to Use and Document Sources Appropriately?

Students who are fully aware that their actions constitute plagiarism—for example, copying published information into a paper without source attribution for the purpose of claiming the information as their own, or turning in material written by another student—are guilty of academic misconduct. Although no excuse will lessen the breach of ethical conduct that such

behavior represents, understanding why students plagiarize can help teachers to consider how to reduce the opportunities for plagiarism in their classrooms.

Students may fear failure or fear taking risks in their own work.

Students may have poor time-management skills, or they may plan poorly for the time and effort required for research-based writing, and believe they have no choice but to plagiarize. Students may view the course, the assignment, the conventions of academic documentation, or the consequences of cheating as unimportant.

Teachers may present students with assignments so generic or unparticularized that students may believe they are justified in looking for canned responses.

Instructors and institutions may fail to report cheating when it does occur or may not enforce appropriate penalties.

Students are not guilty of plagiarism when they try in good faith to acknowledge others' work but fail to do so accurately or fully. These failures are largely the result of failures in prior teaching and learning: students lack the knowledge of and ability to use the conventions of authorial attribution. The following conditions and practices may result in texts that falsely appear to represent plagiarism as we have defined it:

Students may not know how to integrate the ideas of others and document the sources of those ideas appropriately in their texts.

Students will make mistakes as they learn how to integrate others' words or ideas into their own work because error is a natural part of learning.

Students may not know how to take careful and fully documented notes during their research.

Academicians and scholars may define plagiarism differently or more stringently than have instructors or administrators in students' earlier education or in other writing situations.

College instructors may assume that students have already learned appropriate academic conventions of research and documentation.

College instructors may not support students as they attempt to learn how to research and document sources; instead, instructors may assign writing that requires research and expect its appropriate documentation yet fail to appreciate the difficulty of novice academic writers to execute these tasks successfully.

Students from other cultures may not be familiar with the conventions governing attribution and plagiarism in American colleges and universities.

In some settings, using other people's words or ideas as their own is an acceptable practice for writers of certain kinds of texts (for example, organizational documents), making the concepts of plagiarism and documentation less clear cut than academics often acknowledge and thereby confusing students who have not learned that the conventions of source attribution vary in different contexts.

What are our Shared Responsibilities?

When assignments are highly generic and not classroom-specific, when there is no instruction on plagiarism and appropriate source attribution, and when students are not led through the iterative processes of writing and revising, teachers often find themselves playing an adversarial role as "plagiarism police" instead of a coaching role as educators. Just as students must live up to their responsibility to behave ethically and honestly as learners, teachers must recognize that they can encourage or discourage plagiarism not just by policy and admonition, but also in the way they structure assignments and in the processes, they use to help students define and gain interest in topics developed for papers and projects.

Students should understand research assignments as opportunities for genuine and rigorous inquiry and learning. Such an understanding involves:

Assembling and analyzing a set of sources that they have themselves determined are relevant to the issues they are investigating.

Acknowledging clearly when and how they are drawing on the ideas or phrasings of others;

Learning the conventions for citing documents and acknowledging sources appropriate to the field they are studying.

Consulting their instructors when they are unsure about how to acknowledge the contributions of others to their thought and writing.

Faculty need to design contexts and assignments for learning that encourage students not simply to recycle information but to investigate and analyze its sources. This includes:

Building support for researched writing (such as the analysis of models, individual/group conferences, or peer review) into course designs; Stating in writing their policies and expectations for documenting sources and avoiding plagiarism; Teaching students the conventions for citing documents and acknowledging sources in their field, and allowing students to practice these skills; Avoiding the use of recycled or formulaic assignments that may invite stock or plagiarized responses; Engaging students in the process of writing, which produces materials such as notes, drafts, and revisions that are difficult to plagiarize; Discussing problems students may encounter in documenting and analyzing sources, and offering strategies for avoiding or solving those problems; Discussing papers suspected of plagiarism with the students who have turned them in, to determine if the papers are the result of a deliberate intent to deceive; Reporting possible cases of plagiarism to appropriate administrators or review boards.

