



LEAVELL COLLEGE

AT NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Senior Seminar: LCGE 4310

Fall 2023

Derek Kitterlin PhD

Online

Adjunct Instructor of Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Studies
318-481-2254

derekkitterlin@yahoo.com

Student Hours: by appointment via phone or videochat (BlueJeans)

The mission of Leavell College of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this capstone course for Leavell College, senior-level students will prepare for ministry and/or graduate studies. The major emphasis is critical thinking and the synthesis of knowledge within each discipline, utilizing upper-level thinking skills, research skills, writing skills, and speaking skills. Major assignments include the senior thesis and the oral defense of the thesis. Students will also read and analyze the senior theses of the other students in the course. *Prerequisites: Research and Writing, and the completion of 90+ semester hours.*

COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (CSLOs)

At the conclusion of the semester, you will be able to

1. understand the importance of critical thinking and the necessity of a synthesis of knowledge;
2. demonstrate through discussion/communication and in written assignments the ability to integrate the various disciplines experiences throughout the Leavell College tenure;
3. relate critical thinking and a synthesis of knowledge through the development and defense of the Senior Thesis.

COURSE TEXTS

The following material is **required**:

- A. NOBTS/Leavell College Style Guide—available in Canvas
- B. Other required readings will be provided in Canvas or accessible via the seminary's EBSCOhost database.

The following books are **optional** as may help you as you construct your papers:

- C. Kibbe, Michael. *From Topic to Thesis: A Guide to Theological Research*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2016. ISBN 9780830851317
- D. Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean, and Terry Dwain Robertson. *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014 ISBN 9780310514022

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Online Participation:** Because of the course format and type, online participation is essential. While you are not required to be online at a certain time, you will be responsible for *frequent and substantial* online participation. Online participation will include discussion board posts and uploads of self-created videos related to the Senior Thesis (see #6 and #8 below). If you are astute, you will pay attention to the Course Schedule and plan your time accordingly.
2. **Academic Articles:** You will be required to read selected academic articles that will be provided by your instructor. You will then write and submit critiques of those articles. The critiques, one double-spaced page in length, must be formatted according to the sample in Canvas. In each critique, you will state what you believe to be the thesis of the article, highlight one or two key claims of the author, explain the validity of the claims, and discuss the strengths or weaknesses of those selected claims, particularly related to the thesis of the article. You are not summarizing the material but learning to think critically about the author's work. Support your claims with data from the article. *Do not write in first person* for these critiques. The critiques will be due on the **Thursday** of the week in which they are assigned. You will submit the critiques as WORD documents (.doc or .docx). Additionally, you will upload your critique to the discussion board forum for that article; the critique will act as your initial post for that discussion forum.
3. **Discussion Board:** You will be **required** to post to Canvas discussion board forums according to the dates posted in the Course Schedule. During the week in which a discussion board prompt is assigned, you will follow the instructions in the forum regarding an initial major post and any required responses. A major post is the offering of one's opinion regarding the information being discussed. A response is a well-considered reaction to the initial poster. Responses such as "I agree" are not acceptable. Your response should indicate that you have read the initial post and have something to add to the discussion. The major post must be uploaded by **Thursday** of each week, and the minimum number of responses must be posted by **Sunday** of each week. Students who do more than the minimum requirements will earn higher grades for this portion of the course.

Note about framing discussion board posts and responses: Canvas discussion board posts are very important if you are to receive the best educational outcome for this course. Online posts and responses should be carefully considered, well planned, conscientiously edited, and adequately supported with facts prior to their submission to Canvas. My suggestion is that you type and save your posts and responses as Word documents so that you can reread, revise, and edit them before uploading them. Then, you can cut and paste them into the appropriate discussion board forum. In this way, you will have taken the time to consider your words carefully so that your post can contribute well to our online discussion. Additionally, by saving them on your desktop or flashdrive, you will have a record of all your posts for future reference

Note about online "netiquette": Each person will read course material and interpret it based on his or her experiences. Therefore, someone else may have a different view of the material than you have. These differing views are what make online conversation so valuable and stimulating — and difficult. Please respect each person's opinion. You very well may disagree with another person's interpretation of course material or of the discussion questions/prompts posed online. You are encouraged to respond to each others' posts (and will be required to do so). In your responses, however, you should

never ridicule another student or in any way disrespect him or her or his or her opinions. I reserve the right to remove any posts I feel are disrespectful (which, of course, will result in the post not being counted for credit). You can disagree with another person's point of view, but in no post or response should you write something that in any way harms another student.

