

Theological Research Methods: Summary & Clinic

Dr Annang Asumang

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Learning Outcomes

1. Summary of the Lectures
2. Discussion of Queries and Questions

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Name: Theological Research Methods I & II
Code: MASM826
Credit Hours: 3
Level: Graduate

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Lecture Notes

#	Topic	Document
1	STUDENTS' HANDOUT ON INTRODUCTION TO COURSE	INTRODUCTION TO SEMINARS ON RESEARCH METHODS
2	STUDENTS' HANDOUT FOR LECTURE ON RESEARCH IN BIBLICAL STUDIES	STUDENTS' HANDOUT FOR RESEARCH IN BIBLICAL STUDIES
3	HANDOUT FOR RESEARCH METHODS IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY	STUDENTS' HANDOUT ON RESEARCH METHODS IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
4	DANIEL INSTITUTE RESEARCH PROPOSAL TEMPLATE	DANIEL INSTITUTE RESEARCH PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

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Nine Sections of the Research Proposal

1. Title
2. Background & Review of Scholarship
3. Research Problem and Questions
4. Research Objectives & Contributions
5. Research Design and Methodology**
6. Hypothesis
7. Structure & Timeframe
8. Bibliography
9. Ethical Clearance

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What is Theological Research?

A carefully structured and systematic investigation of a biblical or theological problem with a view of providing its solution and / or clarifying its nature

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**The Chosen Discipline
makes a big difference
how to proceed**

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Constructing Research Questions

- Turn Problem Statement into the Main Question if not already
- Decide the Steps of the Methodology you are going to use
- Break the Main Question down into sub-questions, each sub-question corresponding to each step of the methodology
- Often each chapter of thesis is governed by a sub-question, but occasionally, two sub-questions may be in same chapter.
- If a sub-question requires more than two chapters to answer then it must be broken down into two sub-questions.
- Questions may need adjusting to reduce scope and refocus on outcome as the study proceeds

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Biblical Studies

The academic discipline which employs various methods for studying the Bible with the aim of establishing the meaning of the text in its original socio-historical, cultural and theological context, and for the purpose of applying that understanding to contemporary Christian doctrine and practice.

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General Steps in Simple Exegesis

1. **Context**
 - Of Book - authorship, date and audience (recipients)
 - Socio-historical-cultural
 - Occasion & Purpose
 - Literary Context
 - Pertinent theological themes
2. **Meaning of Passage**
 - Text critical issue if relevant
 - Translation if relevant
 - Literary Analysis: Genre & Structure
 - Grammatical Analysis: Verbal, Syntactical, etc
 - Theological Analysis
3. **Exegetical Synthesis**
 - Summary of key message and themes
4. **Implications, Significance & Application**
 - Historical – Scholarly implication
 - Theological - Doctrine
 - Pastoral – Practice for Church, Society & Personal

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Varieties Of Research Methods in Biblical Studies

- **Historical-Critical Methods:** Variety of Methods which relate the text to the historical settings based on assumptions which have now become less utilized. E.g., Source, Redaction, Form & History of Religions
- **Narrative Methods:** Literary analysis of a storied text in its canonical form employing ideas from Narrative criticism such as plot, characterization, rhetoric and setting
- **Rhetorical Methods:** Examination of the strategies and mechanisms through which the text persuades its reader or hearer
- **Social Scientific Methods:** Analysis of the text from the perspective of social sciences and cultural anthropological insights of the world behind it
- **Discourse Analysis:** Linguistic and structural analysis of the text with interest in how the words relate to each other to form communicative units
- **Intertextuality:** Study of how one earlier biblical text is utilized by a later text and its implications for interpretations of both texts. For example Daniel texts in Revelation

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Categories of Approaches in Systematic Theology

- **Dialogical:**
 - Engaging in dialogue with different authors' viewpoints.
- **Comparative:**
 - Analysing similarities and differences between different view points
- **Complementary:**
 - Harmonising different theories or opinions by into a logically coherent whole.
- **Epistemological:**
 - Critical evaluation of the philosophical basis of an argument
- **Polemical:**
 - Apologetically engaging and arguing against a theory or idea
- **Analytical:**
 - Careful dissection and evaluation of a theory or a concept by engaging its logical components
- **Synthetic:**
 - Bringing together unrelated concepts to form a new model.

