RESEARCH METHODS
GSEM620
Spring Semester, 2007
Thursdays, 3:30 to 6:20 pm
Seminary Room N135

Contact Information
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Research Methods, GSEM620, is organized according to the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education published by the Association of College and Research Libraries.¹

Based on these standards, the objectives for this class are as follows:

1. “The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.” This includes identifying a specific topic, framing a research question, understanding relevant systems of information organization, developing an information-seeking strategy, and anticipating the types of sources that may be of value.

2. “The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.” This includes identifying and using appropriate sources for finding information that is relevant to your research question, modifying search strategies as needed, developing a practical system of note taking, and keeping a careful record of findings.

3. “The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.” This

involves selecting the best sources, justifying the use of given sources as authoritative, and properly citing appropriate sources.

4. “The information literate student … uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.” In this case, this requires applying all skills to writing a formal research paper using standard research English and applying fully the Andrews University Standards for Written Work, following the special instructions for the Seminary.

5. “The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.” This includes discussing questions on academic integrity and plagiarism and applying the principles in the paper.

While these Standard Competencies provide a useful outline for doing research, they are only a conceptual foundation for a process. The course will build upon that foundation exploring what it means to be information literate on a graduate and/or professional level. We will reflect on how research at this level relates to Seminary education, ministry in the Church, and the researcher’s spiritual formation. What does it mean to be an information literate pastor, teacher, church administrator, chaplain, etc.?

The research methodology followed in this course will primarily focus on a “humanities” model. “Scientific” type research focuses on the observation and manipulation of “objects,” i.e. stars, atoms, birds, cells, etc. “Social science” type research focuses on human “responses,” and the data is collected from surveys, interviews, and observations of behavior. “Humanities” type research focuses on “words,” primarily as found in written communication, and thus a significant portion of the class will cover the classification and organization of knowledge, and the access tools for finding pertinent information using library resources.

Information that is acquired through systematic research can be communicated on many different levels and in many different contexts, ranging from casual conversations to classroom lectures to sermons. The context for the written work in this class is “scholarly discourse” in written form and will follow the expectations and conventions for scholarly discourse in religious studies.

The course also assumes “theological inquiry,” the intentional seeking after knowledge of God. It is hoped that the course will be a voyage of discovery, in which each writer will experience a more complete understanding of the God we serve.

In recognition of the fact that students take this course for different reasons, two tracks have been developed. Those who take the course for three credits will take both tracks. Students who register for two credits will select the track that better suits their expectations. The Academic Writing track focuses on the skills associated with producing a quality paper that meets the expectations of disciplinary discourse. The Research Foundations track explores how research is experienced, and encourages reflection on the role of research in the mission and ministry of the church. The two tracks are equally rigorous in terms of both content and assignments. All students will participate in a comprehensive introduction to the Andrews University Standards
for Written Work and the academic resources for research available through both the James White Library and online.

**Required texts for all students:**


**Required text for the Academic Writing track:**


**Required text for the Research Foundations track:**


**Using D2L**

Access to D2L is available at d2l.andrews.edu. Your user name and password are your Andrews University email address and password. All course documents and your grades are available through this site.

**Online Databases**

You can access all licensed databases from off-campus using your Andrews University email address and password for the user name and password when requested by a dialog box.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will proceed through the following assignments as given. Points for each assignment have been allocated based on the approximate time needed to complete the work, 10 pts. per hour; if more time is consistently required, please let the instructor know. Individualized instruction is available for any assignment should it be needed. The instructor serves as a coach and mentor in this process, so please feel free to ask questions.

Assignments for All Students:

1. **A Context for Research**: 50 pts.

   After interviewing many leading researchers in a variety of fields, Brew was able to identify four different ways research is experienced.¹

   1. The *domino variation*. Research is experienced as solving problems and answering questions. The successful completion of a project then makes it possible to solve new problems or ask new questions. The focus is on the “knowledge.”
   2. The *layer variation*. Research is experienced as “dipping through the top layer to reveal what lies beneath.” Again the basic focus is on the “knowledge.” Vyhmeister’s description resembles both these variations. See *Quality Research Papers*, 1-6; 42-50.
   3. The *trading variation*. Research outcomes are viewed as commodities that are exchanged within the community. The focus is on the “community.” Robertson’s description suggests this variation. See “Academic Writing and Theological Inquiry,” available on [http://d2l.andrews.edu/](http://d2l.andrews.edu/).

   After reading Vyhmeister, Robertson, and Hamilton, summarize, then analyze the three readings, and lastly respond to the variations from a personal perspective. Which variation

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best describes your perception of experiencing research? 5 pages, double spaced, (about 1200 words).

2. Andrews University Standards: 20 pts. A document will be provided that has no formatting. Format the document according to Andrews University Standards for Written Work using the Word processor of choice. This will include title page, table of contents, various levels of headings, margins, paragraphs, pagination, footnotes and bibliography.

