

MCS 810 – Graduate Project

Associated Canadian Theological Schools
Professor of Record: Kenton C. Anderson, Ph.D.

Spring 2011**3 Credit Hours****Course Description and Objective**

The Graduate Project is a *summative* and *integrative* work that serves as a capstone to the student's entire course of studies in the MACS. Building out of work already done in pursuit of the degree, the student will have this opportunity to consider unresolved questions and to test or apply ideas formed during the student's course of studies. The project will demonstrate an effective integration of biblical/theological themes, research into the relevant literature, and appropriate practical ministry application. The objective of the project is for the student to come away from the degree having successfully described and displayed a settled understanding, appreciation, and application of at least one significant aspect of his or her area of study.

Course Schedule

The course will require participation in three mandatory webinars, easily accessible without requiring a visit to the campus. An announcement regarding webinar dates and means of access will be sent to each registered student's student email address within the first few days of the semester. Each webinar will be offered once only. It is the student's responsibility to be present.

The *first* webinar, held early in January, will allow the professor of record to describe the expectations for the course and to field questions from students. Following this webinar, students are expected to develop their plans for the project.

At the *second* webinar, held in late January, students will be required to orally share their project plans with the professor and the other students. Such plans will fit the requirements of a template to be attached to the course syllabus. Students will profit greatly from hearing one another's proposals at this time. At this webinar, the professor will "green light" the proposals or else require further work toward approval. The professor may require the student to present their work in writing if their oral presentation is unclear or problematic.

The *third* webinar, will be held in early March at which time the students will report on their progress toward completion of their project and report their preliminary findings.

The final project will be due no later than April 1.

Description of the Project

The student is expected to pursue a specific issue in ministry or a significant theological question that has relevance either within a local setting or within the broader church. This project will evaluate current approaches to the issue and suggest an improved approach. The student will evaluate both current and significant literature on the subject chosen.

Examples: "Evaluating the Study of 'Situational Leadership' and its Implications for the Local Church"; "Current Trends in Asian Christian Education"; "Assessing Current Models for Children's Ministry"; "A Theology of Rest and Sabbath for Canadian Churches"; "Worship in the Book of Deuteronomy and Implications for Contemporary Application in the Local Church"; "Adopting a New Administrative Structure in a Large Canadian Church" or "Using Non-Verbal Media for Evangelism in Cross- Cultural Settings").

Please note that the Graduating Project is intended to be more of a project than a written essay. Through this project students will need to demonstrate how their thinking has been or could be applied in the field. The result of this project will be a reflective paper of *at least 15 pages and no more than 40 pages*. Note that shorter papers will reflect projects that have a more active field component. Longer papers will rely less on *application* and more upon *analysis*. Of course, all projects need to adequately encompass both ends of this continuum. The final project can take a number of forms, but should be sure to effectively offer each of the following elements:

Statement of the Issue

This paper should present the issue in summary, offering a statement of the intent of the project. The student will want to express what they are working on, why they have chosen the subject, and how they propose to address it through the project. Note that the project should clearly articulate how this project is *summative* and *integrative* of his or her program of studies to this point.

Review of Current Thinking and Practice

The student will interact with current thinkers and practitioners relevant to the subject area, showing an understanding of the state of current thinking and practice both locally, and beyond.

Biblical and Theological Engagement

The student will show that he or she has a sound grasp of the relevant biblical and theological issues, deriving conclusions that are well founded upon an appropriate biblical foundation.

Description of the Student's Personal Engagement with the Issue

The final paper will describe the student's personal engagement with the project, both in terms of thinking and practice. Note that every project should describe some level of actual participation with the subject in the field, articulating clearly how such time has been spent and how much time has been investment in these practical forms of engagement.

Presentation of a Fresh Approach to the Issue

The project should build from observation and practice to offer some distinctive response to the issue, effectively argued and well founded. This may involve an evaluative critique of leading approaches of the past, along with a proposal for a new approach or perhaps the application of an existing principle. The writing may take considerable effort to explain a particular application to a specific setting, as well as describing implications for the broader work of the Kingdom.

Bibliography

The student should think in terms of a minimum bibliography of 10-20 items including books, periodical literature, credible websites and other resources of a scholarly nature. Longer papers would require additional sources.

Again, the degree to which the student fulfills these requirements in writing depends upon the level to which the student engages in the fieldwork relevant to the project. Students who choose to engage the subject more actively will present a paper that addresses these issues more succinctly. *Note, however, that in such cases, the student will need to account for and articulate clearly how he or she has utilized his or her time in the field.* In every case, all of the above-stated elements must still be adequately presented in the final paper.

Students should be prepared to invest something in the neighborhood of *120 clock hours* in total toward the completion of this project. While these areas of study could benefit from much more attention than this timeframe allows, this course intends a product that can be achieved by the average student within this limited amount of time. Students will be wise to budget their time and expectations accordingly. Note that in the 120 hour calculation, we are assuming something in the neighborhood of 90 to 120 minutes per written page. The remainder of one's time would be spent in field involvement that supports the writing of the paper.

Evaluation of the Project

The Professor of Record will be responsible for the application of the student's final grade. Evaluation will centre mostly upon the student's faithfulness to the requirements of the assignment, more than it will focus on the details of the student's findings. It may be, however, that in certain cases the professor may rely on the advice of other faculty when it comes to evaluating projects outside of his field of expertise. In general project will be evaluated according to the following grid:

The student's grade for the course will be assigned according to the following grid:

A-Range Grades: The project is clear and the paper well written with little need for grammar or formatting edits. The issue is clearly described, relevant to the student's objectives, and is effectively addressed throughout the assignment. The project insightfully derives from the student's previous work in his or her program of studies. The student has made outstanding use of the existing literature drawing from diverse sources, both faith-based and secular, reflecting fairly upon a variety of viewpoints relevant to the theme. The student brings a unique and well-argued perspective to the subject reflecting a distinct and discerning ministry vantage point. The student describes clear and achievable results for a particular ministry setting, raising further questions that can fuel the student's future engagement of the subject.