Administrators need to foster a program- or campus-wide climate that values academic honesty. This involves:

Publicizing policies and expectations for conducting ethical research, as well as procedures for investigating possible cases of academic dishonesty and its penalties;

Providing support services (for example, writing centers or Web pages) for students who have questions about how to cite sources; Supporting faculty and student discussions of issues concerning academic honesty, research ethics, and plagiarism; Recognizing and improving upon working conditions, such as high teacher-student ratios, that reduce opportunities for more individualized instruction and increase the need to handle papers and assignments too quickly and mechanically; Providing faculty development opportunities for instructors to reflect on and, if appropriate, change the ways they work with writing in their courses.

Best Practices

College writing is *a process* of goal setting, writing, giving and using feedback, revising, and editing. Effective assignments construct specific writing situations and build in ample room for response and revision. There is no guarantee that, if adopted, the strategies listed below will eliminate plagiarism; but in supporting students throughout their research process, these strategies make plagiarism both difficult and unnecessary.

1. Explain Plagiarism and Develop Clear Policies

Talk about the underlying implications of plagiarism. Remind students that the goal of research is to engage, through writing, in a purposeful, scholarly discussion of issues that are sometimes passed over in daily life. Understanding, augmenting, engaging in dialogue with, and challenging the work of others are part of becoming an effective citizen in a complex society. Plagiarism does not simply devalue the institution and the degree it offers; it hurts the inquirer, who has avoided thinking independently and has lost the opportunity to participate in broader social conversations.

Include in your syllabus a policy for using sources and discuss it in your course. Define a policy that clearly explains the consequences of both plagiarism (such as turning in a paper known to be written by someone else) and the misuse or inaccurate citation of sources.

If your university does not already have one, establish an honor code to which all students subscribe; a judicial board to hear plagiarism cases; or a departmental ombudsperson to hear cases brought between students and instructors.

2. Improve the Design and Sequence of Assignments

Design assignments that require students to explore a subject in depth. Research questions and assignment topics should be based on principles of inquiry and on the genuine need to discover something about the topic and should present that topic to an audience in the form of an exploration or an argument.

Start building possible topics early. Good writing reflects a thorough understanding of the topic being addressed or researched. Giving students time to explore their topics slowly and helping them to narrow their focus from broad ideas to specific research questions will personalize their research and provide evidence of their ongoing investigations.

Consider establishing a course theme and then allow students to define specific questions about that theme so that they become engaged in learning new ideas and begin to own their research. A course theme (like “literacy” or “popular culture”) allows students and instructor to develop expertise and to support each other as they read, write, and engage in their research. Grounding the theme in a local context (such as the campus, or the neighborhood or city where the campus is located) can provide greater relevance to students’ lives. Once students have defined a topic within the course theme, ask them to reflect frequently on their choice of topic: about what they already know about the topic when they begin their research; about what new ideas they are learning along the way; and about what new subjects for research they are discovering.

Develop schedules for students that both allow them time to explore and support them as they work toward defined topics. As researchers learn more about their subjects, they typically discover new, unforeseen questions and interests to explore. However, student researchers do not have unlimited time for their work—at some point, they must choose a focus for their papers. Conferences with students (sometimes held in the library or computer resource center) are invaluable for enabling them to refine their focus and begin their inquiry.

Support each step of the research process. Students often have little experience planning and conducting research. Using planning guides, in-class activities, and portfolios, instructors should “stage” students’ work and provide support at each stage—from invention to drafting, through revision and polishing. Collecting interim materials (such as annotated photocopies) helps break the research assignment down into elements of the research process while providing instructors with evidence of students’ original work. Building “low-stakes” writing into the research process, such as reflective progress reports, allows instructors to coach students more effectively while monitoring their progress.

Make the research process, and technology used for it, visible. Ask your students to consider how various technologies—computers, fax machines, photocopiers, e-mail—affect

the way information is gathered and synthesized, and what effect these technologies may have on plagiarism.