3. Preparing a Working Bibliography: 50 pts. Explore the following online databases, and identify a potential bibliography for your paper of 10 to 20 items. The Bibliography must follow Andrews University Standards for Written Work. Attach to the bibliography (1) a report of the strategy used and evaluate the success you enjoyed and (2) a print-out of one example from each of the selected databases as outlined below, ten total. The most important objective is that you learn how to use each online database efficiently and effectively. It will be well worth your time to “play” with each database, and explore all the features, experimenting with what each will accomplish. If you have specific difficulties using a database, please let the instructor know, and coaching will be available.

A. Books

1. James White Library Catalog
2. WorldCat
3. Google Books
4. One of the following:
   a. Ellen G. White Writings
   b. HRAF
   c. Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts
   d. Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (Media Center)
   e. NetLibrary
   f. Encyclopedia of Philosophy
   g. Dissertation Abstracts
   h. Research in Ministry (RIM) online

B. Periodicals

5. ATLA
6-7. Two of the following:
   a. Religious and Theological Abstracts
   b. Old Testament Abstracts
   c. New Testament Abstracts
   d. Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index
   e. Index Theologicus, http://www.ixtheo.de/
7. **One** general or interdisciplinary database, from the following:

   a. AATA Online  
   b. JSTOR  
   c. Academic Search  
   d. ERIC  
   e. PsychINFO  
   f. Social Science Abstracts  
   g. Sociological Abstracts  
   h. Blackwell Synergy  
   i. Any other Library subscription database relevant for the topic.

9. Google Scholar  

C. World Wide Web  

10. **One** website not accessed by either Google Book or Google Scholar.

4. **Final Paper:** 200 pts. The final paper may be used to complete the requirements of another class, with a minimum length of twelve pages (about 3000 words). It should be a topic that has a research question, whether implicit or explicit, and which invites the use of multiple sources.

   The final paper will require a minimum of two drafts. The first draft will focus on the content: organization, proper use of research English, use of sources, etc. The second draft will focus closely on applying the *AU Standards*. See Vyhmeister Chaps. 10-12 (82-116). The paper will be graded according to the rubric.

5. **Citation Portfolio:** 50 pts.

   Present a photocopy of the page in each source cited in the paper, organized by footnote page and number. Categorize and justify the use of each citation. The following categories may be used, however you may add others you feel are needed. Then briefly explain how and why that citation was needed at that point.

   a. Evidence. Objective facts that support your claim. Examples include statistics, historical facts, text of primary sources, etc.  
   b. Definitions and descriptions. Authoritative disciplinary sources. Examples include working definitions and descriptions from standard reference works such as encyclopedias and dictionaries.  
   c. Authority. Key citations from recognized authorities to support your claim. An appeal to authority must be validated by publication history, citation history, etc.  
   d. Discussion. Citations of authors who have written on the topic and who make a valid point relevant to your claim, but who are not recognized authorities. These may either support your claim or provide alternative claims which you wish to address and discuss.
5. **Class Presentation:** 10 pts. The last two class periods of the semester are set aside for the students to present the findings of their research to the rest of the class. Students will have about 20 minutes to present their papers, with a few minutes for discussion. In a limited way, this experience is intended to emulate scholarly communication at a professional meeting.

**Assignments for the Academic Writing Track:**

1. **Define a Research Question and Develop a Research Strategy:** 10 pts.
   
   a. Prepare a one paragraph description of the topic of your choice, concluding with a one sentence research question. See Vyhmeister, 17-22.

   b. Initially prepare a semantic web of the topic with a minimum of six keywords, professional terms, subject headings, etc. Apply Boolean operators as needed. This web will become the basis for searching various sources and databases. You may wish to use *The Library of Congress Subject Headings*. This is not an online assignment. Searching for specific books and articles will be done in another assignment.

   Note that this strategy may need to be modified as you become more knowledgeable about the topic or as you become more proficient in using specific databases.

2. **Note Taking:** 20 pts. Select two readings, either a journal article or a chapter in a book, that are relevant for the topic of your paper, and prepare notes as described in Johnson, 21-24 and Vyhmeister, 56-61.

3. **Writing Assignments:** 100 pts. Four short assignments as required using specific skills. The content of the assignments should be on the topic of the final paper, and should be readily adaptable for inclusion. However, a paper written for a prior course can also be used for the assignments. The short assignments will include:

   a. Academic writing competencies, focus on style and composition
   b. Developing strong arguments
   c. Use of citations
   d. Evaluation of sources

4. **Tentative Outline:** 20 pts. Prepare a tentative outline for the final paper.