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Osborne's Method

1. What have Theologians said? – Historical Theology of the Topic
2. What does the Bible Say? – Biblical Theology of the Topic
3. How might we formulate a theology of the Topic? Systematic Theology
4. What are the theological/practical implications? Application

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Practical Theology)

Study through research, reflection and experimentation of the practical application of insights from the Bible and theology, and relevant social sciences disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology of theologians and practitioners, such as pastors, counsellors, social workers, and other professionals to real-life situations and contexts of individuals, the Church, communities and society at large.

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Research Methodologies in Practical Theology

- Richard Osmer's Method
- Zerfass Model (Simple Church situation analysis)
- Browning's (Social Science heavy)
- LIM (Loyola Institute of Ministry)
- Lewis & Damarest's Integrated Method
- Appreciative Inquiry Method
- Phenomenological Method - Ethnographic
- Praxis Cycle
- Praxis Matrix
- Grounded Theory Method

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Richard Osmer's Methodology

1. Descriptive Task:
 - What is going on?
 - Establish the real life problem
2. Interpretive Task:
 - Why is this going on?
 - Explain why the situation is
3. Normative Task:
 - What ought to be going on? Or What is God's will in this situation?
 - Use Bible & Theology (& Social Science) to Determine what *must* the situation be
4. Pragmatic Task:
 - How might we respond?
 - Detail Realistic Practical Strategies to transform the situation to the normative

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Qualitative Tools in Practical Theology Research

- Interviews
 - One on One
 - Mass Interviews
 - Group Interviews
- Focus Group Discussions
- Observation / Ethnographic Study
- Case Study
- Comparative research: Especially cross-cultural

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Literature Review

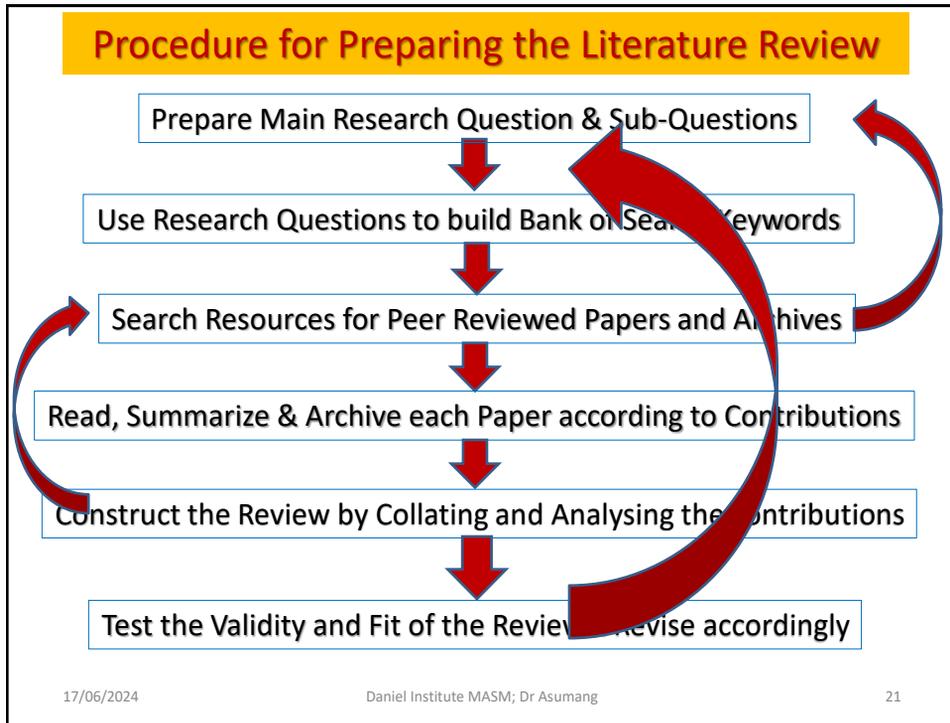
A literature review is a critical analysis and summary of existing published research on a particular topic usually arranged according to logical themes, but rarely according to chronology, with critical evaluations and dialogue intended to highlight the gaps in knowledge of the subject and so generate the motivations for further research

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Research ethics may be defined as the values and norms that are guide and shape the processes, decisions and activities involved in the creation of new knowledge and solving of problems through research.

