



BTS Mission:

Providing sound Biblical and practical theological training to equip leaders for Christ's Church.

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

Semester:	Fall 2020	Course:	DM9120 Research & Design
Day & Time:	Mon. 5:30-8:30 pm	Room:	V/C
Professor:	Thad James, Jr. Ph.D.	Credits:	3 Hours
E-mail:	tjames@briarwood.org	Phone:	(M) 205-746-7356 (O) 205-776-5386

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 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

1. Examine, assess, and critique research topics, both online and conventionally, that will develop their understanding of and practical application of Scripture.
2. To demonstrate intellectual, Biblical/Theological, and spiritual growth by acquiring, organizing, analyzing, and communicating research results in an effective and timely manner.
3. Challenge adult learners to formulate, organize and conduct methods of research, design, and communication, to provide evidence through the successful completion of submissions (focused ministry or professional projects).
4. Provide adult learners with the knowledge to objectively use resources such as Logos, the Internet, library, journals, and other sources to quantify valid academic and theological research.
5. To identify, appraise, and establish a fuller knowledge of what is true and the reliability and dependability of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources.
6. To investigate, critique, challenge, summarize, compare, and report on the conclusions/findings of diverse sources of information.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Required for Doctoral Program

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams *The Craft of Research 4th ed.* (Chicago University of Chicago Press), 2016

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations 9th ed.* (University of Chicago Press), 2018

Pazmino, Robert W. *Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Research* (Eugene, OR. Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2009

Vyhmeister, Nancy J. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology. 4th ed.* (Grand Rapids Zondervan), 2020

Required for Course

Klink III, Edward, and Darian R. Lockett *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids Zondervan), 2012

Logos Bible Software (<https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BBT>)

Rushing, Richard, *The Mortification of Sin: The Treasure of John Owen* (Edinburgh The Banner of Truth Trust), 2007

Sensing, Tim *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Method Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR. Wipf & Stock Publishers), 2011

Virkler, Henry *A Christian's Guide to Critical Thinking* (Eugene, OR Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2005

WPA Statement on Best Practices: Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism (included in syllabus)

You are welcome to purchase used books or use previous editions just match up the chapters.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

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

<p>This class will meet weekly students are 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, Thirdmill 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; <i>Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance</i></p>
<p>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.</p> <p><i>"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel..." Proverbs 1:5 NASB</i></p>
<p>Submit a 400-word essay describing your personal expected learning outcomes from this course. Begin with identifying and explaining your current understanding of research. This is due 9/14. Email all assignments as word attachments.</p>
<p>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</p>

Biblical Theology? Be precise and comprehensive the 12-15 pages should include your understanding, your philosophy, your personal beliefs, and awareness of the importance of research challenged? What are the potential problems with research and theology, and what is your personal motivation to seek truth? Create a list of ten (10) scholarly books, three (3) viable, scholarly internet sources, and three (3) scholarly journals articles. Write an annotated bibliography of one paragraph on each source, designate them as primary, secondary, or tertiary sources (do not copy from Amazon). You may use the required text; you should average a minimum of two citations per page and a minimum of seven 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. The annotated bibliographies must be in Turabian format. **Dec. 18th**

GRADING WEIGHT & COMMENTS

COURSE REQUIREMENT	GRADE WEIGHT	COMMENTS
Class readings and preparedness	25%	Class participation is a vital assessment
Thirdmill assignment	15%	One-page synopsis due prior to class
Weekly assignments	25%	
Final Paper	35%	
Total	100%	Sign the last page of this syllabus and send it with your personal learning objectives

COURSE SCHEDULE

DAY	DATE	AGENDA / TOPIC
Monday	9/14	<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction to Course</p> <p>Readings and Materials Read Part I Section 5 <i>Turabian</i>, Chap. 1-2 <i>Doing Theological Research</i> Chap 11 <i>Quality Research</i> Chap 1 <i>Critical Thinking</i> Chap Introduction <i>Qualitative Research</i> Read Acts 17:10-11 Romans 12:1-2.</p> <p>Assignments Tell us what you might select as the topic for your dissertation and why, also type your personal learning objectives for this course (<u>400 words</u>). 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? Introduction of Logos Bible Software</p>
Monday	9/21	<p style="text-align: center;">What is Research?</p> <p>Readings and Materials Chap 1 <i>Quality Research</i> Part 1:1-2 <i>Turabian</i> Chap. 6 <i>Critical Thinking</i>,</p>