Note about professor responses to discussion board posts: During the weeks in which I assign a discussion forum, you can expect an online response from me at least once per week. Often in my responses, I will ask you a question or request a clarification or provide some redirection. If I instruct you in any way, I do expect your appropriate responses. My comments and questions to you mimic the type of discussion that might occur in a face-to-face setting, so answering the follow-up questions/comments is important. Also, I will not respond directly to every post or every response, but I do read ALL posts and responses. I rarely respond to posts or emails during the weekend. However, you can expect frequent online interaction from me.

4. **Mini-Assignments:** You will be required to submit several mini-assignments related to the Senior Thesis (or Senior Paper or Critical Paper—I use terms interchangeably) that you will be writing. A Senior Thesis is a paper in which you are attempting either to defend or deny a thesis statement. For Senior Seminar, the thesis paper must have a biblical or theological basis.
 - A. The first of these mini-assignments is a well-developed thesis statement and a brief paragraph description of the Senior Thesis you intend to write. First, during the week in which topics are to be proposed, you must be prepared to present at least two possible topics along with a brief explanation of your perceived validity of those topics; this information will be your initial post to a discussion forum. The rest of the class members will then discuss the possible topics indicating their perceptions of the appropriateness of the proposed topics. In this way, the class takes ownership of the topics for the papers through considering the merits of the proposed topics. Please note that not all topics are appropriate for a thesis paper, and based on class interaction and professor input regarding the topic/thesis, students may have to choose an alternative topic. Then, after the topics have been approved, students will write a final, formal thesis statement. The final thesis statement will be due electronically in Canvas on the date indicated in the Course Schedule. Late thesis submissions will affect your grade for this assignment.
 - B. The second mini-assignment will be a preliminary bibliography of fifteen possible sources for the paper. The bibliography is to be annotated, meaning that the student will write several sentences about the source indicating its overall content and its usefulness in the paper. An example of an annotated bibliography entry can be found on page 10 of this syllabus. An electronic copy of the annotated bibliography will be due in Canvas on the date indicated in the Course Schedule. Late submission, lack of annotations, fewer than the required sources, and/or poor Turabian will affect your grade on this assignment.
 - C. The final mini-assignment will be a detailed outline of the paper. You will not be submitting a rough draft of your paper, so the outline will be my only chance to assess the logic of the paper. An electronic copy of the outline will be due in Canvas on the date indicated in the Course Schedule. Late, poor, or incomplete work will affect your grade on this assignment. Additionally,

failure to submit an outline will result in a penalty of one letter grade on the final paper.

5. **Critical Paper:** You will be required to research, write, and present a critical paper (Senior Thesis) on the topic approved by the class (with professor input). *The paper must have a biblical or theological basis **and** must relate to your major.* The paper must be 17-20 pages of text. (This pagination does not include the title page, blank page, contents page, or bibliography.) Papers shorter or longer than the required length will be penalized as follows: two points for each page shorter than the required minimum length, and one point for each page exceeding the required maximum length. The format must be according to the NOBTS/Leavell College Manual of Form and Style. The Senior Thesis will be graded on style, format, grammar, and Turabian. (See grading rubric in Canvas.)