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Core Biblical Values & Theological Research

1. Lordship of Jesus
2. The Gospel
3. Love: The Greatest Commandment
4. Truth
5. Imago Dei

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Philosophical issues related to Plagiarism

- **Cultural Perspectives**
 - Degrees to which plagiarism is viewed as offences may differ depending on culture
 - Individualistic Western cultures may view intellectual property as sacrosanct and plagiarism therefore as violation of sacred trust
 - Collectivistic cultures may view ideas as commonly owned and thus some may not view plagiarism as seriously as others
- **Social Linguistic Perspectives**
 - Non-English Students feel intimidated by having to express themselves in English and so may resort to “borrowing” words from others
 - Some may view use of other’s work as honouring them, which is fine, but such use must always be acknowledged
- **Academic Perspectives**
 - Scholarship by and large emphasize individual contributions and critical thinking
 - All students must therefore adopt the practice of ensuring that they use their own words in expressing knowledge, and to clearly attribute ideas to other sources

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Features of the Ideal Consent Form

- Ideally standardized institutional Consent form
- Clear and concise language that is easy to understand
- Detailed information about the purpose of the study, including the research question and methods
- Explanation of the participant's role in the study, including any risks or benefits
- Information about confidentiality and how the participant's data will be used and stored
- Clear explanation of the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time
- Contact information for the researcher or research team in case of questions or concerns
- Signature lines for both the participant and the researcher to indicate agreement and understanding of the terms of the consent form.

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Causes & Signs of Problems in Relationship

- **Communication breakdown:**
 - Lack of clarity can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.
- **Conflicting Styles:**
 - Conflicts in Personalities & “style” may stimulate tension.
- **Power dynamics:**
 - Navigation of power imbalance may not be easy, especially for different genders
- **Time pressures:**
 - Time pressures and deadlines can create stress and tension, especially if the student feels overwhelmed or unsupported.
- **Conflict of interest:**
 - Unrecognized or unacknowledged personal interests or commitments may lead to inappropriate pressures being exerted on student
- **Resource constraints:**
 - Time and other resources constraints may lead to student feeling unsupported

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The Research Proposal

1. Background (may contain “survey of scholarship”)
2. Review of Scholarship or Literature
3. Research Problem and/or Question
4. Research Sub-Questions
5. Hypothesis or central argument
6. Purpose and Relevance of Study
7. Methodology
8. Outline of chapters
9. Timeframe

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What is Scholarly Writing?

A distinctive genre of writing designed for specific scholarly audience communicating results of research that offers solutions to and or responding to and questioning various technical elements of an academic discipline

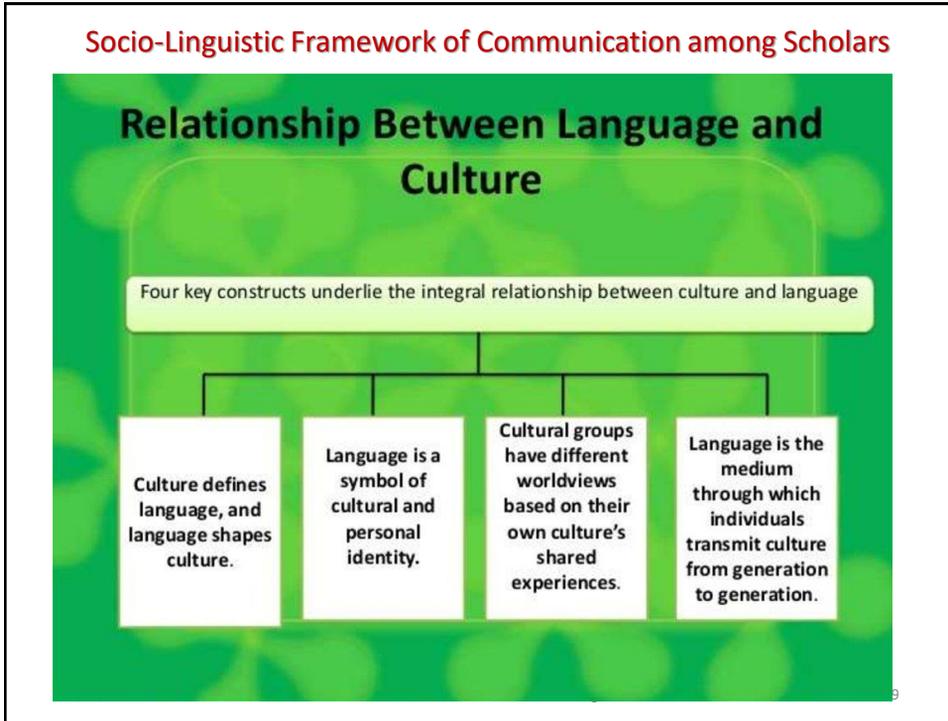
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Socio-Linguistic Framework of Communication among Scholars



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Because scholars belong to a particular entity with its own culture, and largely communicate also in English, non-native English speaking scholars must appreciate the several hurdles they need to overcome in order to fully participate in that academic culture

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Challenges of Non-Native English Scholars

1. **Language barriers:**
 - Understanding lectures, academic texts,
 - Adequate communication with other scholars.

