Birmingham Theological Seminary
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DM4000 DMin Research and Design

Semester: Spring, 2026	**Course:** DM4000 DMin Research and Design
Day & Time: TBD	**Room:** Online
Professor: Pat Sanders, PhD	**Credits:** 3
Email: pat.sanders@bts.education	**Phone:** upon request

Course Note

Note that the 9th edition of the Turabian book is required. Any editions of the other books are acceptable.

I prefer to be contacted via email, rather than Blackbaud.

Course Description

The basic principles of effective communication for the chaplain's research project will be considered with special emphasis on written communication skills and research. The students will be involved in several writing projects during the semester. This class is required for the DMin - Chaplaincy degree program.

Course Objectives

Cognitive (Content)
- Know how to identify scholarly sources and analyze them
- Know how to properly cite information and sources according to Turabian guidelines for footnotes and bibliographies
- Know basic formats for three types of papers: the book critique, literature review, and research proposal
- Know the components of a research paper and CV

Affective/Motivational (Character)/Comprehension
- Distinguish between various types of research-oriented writing assignments and understand how to apply the principles derived to academic and ministry contexts
- Reflect on the issue of plagiarism and the use of AI
- Understand the process of developing a research paper
- Reflect on intentional academic planning and professional development

Volitional/Application (Competencies)
- Improve and affirm grammar and Turabian skills
- Write a literature review and synthesize those sources in order to develop a research proposal that identifies a problem, develops a research question, and proposes a hypothesis
- Write a book critique
- Write a CV

Required Texts

A. Four Required Texts:
1. Browning, Jim, and Jim Spivey, eds. *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry.* 2nd ed. Birmingham, AL: Iron Stream Media, 2025.

2. Merkle, Benjamin L., and Adrianne Cheek Miles. *Christian Academic Writing: Twelve Practices and Principles for Becoming a Successful Writer*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024.

3. Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*. 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022.

4. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

B. In addition, the student will need:
a. Microsoft Word to submit assignments.
b. Logos Bible Software. Please contact the seminary office for information on acquiring the Logos Remote Learning Library.
c. The BTS Form and Style Guide.
d. The BTS Research and Writing Center.

C. For this class, the estimated number of pages of required reading is 1000. The student will identify additional reading for their research, as needed.

Course Requirements and Assessments

COURSE REQUIREMENT	GRADE WEIGHT	COMMENTS
Completion of Assigned Reading, Related Reflections (Turabian, Sensing), and Videos	5%	The reflection papers and a student assessment of the percentage of completed reading and videos will be used for this grade.
Turabian Worksheet	10%	
Book Critique	10%	
3-Part Citations Exercise	20%	Footnotes and annotated bibliography
Literature Review	20%	
Project Proposal	20%	
CV and Reflection	15%	

Plagiarism and use of AI for any assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. Part of writing well is learning to write within the parameters given. Please observe the guidelines below, as well as those provided in the Learning Management System (LMS) for individual assignment descriptions.

Required reading. The student is expected to complete all assigned reading. At Birmingham Theological Seminary, we aim to utilize textbooks that are aligned with a biblical, reformed worldview. At times, we assign textbooks that provide students with exposure to a range of perspectives and encourage thoughtful engagement. The fact that a book is required does **not** mean BTS endorses all of the author's views. We encourage you to read with discernment and evaluate every resource in light of Scripture and the seminary's confessional commitments.

Weekly research and writing assignments. The student is expected to complete weekly research and writing assignments, including a Turabian worksheet, an annotated bibliography (citations exercise), a book review, a literature review, a research proposal, and a CV/essay. Logos Bible Software and the BTS Writing Center provide resources for research assignments. A detailed description of each assignment is provided in the LMS. An overview of the three major papers is provided below.

First major paper. The first major paper will correspond to chaplaincy in your field of ministry like hospitals, military, hospice, emergency services, corporate, etc. If you are not serving as a chaplain yet, you may choose a field of ministry where you hope to serve. This paper will be a literature review of <u>secondary sources</u> that helps students develop a critical understanding of the existing research, primarily qualitative, related to their area of inquiry. Through this literature review, students have the opportunity to explore and synthesize major themes, theories, methodological approaches, and identified gaps and opportunities in qualitative research. This assignment lays the groundwork for developing a well-justified qualitative research proposal for a dissertation.