B-Range Grades: The project is clear and reasonably well-written, displaying some grammatical or writing deficiencies. The paper offers a promising issue, deriving reasonably from the student's program of studies. While displaying a reasonable grasp of the standard existing literature, the paper lacks a full and compelling integration of current thinking into the student's assessment of the subject. The student presents a reasonable and satisfactory, though perhaps not distinctive, response to the issues, with some attempt to describe potential ministry implications and pose further questions.

C-Range Grades: The project is significantly challenged by issues of grammar, spelling, form, and style. The issue offered by the paper is vague and lacking focus, only marginally connected to the student's previous work in his or her program of studies. While there is some attempt at a review of current thinking on the subject, the paper misses key discussions, relying instead on personal opinion. There is a lack of integration of sources, and unclear or unachievable ministry implications.

F Grade: The project presents grammar, spelling, form, and style, unacceptable for graduate level work. The paper offers no defined and focused issue, showing

little awareness of the concerns involved in the current discussion and little or no success in the presentation of meaningful responses to the issues in question.

Late submissions, without previous written approval by the professor of record will result in at least a 2/3-letter grade reduction (ie. from B+ to B-). The severity of the reduction will depend upon the degree of lateness. Student should expect at least a 1/3-letter for every day of unapproved lateness.

Students are expected to actively participate in all three webinars associated with this class. Failure to participate will result in a two-thirds-letter reduction to their final grade for every unapproved absence. Failure to participate in at least one of the seminars will result in a grade of "F" for the course.

Formatting of the Assignment

Students are expected to follow the Turabian form of academic presentation. Sample papers and support can be found at <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/> (please work with the "History"/Chicago section). Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to "clean up" most bibliographies generated by this program. Note that in RefWorks for Turabian, there are two formats: Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List. *Note that Turabian requires 1" margins, 12 point Time New Roman font (or its equivalent), and double-spacing.*

Expectations of Faculty

Students would be well advised to secure the help and assistance of a mentor located in a relevant field of service. The student should understand, however, that while the Professor of Record and ACTS faculty members in general will be available to offer advice to students, it will not be considered reasonable for a student to ask a faculty member to read his or her paper, in full or in part, in advance of formal submission. The Professor of Record is available for general guidance and advice throughout the semester. He can be reached by email at kenta@twu.ca.

Statement on Avoidance of Plagiarism

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire ACTS/TWU community. Students are expected to abide by principles of sound academic scholarship, which includes avoiding all forms of plagiarism. Further details can be found in the ACTS Student Handbook (section 4.12).

Statement on Research Ethics

Given the short time-line for Graduate Projects, students are prohibited from utilizing research or data-gathering from human subjects such as the conducting of formal interviews, surveys, and use of focus group without having received the approval of the TWU Research Ethics Board. All research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) must be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. (Information may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/academics/research/ethics/>). Such requests usually require several weeks from date of submission for review and approval, making the timely completion of this project impossible.

Students are encouraged to engage in ministry with people and to evaluate that experience. This is in the nature of developing and assessing quality in ministry rather than in the formal testing of a research hypothesis. *Students must apply to the Research Ethics Board whenever the intent is to do research on human subjects, including interviews, focus groups, and data-gathering.* This does not mean, however, that the student cannot or should not have conversation with individuals about their observations and ideas. The point to distinguish is that *students can have conversations with people about a subject, but must not have conversation with people who are the subject of a project.* Specifically...

...discussion of one's personal learning experience and reflections is acceptable;

...conceptual research using information readily available to the public is acceptable;

...normal "everyday life" conversations with people in the practice of ministry are acceptable, but should not be quoted or formally referenced in the written paper;

...conversations with "investigative colleagues" (mentors and learning directors) are acceptable as long as those conversations do not become the *subject* of the research;

...any conversations or written comments that would impinge upon the privacy of a human subject are prohibited;

...any investigation of "current thinking and practice" must be "publically accessible".

In sum, we are looking for projects that are fundamentally about reflection on theological and practical issues at a *conceptual level*, informed by reflection on *personal learning* that has arisen both out of study and out of ministry practice (which is part of the ordinary life of the students involved). Note further, that the intention is *not* to set up research projects to test the impact of innovative ministry models on test groups of live subjects.

MCS 810 – Project Proposal Template

Student Name: _____ **Semester** _____

Student's Email: _____ **Telephone** _____

Proposed Title for the Project: _____

Brief Description of the Context for the Project:

Research Sources for the Project (biblical/theological/theoretical/practical):

Brief Description of the Nature and Implementation of the Project:

Intended Outcomes for the Project:

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Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except for in counselling courses, for which APA format is used and for CanIL courses. Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 6th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats – Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>. For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are an important aspect of improving teaching outcomes and for students and faculty professional development. Therefore, completion of course evaluations are considered a course expectation. Professors will schedule time to fill out the online course evaluation (20-30 minutes) during their last scheduled class of the semester, for students to complete on their personal laptop or a collegium computer. Students who are absent or otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation in the last class, will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at

<http://www.twu.ca/academics/research/ethics/>

Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean's office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link:

www.acts.twu.ca/Handbook.html.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self-running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to

accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.