

MEMORANDUM

TO: Participants in Research Methodology & Design (Thesis Proposal Workshop)

FROM: Justin A. Irving, Instructor

Re: July 14-18, 2008 Workshop

Enclosed you will find:

1. the syllabus for the workshop;
2. a paper (*Expectations for D.Min. Thesis Project Proposals*) which will provide guidelines for developing your proposal;
3. a sample *Thesis Project Report Outline*.

Upon receipt of your registration you will receive the following:

- 1, a sample thesis project proposal, which you may refer to for help in writing your proposal;
2. a *Style and Form Manual*, which you are to follow in writing your proposal.

It is not a problem if you are uncertain about a project at this point. Pick one which you are likely (but not certain) to pursue. Even if you change your mind, learning the process of preparing the proposal will stand you in good stead as you complete the program. *Do not come to the workshop without bringing a proposal which you have developed to the best of your ability.* Our time together will be spent working with refinement and revision of the work which you bring. The value of the process depends significantly on your preparation.

Please contact me if you have questions. The easiest way to reach me is by e-mail at j-irving@bethel.edu

Research Methodology & Design
Doctor of Ministry Course (GS803)
July 14-18, 2008 – Bethel Seminary, St. Paul Campus

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SYLLABUS

Course Description

All students in the Doctor of Ministry program will participate in a one-week thesis project proposal workshop. Each participant will develop and bring to the workshop a preliminary thesis project proposal developed according to guidelines stated in the pre-course assignments. The week will be spent in a process of modification, expansion, and perfection of this proposal as well as in development of a strategy for proposal implementation and for the writing of the thesis project report.

Course Objectives

After completing this course the student should be able to:

1. submit for advisor approval an acceptable thesis project proposal;
2. develop a strategy for implementation of the proposal activities in ways which are consistent with standards appropriate to both the nature of the project research and the requirements of Bethel's Doctor of Ministry program;
3. understand the process for writing a thesis project report which will satisfy the requirements for successful completion of this component of the D.Min. program.

Classroom Schedule

The schedule will be 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-4:30 p.m. each day. Evenings should be kept free for additional group or individual working assignments. Since class time is so limited, attendance at all sessions is expected.

Required Textbooks

Textbooks can be purchased online at sites such as Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com. The Myers book may be secured more quickly and cheaply by ordering through the Bethel University bookstore at 651-638-6002. It cannot be ordered directly from Exploration Press.

Leedy, Paul, Ormrod, Jeanne Ellis. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004. ISBN: 0131108956

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780226823379

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998. ISBN: 0310239451

William Myers, *Research in Ministry*. Chicago: Exploration Press, 1997. ISBN: 0913552631

Recommended Textbooks

These textbooks are not required for the course, but have been of help to other students who have pursued either qualitative or mixed-method studies.

John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. ISBN: 0761901442

John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003. ISBN: 0761924426

Pre-Course Assignments

1. Read all textbooks.

Begin with the reading of Myers in order to gain some idea of the kinds of research being done in Doctor of Ministry programs. Then, study carefully parts one and two of Leedy (chapters one through six). These sections focus on the basic issues and procedures in designing a project and writing a proposal. When you have a good grasp of the material in these chapters and have some idea about your project focus, read the remainder of Leedy paying particular attention to those sections which address the kinds of research and the kinds of research instrumentation that you may be likely to use. The book by Vyhmeister will be an excellent resource to reference throughout the proposal development and writing phase.

2. Develop a preliminary thesis project proposal.

The development of the thesis project proposal should follow the ensuing guidelines which are drawn with some modification from Leedy, part two (chapters three through six). Refer to Leedy for description of the terms used in the guidelines. Your initial draft of the thesis project proposal will be significantly reshaped during the thesis project workshop. Bring the proposal to the workshop in electronic format.

The following is the outline to be followed in writing your proposal. For description of the content and expectations for each of the sections, please read carefully the pages labeled *Expectations for D. Min. Thesis Project Proposals*. The more exactly you follow the guidelines in this document, the fewer revisions you can expect during the workshop.