    The literature review should include:
        (1) a title page
        (2) a contents page
        (2) an introduction including definitions related to the topic
        (3) a survey of 6 secondary sources related to the research topic

a. These 6 works should come from the books and journal articles identified for the citations project. (Substitutions may be made with the approval of the professor.)

b. The literature review will describe the theological themes and theoretical frameworks that support your project and provide a point of connection for your contribution to the academic conversation

c. The literature review allows you to make a rationale for your project and why a scholar's work is useful for your project.

(4) a conclusion

a. Include a list of current issues/debates regarding the topic

b. Discuss what research still needs to be done on this topic

c. End with a segue into the need for the student's proposed research project

(5) a bibliography

a. Include the 6 books and journal articles identified in your citations exercise. You may add other scholarly sources as well.

b. Do not include the annotations in this bibliography.

c. No secondary source may be more than 50 years old.

(6) The literature review should be 8-10 pages, exclusive of title page, contents, and bibliography.

Second major paper. The second major paper is a research proposal. This assignment guides doctoral students through the process of conceptualizing a formal research proposal that articulates a research problem, formulates a purpose statement, research question, and hypothesis, selects an appropriate methodology, and justifies the significance of their proposed study within the context of their discipline. This proposal serves as both a planning tool for a potential dissertation and as practice in academic research design and communication. It will serve as a preliminary prospectus that students can update and customize as they continue through the DMin program.

The research proposal should include:

(1) a title page

(2) a contents page

(3) an introduction that includes background and definitions related to the chosen topic

(4) The elements of research

a. A narrowed focus to the student's ministry context

b. A purpose statement

c. A research opportunity or problem

d. A research question and hypothesis

e. An appropriate methodology to answer the research question. Students should include a statement explaining why an IRB review is not required. If students conduct surveys, interviews, or similar data collection methods, they are not allowed to collect private, personally-identifiable information from participants.

f. A discussion of the significance of the proposed study

(5) a conclusion

(6) a bibliography

a. The six secondary sources used in the literature review should be included in the bibliography, and other sources may be added as well.

b. No secondary source may be more than 50 years old.

(7) The research proposal should be ten pages, exclusive of title page, contents page, and

bibliography.

Third major paper. The third major paper is designed to help you engage in intentional academic planning, align your professional development with long-term goals, and practice the strategic thinking necessary for a successful doctoral career.

Students will write a 2-part paper that includes:
(1) a title page
(2) <u>current</u> curriculum vitae (CV)
      a. Identify the student's current educational background, research experience, publications (if any), teaching, service, and other professional activities, and

(3) a reflection essay outlining the student's <u>projected</u> CV at the time of graduation.

      b. Identify the key milestones, achievements, and professional experiences the student aims to include
      c. Detail the specific actions and timelines required to reach these goals throughout their doctoral journey.
(4) a bibliography
(5) The CV and reflection essay should be four pages, exclusive of title page and bibliography.

BTS Format, Style, and Writing Standards

All research papers must be formatted in accordance with Turabian standards including the title page, footnotes, and bibliography. All papers are to be in 12-point, Times New Roman font and double-spaced. Any paper not conforming to these standards will automatically be dropped one letter grade. Please see the BTS Form and Style Guide for more information. The BTS Form and Style Guide and other resources are available on the BTS Research and Writing Center webpage: https://www.btswritingcenter.net/.

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

BTS Plagiarism / Generative AI Policy

As noted above, plagiarism and use of AI for any assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. 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

WEEK	AGENDA / TOPIC	DUE ON THIS DAY/DATE

1	**DMin Distinctives and Introduction to Qualitative Research**
	
	Introduction, Broad Topic, Outlines, Personal Bias, and Sources
		1. Obtain the required books.
		2. Submit a discussion board post in the LMS to introduce yourself. See the prompt under the assignments tab.
		3. Watch the lecture for week 1.
		  a. Read Merkle & Miles, 1-29.
		  b. Read Turabian, 1-9, 25-37, and 134-135.
		  c. Read Sensing, 1-69.
		4. Sign and submit the student agreement at the end of the syllabus.
		5. Download a file from the LMS called "DM4000 Responses to Videos."
		6. Download a file from the LMS (under "topics" for week 1) called "DMin Writing Style Worksheet." It will be submitted next week.