 2. **Cultural differences:**
 - Difficulties adjusting to different expectations and teaching styles, as well
 - Culture Shock in engaging the social norms and values.

 3. **Academic writing:**
 - Learning Precision especially grammar, vocabulary, and structure

 4. **Time management:**
 - Most non-native students are adult learners with limited time
 - Many are multi-vocational

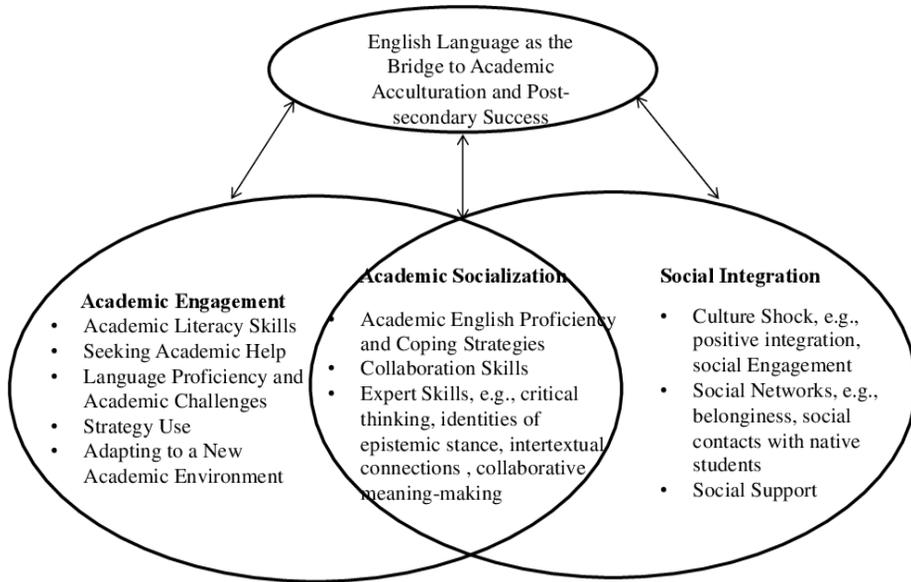
 5. **Confidence:**
 - Psychological barriers such as self-consciousness about limitations
 - Reserved temperament may impede public expressions of views
- Getting used (again) to criticisms may take some adjustments

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Three Steps of Integration into Scholarly Culture



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Structure of Scholarly Writing

- **Definition**
 - The arrangement and presentation of the content of the writing
- **Coherence**
 - Logical flow of thought
- **Signposting**
 - Precise headings following formatting styles
- **Bridging & Transitions**
 - Summaries, statements or words at beginnings and ends of sections and paragraphs bridge them to logically link them
- **Triadic Structure**
 - Typical line of argumentation that clarifies the point

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Criticality

The ability to evaluate and analyze scholarly information in a rigorous discursive manner questioning assumptions, testing evidence, identifying biases, and considering multiple perspectives in order to develop a well-reasoned argument or conclusion.

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Five Minimum Elements of Criticality

1. Clear statement of the claim
2. Fair explanation of the basis and methodology behind the claim
3. Insightful assessment of the claim, whether (a) correct, (b) wrong, or (c) partially correct and why
4. Reflections on the claim
5. Additional defence or statement of alternative or modification of claim

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Assessments for Part II

- **Formative Assessment: 40% of total marks**
 - Submit Research Proposal using the provided template (download from OCW on the Research Methods site)
 - Deadline for submission: **12th July 2024**
- **Summative Assessment: 60% of total marks**
 - Oral Defense of Research Proposal

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Rough Guide on Length of sections

- Aim for 13-15 pages length for the Research Proposal
- Arial font 12; 1.15 line spacing
- Background & Review of Scholarship: 4-5 pages
- Research Problem and Questions: 0.5-1 page
- Research Objectives and Contributions: 1-1.5 pages
- Research Design and Methodology: 4-5 pages
- Hypothesis: One sentence
- Structure & Timeframe: 0.5 pages

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Questions?

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