Title

Section I - The Problem and Its Context

- A. The Problem (in two sentences)
 - "The problem this project will address is--"
 - "In response to this problem, the project will--"
- 1. Definition of Terms
- 2. Delimitations
- 3. Assumptions
- B. Sub-problems/Hypotheses
- C. Setting of Project
- D. Importance of Project
 - 1. To you
 - 2. To your immediate context of ministry
 - 3. To the Church at large

Section II – Theology

Section III - Review of Related Research

THE FOLLOWING SECTION (DATA AND METHODOLOGY) IS TO BE WRITTEN DURING THE WORKSHOP SINCE THERE IS USUALLY SUBSTANTIAL REVISION OF THE PROBLEM AND SUB-PROBLEM STATEMENTS UPON WHICH THIS SECTION IS BASED. YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO THINK THROUGH THE FOLLOWING SECTION BUT NOT WRITE THE MATERIAL BEFOREHAND.

Section IV - Data and Methodology

- A. Nature of the Research
- B. Data
 - 1. Primary
 - 2. Secondary
- C. Project Overview
- D. Sub-problem Treatment
 - 1. What data are needed to address this sub-problem?
 - 2. What criteria will be used to determine acceptability of the data?
 - 3. Where are the data located?
 - 4. How will the data be secured?
 - 5. For what purpose and in what way(s) will the data be used?

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS ARE TO BE WRITTEN BEFOREHAND

Section V - Proposed Thesis Outline

Section VI - Schedule for Completion

Section VII – Preliminary Bibliography

Expectations during the Workshop

1. *Attendance:* As previously noted, because class time is limited, attendance at all sessions is expected.
2. *Attentive Engagement:* The development of a thesis proposal is a substantial undertaking. In order to successfully navigate the expectations of the week, attentive engagement will be a necessity. Students will be expected to thoughtfully engage both the concepts discussed in the workshop as well as feedback from fellow students and the instructor. The concepts and associated feedback should be used to revise the developing proposal over the course of the week.
3. *Refinement and Revision:* While students are to bring a working draft of their thesis proposal to the workshop, a majority of the week will be devoted to refining and revising this proposal. In light of this, students will be regularly engaged in both library research and revisions of their proposal. Often, this work of refinement and revision takes a significant amount of time for students, and thus students should be prepared to engage in this work throughout the workshop week, including both class time and evenings. Students should be cautious about planning other work or scheduling too many activities unrelated to their thesis proposal during the week.

4. *Technology & Typing:*

Because both library research and the writing of the proposal is so dependant on the use of computers, students are strongly urged to bring a laptop computer with them to the workshop. If this is not a possibility, students will need to be prepared (i.e, understand how) to work with the computers available in the seminary library during their individual writing and research time. Students will also need to submit electronic drafts of their emerging proposal throughout the week to the instructor in a Microsoft Word compatible format, and will be expected to do so either as an e-mail attachment or via a USB external drive.

All proposal drafts must be submitted in a type-written and word-processed format. The workshop will be a challenging experience for those who are not proficient with typing. Because a majority of the week is devoted to revisions and rewriting, students will need to come to the workshop with proficient typing skills. While there may be alternatives (e.g., voice recognition software, etc.), the student will be responsible for ensuring that they are able to keep up with the pace of the course, submitting their proposal drafts in a timely manner.

5. *Final Draft Submission:* By the end of the workshop week, students will be expected to submit the final draft of their proposal to the instructor. While the student's advisor and second reader may ask for additional revisions, the proposal submitted by the end of the workshop week should largely be completed. Drafts are due to the instructor the final day of the workshop. The final time and day proposal drafts will be accepted by the instructor will be 11:59pm (PST) two days after the end of the workshop; for example, if the final

day of the workshop is a Friday, the final deadline for draft submissions will be 11:59pm (PST) on Sunday.

Post-Course Assignment

Following the thesis proposal workshop, each participant will do whatever work is necessary to bring the proposal to completion and submit it to his or her advisor for approval. The advisor will consult with the person who will be the second reader of the thesis project report. When both the advisor and the second reader are satisfied with the proposal, it will be approved and credit granted for GS803.

It is recognized that because projects differ the exact structure and proportion of material will vary from proposal to proposal. In general, however, all of the topics in the outline need to be addressed. The *Style and Form Manual* (Section Seven of the Student Manual) is to be the students' guide in writing both the proposal and the thesis report. If you have questions regarding the writing of your thesis project report that are not answered in the *Style and Form Manual*, please contact Renae Long, Program Coordinator.