2	**Formatting, Citation, and Ethical Scholarship**
	
	Turabian Formatting
	(Title page, contents page, tables, figures, content notes, spacing on headings and paragraph settings, and block quotes v. run-in quotes).
	
	Citation Practices for Footnotes and Bibliographies
	(Use Turabian chaps. 15-17 as a reference for citations.)
	
	Academic Integrity
	(Avoiding plagiarism)
		1. Watch the lecture for week 2.
		  a. Read Merkle & Miles, 31-64.
		  b. Read Turabian, 139-168 and 358-369.
		  c. Earnestly begin reading the required book for your research topic, *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry*. You should read parts 1-4, and the section of part 5 that best corresponds to your chaplaincy environment.
		  d. Review Turabian chapter 17 to become familiar with these parts:
		    1) 17.1 (books)
		    2) 17.2 (articles)
		    3) 17.5.1 (websites)
		    4) 17.9.2 (reviews)
		    5) 17.7.1 (dissertations).
		2. Submit the DMin Writing Style Worksheet.

3	**Engaging Sources**
	
	Critical Reading, Summaries, Book Critiques
		1. Watch the lecture for week 3.
		   a. Read Turabian, 38-50.
		   b. Finish reading the required sections of *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry*.
		2. A Citations Exercise
		   a. Find 9 sources related to your broad research topic as follows:
		      1) 3 scholarly books
		      2) 3 peer-reviewed journal articles
		      3) 3 biblical passages on a theological theme related to your research topic
		   b. Summit the citations exercise with three books and three journal articles annotated.
		   c. See the related assignment description.

4	**Developing a Scholarly Research Foundation**
	
	Narrowed Topic, Research Problem, Research Question, Purpose Statement, Thesis
		1. Watch the lecture for week 4.
		   a. Read Turabian, 10-24.
		   b. Read Sensing, 76-112.
		2. A book review:
		   a. Finish reading the required sections of *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry*.
		   b. Find and read a book review in an academic journal. Notice the language used (a strong, positive evaluation vs. a cautious or negative evaluation) and attitudes conveyed (like surprise or doubt about the claims of the book). This exercise is for your information before you submit a book review and will not be submitted.
		   c. Submit a book review of *The Heart of a Chaplain: Exploring Essentials for Ministry*.
		   d. See the related assignment description.

5	**Literature Review**	1. Watch the lecture for week 5. a. Read Turabian, 108. 2. Begin working on your literature review, to be submitted next week.

6	**Research Methodology and Invention Planning**
	
	Ethics, Methodology, Intervention, and Arguments
		1. Watch the lecture for week 6.
		  a. Read Turabian, 86-101 and 370-420.
		  b. Read Sensing, 139-300.
		2. Submit a literature review on chaplaincy in your field of ministry. See the related assignment description.

7	**The Research Proposal**
	
	Research Proposal, Editing and Revision, Review a Sample Research Paper
		1. Watch the lecture for week 7.
		  a. Read Merkle & Miles, 65-98.
		  b. Read Turabian, 66-85 and 102-126.
		  c. Read Sensing, 301-359.
		2. Submit a research proposal. See the related assignment description.

8	**Writing a CV**
	
	Writing a CV and Reflection on the DMin Journey
		1. Watch the lecture for week 8.
		  a. Read Turabian, 51-65.
		  b. Read Merkle & Miles, 99-147.
		2. Submit a statement of the percentage of reading completed: "I completed --% of the reading."
		3. Submit a statement of the percentage of videos watched: "I completed --% of the videos."
		4. Submit the "DM4000 Responses to Videos" document.
		5. Submit a current CV and reflection on a projected CV before graduation. See the assignment description for this exercise.
		6. Submit a reflection on Sensing. See the related assignment description.