An electronic copy of the paper must be submitted electronically as ONE PDF DOCUMENT via Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the date indicated in the Course Schedule. Papers not submitted by the due date will not be accepted, and you therefore will not be able to pass the course. The professor will upload the copies of the papers to Canvas so that all students can access them. *Note: This assignment is an embedded assignment that will be completed by all students for all sections of this course.*

6. **Oral Defense:** You also will be required to submit a video of yourself giving a 7-10-minute formal oral defense of the paper. In this defense, you will explain why you took the particular position on the topic, what you consider the key arguments in your paper (both for and against the thesis), what you learned from the research, what you believe to be strengths and weaknesses of your paper, and what you would have done differently. The video must be uploaded as an unlisted (not private) YouTube video (the only format to be accepted), and the YouTube link to the video must be sent via email to the professor by 11:59 p.m. on the date indicated on the Course Schedule. I will upload all videos to Canvas, and all students are expected to view all videos before reading the Senior Theses. If you do not submit a video, your paper will not be read or critiqued, and you therefore will not pass the course. **Late videos will not be accepted.** *This assignment is an embedded assignment that will be completed by all students for all sections of this course.*
7. **Evaluation Form:** During the last two to four weeks of the course, you will read and critique other students' Senior Theses. I will post a schedule of which papers will be read and discussed for each of those weeks. You will be completing an evaluation form for **each paper** you are assigned, and these forms are counted toward your grade. The process for the evaluation forms will be as follows:
 - a. First, consult the schedule so you will know which papers to read during a given week.
 - b. Second, view the video oral defense of the student whose paper you are reading. This step is important as you need to see the person whose paper you are reading. Reading the paper with that person's face and voice in mind changes the way you read the paper. You're reading the work of a person you've seen rather than the work of an unknown person.

- c. Third, download the Senior Thesis so that you can read it. I'd strongly suggest that you print the paper so that you can mark on it as you will be expected to give the paper a grade.
 - d. Fourth, download the Word version of the evaluation form (available in Canvas). As you read the paper, you should mark the paper according to the areas identified on the evaluation form. You should also mark strengths and weakness of the paper.
 - e. Complete the evaluation form electronically. Once you have saved it, you will submit it electronically.
 - f. In addition to submitting the evaluation forms (which only I will see), you will also be discussing each student's paper via Canvas discussion board forum (see #8 below). The intent of these discussions is to mimic a round-table discussion that would happen in a traditional setting. I will provide very clear instructions as to the format of these particular discussions. The goal is for us to help each other grow as writers and thinkers, so the expectation is that our comments will be complimentary and constructive, not critical. I will monitor these boards carefully, and I will remove posts that are not constructive or complimentary.
8. **Video Critique:** In addition to completing evaluation forms for each paper submitted for the class, you will be assigned to give a video evaluation/critique of one other student's paper. You must give a 7-10-minute formal oral critique (video recorded) of one Senior Thesis from another member of the class. I will provide clear instructions on my expectations for this video oral critique. This video must be uploaded as an unlisted (not private) video to YouTube, and the link must be submitted to me via email by 11:59 p.m. on the date indicated on the Course Schedule. I will view the video, and if I believe the video to be appropriate, I will upload it to a discussion board for that particular paper. That oral critique will be the basis for the discussion, and all members of the class will be required to post comments (constructive and complementary) about the paper being discussed. After I view the oral critique video, if I believe it to be inappropriate (too harsh, too negative, not constructive enough, etc.), I will ask you to resubmit the oral critique. Then, I will upload the video to the appropriate discussion board. If you do not provide your video oral critique, your paper will be pulled from the schedule and you therefore will not pass the course. **Late videos will not be accepted.**
9. **Reflection Paper:** You must submit a reflection paper regarding your insights on how well Leavell College has equipped you to meet our program expectations. The specific prompt for the paper will be available near the end of the semester. **The reflection paper must be 4-5 typed pages** and is due by 11:59 p.m. on the date indicated on the Course Schedule. Students who fail to address the prompt will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment. The reflection papers will be submitted electronically via Canvas. **Late papers will not be accepted.**

GRADING

The final grade will be tabulated as follows:

average of chapter critiques	10%
formal thesis statement	1%
annotated bibliography	2%
detailed outline	2%
senior paper	40%
oral defense of paper	10%

GRADING SCALE

A: 93-100
B: 85-92
C: 77-84
D: 70-76
F: below 70

evaluation forms of peers' papers	10%
oral critique of one peer's paper	5%
average of discussion board grades	10%
reflection paper	10%

COURSE SCHEDULE (Tentative as of July 15, 2023)

Note: With the exception of the due date for the reflection paper/final exam, the rest of the due dates and topics are subject to change.)