The length of the thesis project proposal should be twenty to thirty pages, double-spaced, not including bibliography or research instruments.

EXPECTATIONS FOR D. MIN. THESIS PROJECT PROPOSALS BETHEL SEMINARY

The following material presents guidelines concerning expectations for thesis project proposals in Bethel Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program. By distributing this document to both students who are writing the proposals and thesis project advisors who are reading and approving them, it is hoped that greater consistency in expectations will be achieved.

When approved, the thesis project proposal should be viewed as a contract between the student and the project advisor/second reader for the work to be done in implementing the thesis project.

TITLE

A clear, concise statement communicating the focus of the project.

SECTION I – THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

THE PROBLEM – The heart of this section is two sentences. The first sentence will complete the thought, "The problem this project will address is . . ." The second sentence will complete the thought, "In the response to this problem, this project will . . ." The section may offer a brief amplification of one or both sentences, but the heart of the section is a clear statement of a problem and the choice of an appropriate response. It should be recognized that there are numerous possible responses to any problem, and the second sentence identifies the one which

this project intends.

DEFINITION OF TERMS – These are operational definitions of key concepts used in the project. While they should bear a definite relationship to commonly understood meanings of the terms used (black should not be defined as white), they are not confined to dictionary definitions. It is understood that wherever the terms are used, they mean what is stated in the operational definition.

DELIMITATIONS – Delimitations are intended to indicate what issues logically related to the problem and its response will not be addressed in the project. Delimitations may be stated for geography or numbers or organizational scope, but the more important task is to anticipate and answer the logical questions which might be asked about the project's focus.

ASSUMPTIONS – Assumptions are primary concepts which must be accepted as true in order for the project to be implemented. They may relate to the project's context or to its theoretical base. They differ from hypotheses in that hypotheses are ideas that are being explored in the doing of the project.

SUB-PROBLEMS/HYPOTHESES

Sub-problems are the logical components of the problem response as a whole. They may be written either as a series of statements or as a series of questions. In either case they represent the logical steps of work which must be taken in order that the entire problem response be completed. Each proposal must include one sub-problem that addresses biblical/theological issues and one that addresses issues to be explored through other related literature. Other sub-problems usually include field research, program or model development and implementation/evaluation. In some cases where implementation/evaluation components are not appropriate or feasible, the terminal point of the project may be a decision point concerning the program/model which has been evaluated by means other than implementation and evaluation.

Hypotheses in this type of qualitative research are not required or formally tested. Instead they represent informed hunches concerning what the student expects to discover in addressing a particular sub-problem. Their articulation serves to alert both the student and the project advisor/second reader to existing biases on the part of the student. Any hypotheses which are stated should follow the statement of the sub-problem to which they are related.

SETTING OF THE PROJECT

This section should contain a description of the context or contexts in which the project will be carried out and to which it applies. While a general description of the context(s) is appropriate, the primary focus should be on the particular characteristics of the setting(s) which make the project significant.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT

There are to be three sub-sections in this part of the proposal.

The first explains why the project is important to the student as a person. It is appropriate here to draw upon personal experiences to explain the importance of the project focus to the student.

The second sub-section indicates the importance of the project in terms of the contribution it will make to the student's ministry and ministry context. Here it is appropriate for the student to talk about his/her current ministry roles and responsibilities.

The third sub-section explores the ways in which the project may be of benefit to the larger world of the Christian community. Care should be taken that there is no claim that results in the particular context in which the project is implemented can be replicated elsewhere. At best, in this type of research project, findings can serve to suggest models or examples which may be contextualized to other settings.

SECTION II – THEOLOGY

This section is used to expand the biblical/theological sub-problem by identifying the questions and/or issues which will be explored in developing a biblical/theological basis for the project. It is not a place for the student to expound theological convictions—these may be articulated as hypotheses following the earlier statement of this sub-problem. It represents the writing of a contract indicating the issues/questions which will focus the biblical/theological study of the project itself. It is expected that the listing of questions/issues is preliminary. The study itself will in most cases generate more questions/issues. However, by looking at this section and the proposal's preliminary bibliography, the project advisor/second reader should be able to determine whether the student is “on the right track” both in terms of issues and in terms of resources.