Attendance Policy

Even though this course is self-paced, students are expected to submit all assignments on time, as though they were attending weekly class sessions.

Class Policies and Procedures

- All assignments are due as noted.
- Late assignments will result in a letter grade deduction after the due date, except in cases of emergency communicated to the professor. An additional letter grade deduction will be taken for each week an assignment continues to be late.
- Approved late work will receive a grade but no feedback.
- Refer to the student handbook for other matters.

Course Bibliography / Extended Bibliography

Adler, Mortimer J. *How to Speak, How to Listen*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

Badke, William B. *The Survivor's Guide to Library Research: A Simple, Systematic Approach to Using the Library and Writing Research Papers*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Bullock, Richard, Deborah Bertsch, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Francine Weinberg. *The Norton Field Guide to Writing with readings and handbook*, 6th ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2022. (ISBN: 9780393884135).

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Graph, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. *They Say / I Say with Readings: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 5th ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2021.

Graves, Richard L., ed. *Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company, 1976.

Hudson, Bob, and Shelley Townsend. *A Christian Writer's Manual of Style*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.

Isaac, Stephen, and William Michael. *Handbook in Research and Evaluation*. San Diego: EDITS, 1971.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004.

Langan, John. *College Writing Skills*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2005.

Laque, Carol, and Phyllis Sherwood. *A Laboratory Approach to Writing*. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1977.

Lederer, Richard, and Richard Dowis. *The Write Way: The S.P.E.L.L. Guide to Real-life Writing*. New York: Pocket Books, 1995.

Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. 9th ed. New York: Longman,

1999.

Lindsell, Sherry L. *Proofreading and Editing for Word Processors*. New York: Arco Publishing Company, 1985.

Murray, Donald A. *A Writer Teaches Writing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Price, Jonathan. *Put That in Writing*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

Rico, Gabriele. *Writing the Natural Way*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1983.

Sabin, William A. *The Gregg Reference Manual*. New York: Gregg Division/McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977.

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990.

Yaghjian, Lucretia B. *Writing Theology Well, A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2006.

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 *Manual for Writers*	Paper generally conforms to Turabian's *Manual for Writers*	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian's *Manual for Writers*	Paper does not conform to Turabian's *Manual for Writers*

BTS Outcomes

1. <u>Scripture</u>: 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. <u>Reformed Theology</u>: Students will be able to engage and reproduce the primary and essential elements of Reformed Theology.
3. <u>Local Church</u>: Students will be engaged in applied ministry projects in the local church
4. <u>Wisdom</u>: Students will grow in character; increasing in their demonstration of wisdom and its fruits.
5. <u>Discipleship</u>: Students will be able to understand and articulate the nature and importance of discipleship–both ordinary (means of grace) and extraordinary (biblical counseling).
6. <u>Communication</u>: 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. <u>Worldview</u>: 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. <u>Leadership</u>: 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	Throughout the course, in readings, lectures, and assignments, students will consider their research topics, a particular ministry environment for chaplaincy, in light of Scripture.
Reformed Theology	3	Students may explore Reformed theology in their readings and assignments on their research topic.
Local Church	4	Students write a research proposal, which they are encouraged to apply in the life of the local church or other ministry environment.
Wisdom	5	The research process requires students to identify potential points of bias, to write with objectivity, and to develop a literature review of prior research. Additionally, students may further explore the application of biblical wisdom in the modern Christian's life.
Discipleship	4	Students will likely explore aspects of discipleship in their chosen research topic, a particular ministry environment for chaplaincy.
Communication	5	Students will develop in their written communications, especially regarding research, through readings, lectures and assignments, including a research proposal.

| Worldview | 5 | Students apply a biblical worldview while bringing Scripture to bear on their research focus, a particular ministry environment for chaplaincy, throughout the semester. |
| Leadership | 3 | Students may explore leadership in their readings and writing assignments on their research topics, a particular ministry environment for chaplaincy, |

DMIN 4000 STUDENT SIGNATURE
Your signature below indicates that you have read this syllabus, understand it, and willingly accept the requirements and responsibilities for successfully complete this course.

Student Signature: _____   Date: _____