UNIT	DATE	REQUIRED DISCUSSION BOARD POSTINGS (initial post due Thursday; responses due by Sunday of each week)	OTHER ASSIGNMENTS
1	Aug. 14-20	Getting to Know You DB	Read the three documents related to thesis statements and view the video related to writing a thesis paper
2*	Aug. 21-27	1. Possible Project Topics DB 2. Article 1 DB	Article 1 critique due via Canvas by Thursday
3*	Aug. 28- Sept. 3	1. Continue discussion on Possible Project Topics DB as needed 2. Final Thesis Statement DB 3. Article 2 DB	Article 2 critique due via Canvas by Thursday
4*	Sept. 4-10	Article 3 DB	1. Article 3 critique due via Canvas by Thursday 2. Final Thesis Statement due by Sunday
5*	Sept. 11-17	Article 4 DB	1. Article 4 critique due via Canvas by Thursday 2. Annotated Bibliography due via Canvas by Sunday
6*	Sept. 18-24	Article 5 DB	1. Article 5 critique due via Canvas by Thursday 2. Detailed Outline due via Canvas by Sunday
7	Sept. 25-Oct. 1	No discussion board assignment	Work on paper
8	Oct. 2-8	NOBTS SEMESTER BREAK	No new work assigned
9	Oct. 9-15	No discussion board assignment	Five pages of your paper due to the Writing Center by 10/11 . Email me upon receiving your marked copy from the Writing Center. You will submit the document to Canvas and we will schedule your meeting for the week of 10/16–21 .

10	Oct. 16-22	No discussion board assignment	<i>Required</i> BlueJeans meeting with instructor to discuss the five pages of your paper.
11	Oct. 23-29	No discussion board assignment	1. Electronic copy of paper as ONE PDF DOCUMENT due via Canvas Sunday 2. Oral Video Defense of your paper—YouTube link due via Canvas by Sunday
12	Oct. 30-Nov. 5	No discussion board assignment	Video Oral Response of Assigned Paper—YouTube link due via Canvas by Sunday
13**	Nov. 6-12	3-5 DBs on assigned papers	Evaluation forms for assigned papers due via Canvas Thursday
14**	Nov. 13-19	3-5 DBs on assigned papers	Evaluation forms for assigned papers due via Canvas Thursday
	Nov. 20-26	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
15	Nov. 27-Dec. 3	No discussion board assignment	Reflection paper due via Canvas Sunday

*Regarding chapter critiques for weeks 2-5: Your written chapter critiques are due via Assignments on Thursday of each week AND should be uploaded to Blackboard by Thursday of each week. Your responses to a minimum of two others' posts are due by Sunday of each week.

Regarding student papers for weeks 13-15: The exact number of papers to be read in a given week will be determined by how many students submit papers. During a given week, you will be reading up to five student papers, completing written evaluation forms for each of those papers, and working on the discussion boards for those papers. The evaluation forms **and your initial discussion board posts are due by Thursday of each week, and your responses to a minimum of two others' posts are due by Sunday of each week. Rebuttals by writers of the papers are also due by Sunday of each week.

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

1. Attendance Policy: Leavell College follows the attendance policy as stated in the Leavell College catalog. While online students are not required to be online at a certain time, they are expected to engage regularly and consistently with course material.
2. Policy for Late Submissions: Unless otherwise noted, late work will result in a penalty of seven percentage points for the first day and one percentage per day thereafter. No work will be accepted more than one week late. **The Senior Paper, the Oral Defense Video, the Oral Video Critique, and the Reflection Paper will not be accepted late.**
3. Plagiarism Policy: A high standard of personal integrity is expected of all Leavell College students. Copying another person's work, submitting downloaded material without proper references, submitting material without properly citing the source, submitting the same material for credit in more than one course, and committing other such forms of dishonesty are strictly forbidden. *Although anything cited in three sources is considered public domain, we require that all sources be cited.* Any infraction may result in failing

the assignment and the course. Any infraction will be reported to the Dean of Leavell College for further action.