Attend to conventions of different genres of writing. As people who read and write academic work regularly, instructors are sensitive to differences in conventions across different disciplines and, sometimes, within disciplines. However, students might not be as aware of these differences. Plan activities—like close examinations of academic readings—that ask students to analyze and reflect on the conventions in different disciplines.

3. Attend to Sources and the Use of Reading

Ask students to draw on and document a variety of sources. Build into your assignment's additional sources, such as systematic observation, interviews, simple surveys, or other data gathering methods. Incorporating a variety of sources can help students develop ways of gathering, assessing, reading, and using different kinds of information, and can make for a livelier, more unique paper.

Consider conventions. Appropriate use of citations depends on students' familiarity with the conventions of the genre(s) they are using for writing. Design activities that help students to become familiar with these conventions and make informed choices about when and where to employ them.

Show students how to evaluate their sources. Provide opportunities for students to discuss the quality of the content and context of their sources, through class discussions, electronic course management programs or Internet chat spaces, or reflective assignments. Discuss with students how their sources will enable them to support their argument or document their research.

Focus on reading. Successful reading is as important to thoughtful research essays as is successful writing. Develop reading-related heuristics and activities that will help students to read carefully and to think about how or whether to use that reading in their research projects.

4. Work on Plagiarism Responsibly

Distinguish between misuse of sources and plagiarism. If students have misused sources, they probably do not understand how to use them correctly. If this is the case, work with students so that they understand how to incorporate and cite sources correctly. Ask them to rewrite the sections where sources have been misused.

Ask students for documentation. If a student's work raises suspicions, talk with him or her about your concerns. Ask students to show you their in-process work (such as sources, summaries, and drafts) and walk you through their research process, describing how it led to the production of their draft. If they are unable to do this, discuss with them the consequences of plagiarism described in your syllabus (and, perhaps, by your institution). If you have talked with a student and want to pursue your own investigation of his or her work, turn to sources that the student is likely to have used and look for evidence of replication.

Use plagiarism detection services cautiously. Although such services may be tempting, they are not always reliable. Furthermore, their availability should never be used to justify the avoidance of responsible teaching methods such as those described in this document.

5. Take Appropriate Disciplinary Actions

Pay attention to institutional guidelines. Many institutions have clearly defined procedures for pursuing claims of academic dishonesty. Be sure you have read and understood these before you take any action.

Consider your goal. If a student has plagiarized, consider what the student should take away from the experience. In some cases, a failing grade on the paper, a failure in the course, academic probation, or even expulsion might achieve those goals. In other cases, recreating the entire research process, from start to finish, might be equally effective.

Council of Writing Program Administrators, January, 2003

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GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Multiple errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation per page	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, over used, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian's <i>Manual for Writers</i>

BTS Outcomes Evaluation

Please rank each outcome on a scale of 1-5

1: this outcome is not covered in this class

2: this outcome is only touched on in this class

3: this outcome is discussed in conjunction with class material

4: this outcome lightly assessed as part of course assessment (one assignment)

5: this outcome is fully integrated into the assessment of this course (multiple assignments)

1. Scripture: Students will effectively articulate the truth of Scripture and Scripture as truth, engaged with learning biblical knowledge and reformed principles of the supremacy of Scripture as God's word.
2. Reformed Theology: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. Local Church: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. Wisdom: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. Discipleship: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship—both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. Communication: Students will grow in the efficacy of their communication (articulation, teaching/speaking, and preaching—respective to various departments) both in content knowledge and rhetorical strategies.
7. Worldview: Students will demonstrate a growing ability to apply God's word to all spheres of life, evidenced through class discussion and other assigned assessments.
8. Leadership: Students will grow in their understanding of godly leadership and ability to lead others in service of the local church.

Outcome	Rank	Rationale (one sentence)
Scripture	5	Foundational to Class
Reformed Theology	4	Foundational to Class
Local Church	5	Foundational to Class
Wisdom	4	Foundational to Class
Discipleship	3	A component of class
Communication	5	Foundational to Class
Worldview	5	Foundational to Class
Leadership	4	Foundational to Class