5. **Information Ethics:** 10 pts. (Competency Standard 5). Discuss and apply the issues of information ethics. See Vyhmeister Chap. 8 (62-68). Complete the online tutorial, “The Plagiarism Court: You Be the Judge,” by Ramona Islam, Fairfield University, [http://library2.fairfield.edu/instruction/ramona/plugin.html](http://library2.fairfield.edu/instruction/ramona/plugin.html), and print out the results of the quiz. You may retake the quiz as often as necessary to achieve the perfect score.
6. **Final Reflection Paper:** 30 pts. (3 pages)
   
   a. Reflect on Gal 5:22-23. In what ways should the fruits of the Spirit define academic writing in theological inquiry?

   b. Summarize the research process and the writing process. How did it work for you on this paper? What can you do differently in the future that will make the completion of research writing assignments more efficient and effective?

   c. Choose a position normally associated with your degree program, for example, pastor, chaplain, teacher, administrator, etc. How does the research skills discussed in this course prepare you to more effectively fulfill typical work related responsibilities for the selected position?

   d. How do you experience research? Use Brew’s variations. Referring to Assignment 1, have your perceptions changed over the course of the semester? If so, how?

**Assignments for the Research Formation Track:**

1. **Interview:** 20 pts. Select one Seminary professor whose area of expertise is of special interest to you. During the interview, discuss how he or she experiences research, you may use Brew’s categories as a discussion starter. How is he or she involved in scholarly discourse? You may also wish to discuss any other research process related questions you have. Prepare a three page report on the interview and be prepared to share findings with the class.

2. **Class Presentation:** 50 pts. Each student will be assigned a chapter in *Nature of Research* to present to the class in a Seminar format. The presentation will include:

   a. A brief description and summary of the main points in the chapter. What is Brew saying?

   b. An application to the discipline of theological inquiry. Do her claims apply to the discipline of theological inquiry? If so, how? If not, why not and what would be a better understanding?

   c. Discussion questions. Three open ended questions that will invite participation.

3. **Online Discussion:** 50 pts. Participate actively in an online discussion of issues related to doing research in theological inquiry. The instructor will be reading carefully all submissions, but will not necessarily contribute responses. Questions for discussion on line will be drawn from the classroom experience.

4. **Poster:** 50 pts. Prepare a poster based on the paper. The poster could be presented at the Scholarship Colloquy held during spring semester.

5. **Final Reflection Paper:** 30 pts. (3 pages) Prepare a personal statement on the role of academic research and scholarly discourse in theological inquiry reflecting on the readings and discussions in the Research Formation track. Select and discuss a Scripture passage that informs your position.
Additional Readings for 3 Credits: Students who take the course for 3 credits will do 10 additional hours of general reading in a topic related to academic writing, research skills, scholarship, or the discipline of theological inquiry. Readings will be selected in consultation with the instructor. Critical reviews of the readings will be submitted
GRADING

Points have been allotted for each assignment and for attendance equivalent to 10 points per hour of anticipated time to complete the assignment. The time estimate assumes the student will be working without prior knowledge or experience of the material, with at least an average typing speed (40 words per minute).

Attendance will be awarded 10 points per class hour. Tardiness will result in a 5 point deduction for the hour. Excused absences will not be penalized, but the reason for the absence needs to be documented in writing (an email will suffice). Points lost for tardiness or unexcused absences can be redeemed through additional assigned readings.

Most assignments will not be penalized if they are turned in late. The exceptions are:

In the “Academic Writing Track”, the four short writing assignments will be docked 50% because participation in the writing group will be compromised, and a valuable learning opportunity would be lost.

In the “Research Formation Track”, the class presentation (assignment 2) will be docked 50% if only a written summary of the potential class presentation is submitted.

This course allows for a Deferred Grade. At the end of the semester, if the points earned do not add up to the desired grade, you may opt for the Deferred Grade, and afterwards either complete or upgrade assignments. However, within reason, this option should be avoided. The challenge of trying to complete the course while fully engaged in a subsequent semester’s coursework compounds the difficulty.

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

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COMPUTER USE IN THE CLASSROOM

Information technology assumes the use of the computer. Having a computer to use for classroom activities, to follow along with demonstrations, and for note taking is a useful tool. It is expected that the computer will be used for class related purposes, and that other uses such as emailing or surfing the web will be avoided. Each student is expected to assume responsibility for the classroom environment and to refrain from any computer use that could potentially be a distraction to other students.

STATEMENT ON INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY

Andrews University, as a Seventh-day Adventist institution, expects students to demonstrate the ability to think clearly and exhibit personal moral integrity in every sphere of life. Honesty in all academic matters is a vital component of personal integrity. Breaches in academic integrity principles are taken seriously by the University. Acts of academic dishonesty as described in the University Bulletin are subject to incremental disciplinary penalties with redemptive intent. Such acts are tracked in the office of the Vice President for Academic Administration. Repeated and/or serious offenses will be referred to the Committee on Academic Integrity for further recommendations on penalties.

Information ethics is a significant component of the course, and is included in the course objectives. At the appropriate time in the syllabus, the topic will be covered. Plagiarism is defined as the using of another’s work or ideas without proper citation. Inadvertent, limited plagiarism in the rough drafts will be used as a teaching moment. Pervasive or intentional plagiarism will be dealt with according to University policy.