SECTION III – REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

This section expands another of the sub-problems by identifying the areas of knowledge other than biblical/theological that must be examined to develop an adequate theoretical base for the project. It parallels the previous section in that the heart of it is the identification of the issues/questions which must be addressed in implementing the project, but additionally it must identify the disciplines from which appropriate literature will be drawn. Again, by looking at this section and the bibliography, the project advisor/second reader should be able to tell whether the student is getting to the right sources with the right questions. Questions relating to social research methodology should not be included in this section.

SECTION IV – DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this section the student should cover the remaining sub-problems of the project. Following three preliminary sections, each sub-problem will be addressed by the use of a series of identical questions.

Nature of the Research – The section should begin with an identification by the student of the basic research approach (qualitative/quantitative or a combination),

the model being used (frequently case study), the kinds of research being done (historical/descriptive/field/action, etc.), and the specific methodological tools being employed (questionnaire/interview, etc.).

Data – This section is to be used by the student to identify both the secondary data and the primary data which will be employed or generated in doing the project. Secondary data consist of anything created by others but used in the implementation of the project (books, periodical articles, internet materials, church or denominational documents, etc., etc.). Primary data are all materials created by the student in the process of implementing the project (letters, questionnaires, questionnaire responses, programs, models, evaluative tools, etc., etc.). Both secondary and primary data are simply to be listed under the appropriate category without discussion or reference to ways they are secured/produced or used.

Project Overview – This section is to be a narrative summary of the student’s plan for the project. It should begin with a description of the intended theoretical work and continue with the description of any field research, model or program development, implementation, and evaluation to the project’s termination point. Generally it will follow the sequence of the sub-problems, but since often the sub-problem work is concurrent rather than sequential, the description is frequently a combination of logical and chronological sequencing. It appears at this point to give the project advisor/second reader a view of the “forest” before looking at the “trees” in the section on sub-problem treatment. In developing the proposal, the student writes this section following completion of the work on sub-problem treatment.

Sub-problem Treatment – In this section the student is to restate each sub-problem and under it write a response to the following questions:

- What data are needed to address this sub-problem?
- What criteria will be used to determine acceptability of the data?
- Where are the data located?
- How will the data be secured?
- For what purpose and in what way(s) will the data be used?

The responses are to be brief, direct, descriptive—and are to remain focused solely on the question to which they represent a response. Usually there will be a pattern of responses under the sub-problems which focus on the theoretical work and a different pattern under field research, model/program development, implementation/evaluation or decision making. Under some of the later sub-problems, data to be used have been secured under the work of earlier sub-problems and are in the student’s possession. In such cases responses to the questions may simply refer to the appropriate earlier sub-problem work.

SECTION V – PROPOSED THESIS REPORT OUTLINE

The student will have followed a model for the proposed outline which is distributed and discussed in the Thesis Proposal Workshop and is contained in the student and mentor manuals. However, the generic headings of the model should be replaced by chapter headings and even subheadings which are project specific: are reflective of the focus and concerns of the particular project.

SECTION VI – TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION

This section is to present a tentative schedule for planning and implementation of the project as well as for the writing of the thesis project report. These two elements will be interwoven since the writing process will usually begin prior to completion of the activity of the project. The schedule should begin with a proposed date for approval of the project proposal and should conclude with the date of intended graduation.

SECTION VII – PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

The preliminary bibliography should run approximately three to five pages. It is preliminary in the sense that it is assumed the student will discover additional resources in the course of his/her work. The basic criteria for the preliminary bibliography are that it covers all areas necessary to the completion of the project and that the sources listed represent the quality of resource for that area which is acceptable for doctoral level work. An example of this would be that biblical commentaries cited be exegetical in nature rather than homiletical or devotional.

Following a student's completion of the Research Methodology & Design workshop, the instructor will forward the latest draft of the student's proposal to Doctor of Ministry Program Director along with an accompanying letter reflecting his perceptions concerning both the student and the forwarded proposal. The Program Director will then pass your proposal along to the project advisor. In some cases only modest revision/addition is necessary for the proposal to be acceptable for approval. In other cases significant work may remain before approval can occur. It is recognized, however, that the addition of two other perspectives (project advisor/second reader) may raise appropriate issues which have not been addressed by the workshop instructor. Students are apprised of this and understand that the project advisor may request modification concerning issues which have not been raised with them in the workshop. Those issues should not, however, represent a departure from the proposal format detailed in this material.