		<p>Chap Prologue & 1, 3 <i>Craft of Research</i> Chap. 3 <i>Doing Research</i> Chap 1 & 3 <i>Qualitative Research</i> Assignments 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 now 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? E-mail copies to professor and cohort Investigate the difficulties of fallacies in theological research You will learn how to organize your Logos resources and library.</p>
Monday	9/28	<p style="text-align: center;">Communication & Evaluating Research Resources</p> <p>Readings and Materials Chap 2, 14 <i>Quality Research</i> Part 1:3-4 <i>Turabian</i> Chap 2 <i>Craft of Research</i> Chap 2, 7 <i>Critical Thinking</i> Chap 4 <i>Doing Research</i> https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/evaluating_sources_of_information/index.html</p> <p>Assignments 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?</p>
Monday	10/5	<p style="text-align: center;">Types of Research</p> <p>Readings and Materials Chap 6, 10 <i>Quality Research</i> Chap 4, 5 <i>Craft of Research</i> Chap 4 <i>Qualitative Research</i> Chap 4 <i>Critical Thinking</i> Chap Introduction, 1, 9 <i>Mortification</i></p>

		<p>Appendix D <i>Doing Research</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Research begins with the problem; how do we decide the problem for our research? When you have a problem, what do you do with 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 the previous weeks readings what part does the evaluation of resources play? Read Mark 8:27-29, what is the problem and why? Is the location significant, why, or why not? What problems does sin propose in theological research?</p>
Monday	10/12	Fall Break
Monday	10/19	<p style="text-align: center;">Citations & Plagiarism</p> <p>Readings and Materials</p> <p>Part 2:15; 3:25 <i>Turabian</i> Pgs. 79, 136-138, 216, 218 <i>Quality Research</i> Pgs.93, 203, 206-210, 271-274 <i>Craft of Research</i> Chap. 5-6 <i>Doing Research</i> Chap 3-4 <i>Mortification</i> Chap 8 <i>Qualitative Research</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/ https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/judicial-board/academic-honesty-and-plagiarism/common-types-of-plagiarism.html</p> <p>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 <i>Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism</i> the end of the syllabus. What knowledge did you gain from the readings? Construct the connection of sin, the heart and plagiarism. Are there cultures where plagiarism is an acceptable practice?</p>
	10/26	<p style="text-align: center;">A Theological Approach to Research</p> <p>Readings and Materials</p> <p>Chap 7-9 <i>Craft of Research</i> Chap 7 <i>Qualitative Research</i> Chap 3 <i>Quality Research</i> Chap Introduction, 1, 2 <i>Biblical Theology</i> Chap 3 <i>Critical Thinking</i> Chap 5 <i>Mortification</i> https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BBT Lesson 1 & Study Guide</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Why investigate, assess, formulate, and defend your theological research argument? 1 Peter 3:15-16 Differentiate between Biblical, Historical, Exegetical and Systematic theology</p>

		<p>Assess and argue the pros and cons of each</p> <p>Distinguish the theological distinctives of Arminianism, Universalism and Calvinism.</p> <p>Support your position from theological research</p> <p>Discuss and evaluate Lesson 1 Thirdmill</p>
Monday	11/2	<p style="text-align: center;">Theological Research & Assessment</p> <p>Readings and Materials</p> <p>Chap 7 <i>Qualitative Research</i></p> <p>Chap 5 <i>Critical Thinking</i></p> <p>Chap 3-4 <i>Biblical Theology</i></p> <p>Chap 6-7 <i>Mortification</i></p> <p>Chap 19 <i>Quality Research</i></p> <p>https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BBT Lesson 2 & Study Guide</p> <p>https://www.ppri.org/research/emerging-consensus-on-lgbt-issues-findings-from-the-2017-american-values-atlas/</p> <p>Read https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/10/26/what-do-americans-believe-about-god/</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Assess and evaluate the statistics, the theological conclusions and employ methods of mortification to the above articles</p> <p>What should the role be of theological research and Biblical Theology in the above articles?</p> <p>Discuss and evaluate Thirdmill Lesson 2</p>
Monday	11/9	<p style="text-align: center;">Theological Research & Assessment (pt.2)</p> <p>Readings and Materials</p> <p>Chap 10-11 <i>Craft of Research</i></p> <p>Chap 8, 10 <i>Mortification</i></p> <p>Chap 5 <i>Biblical Theology</i></p> <p>https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BBT Lesson 3 & Study Guide</p> <p>https://www.barna.com/research/evangelicals-political-lens/</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Assess and evaluate the statistics, the theological conclusions and employ methods of mortification to the above article.</p> <p>What are the arguments and warrants for and against the “social Gospel” within the church? What does God say?</p> <p>Compare the Barna article with your findings on the “social Gospel” what is your conclusion? Is there a connection, yes or no?</p> <p>Discuss and evaluate Thirdmill Lesson 3</p>
Monday	11/16	<p style="text-align: center;">Literature Review: Why? How?</p> <p>Readings and Materials</p> <p>Chap 7 <i>Quality Research</i></p> <p>Chap 6 <i>Craft of Research</i></p> <p>Chap 7-8 <i>Biblical Theology</i></p> <p>Part II: 16-17 <i>Turabian</i></p> <p>Chap 8 <i>Critical Thinking</i></p> <p>https://www.scribbr.com/chicago-style/annotated-bibliography/</p> <p>Assignments</p>

		<p>What is the role of the literature review?</p> <p>What are some methods to use to search for literature related to your topic?</p> <p>List three online data bases, three Logos resources and three library resources that would be pertinent resources for your research. (Turabian format)</p> <p>Access them and cite five pertinent references and the specific location to obtain them.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Using the topic of “Emerging Church” write three annotated bibliographies, approximately one paragraph each, state a brief description of the works, content, and the relevance to the subject matter.</p>
Monday	11/23	Thanksgiving, enjoy your families and blessings
Monday	11/30	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Interviews</p> <p>Readings and Materials Chap 7 <i>Doing Research</i> Chap 11-12 <i>Mortification</i> Chap 9-10 <i>Biblical Theology</i> https://thirdmill.org/seminary/course.asp/vs/BBT Lesson 4 & Study Guide</p> <p>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? Discuss and evaluate Thirdmill Lesson 4</p>
Monday	12/7	<p style="text-align: center;">Final Matters</p> <p>Readings and Materials Chap 13-14 <i>Mortification</i> Chap 8-9 <i>Critical Thinking</i></p> <p>Assignment Class will consist of Peer discussions, course review, discussions of past assignments and research obstacles and opportunities. Be prepared with questions and answers</p>

BTS FORMAT, STYLE, AND WRITING STANDARDS

BTS has adopted Turabian as the standard form and style for writing formal papers. However, professors retain discretion in determining how “formal” a paper must be. Students should reference Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 9th Edition*. A Turabian Supplement is available through the seminary. Students should also refer to the BTS Student Handbook on academic integrity/plagiarism. Below is a Paper Grading Rubric for formal papers:

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
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Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Many errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	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, overused, 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>

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to demonstrate punctuality and attend all class sessions. Any absences should be communicated to the professor and/or seminary office prior to the absence. In the absence of professor approval, a student will be permitted two absences per semester in a course. Tardiness may be recorded and three unexcused tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence. Unexcused absences and tardies exceeding the allowance may result in the student being dropped from the course with an "F" grade.

CLASS POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Refer to Student Handbook:

<https://bts.education/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Student-Handbook-2016-Current.pdf>

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.

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STUDENT SIGNATURE

Your signature below indicates that you have read this syllabus, understand it, and willingly accept the requirements and responsibilities for successfully completing this course.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____