A further note about plagiarism: All written assignments must be your own work!

- a. If you use an author's exact words, you must put his/her words in quotation marks and footnote the source. You must also cite the author in the text of the paper.
 - b. If you paraphrase, you must footnote the source. You must also cite the author in the text of the paper.
 - c. Any information that you include in your paper that you did not previously know must be footnoted because that information came from someone else.
 - d. If you do not footnote someone else's information, you are plagiarizing that person's work.
 - e. If your paraphrases are too close to the original (i.e. you change an adjective here or there), you have committed inadvertent plagiarism. Inadvertent plagiarism is still plagiarism.
 - f. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and the penalties can include a failing grade in the course and/or dismissal from Leavell College
4. Classroom and Online Decorum: Each student is expected to demonstrate appropriate Christian behavior. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of the others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity is expected at all times. Electronic devices should be used only for classroom purposes as indicated by the professor.
 5. Special Needs: If you need accommodations for a disability, please set up a meeting with the professor for consideration of any modifications you may need.
 6. Emergency Plan: In the event the NOBTS schedule is impacted due to a natural event, go to the seminary's website for pertinent information. Class will continue as scheduled through the Canvas site. Please note announcements and assignments on the course's Canvas site.
 7. Technical Assistance: For general NOBTS technical help, go to www.NOBTS.edu/itc/
 8. Style Guide: A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Canvas shell, or it can be located online at the Writing Center's page on the seminary website at <https://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/writing/StyleGuide.pdf>
 9. The Write Stuff: NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. All Leavell College students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. Please contact them at <http://nobts.edu.writing> to secure help with writing.
 10. Document Format: *Unless otherwise noted*, all written assignments submitted electronically must be submitted as Word documents (.doc or .docx). Documents submitted in any other format will not be graded. Please use Times New Roman 12-

point font, use one-inch margins on all sides, and double space all work. Please use a seminary-specific cover page for all work submitted.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003.

Longknife, Ann, and K.D. Sullivan. *The Art of Styling Sentences*. 5th ed. Happaage, NY: Barrons, 2012.

Masiello, Lea, and Tracy L. Skipper. *Writing in the Senior Capstone: Theory and Practice*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2013.

Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean, and Terry Dwain Robertson. *Your Guide to Writing a Quality Research Paper: For Students of Religion and Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Yaghjian, Lucretia B. *Writing Theology Well: A Rhetoric for Theological and Biblical Writers*. 2nd ed. New York: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. 6th ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

Instructions for Mini-assignments Related to the Thesis Paper

Thesis Statement

The first mini-assignment is your thesis statement. Because you are writing a thesis paper—a paper in which you attempt to defend or deny a thesis statement—a well-written thesis statement is a critical component of the paper. Your thesis statement must make a claim and should convey to the reader that the claim you are making has been researched thoroughly and is defensible by evidence. Your thesis cannot be an opinion but must indicate to the reader the topic you are arguing and the claims you are making about that argument.

Annotated Bibliography

For the second mini-assignment, you will submit an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to the sources that you will use (or may use) in your final paper. Following each correctly formatted citation, you will provide a brief descriptive, evaluative paragraph known as an annotation. In other words, you will write several sentences about the source including its overall content and its possible usefulness in the paper. Please write in third person, and use past-tense verbs to tell what an author wrote. An example of an annotated bibliography entry is as follows:

Wesley, John. *The Essential Works of John Wesley: Selected Books, Sermons, and Other Writings*. Edited by Alice Russie. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2013.

This collection of John Wesley's writings includes a vast number of his sermons, articles, and essays. Wesley had no love for the TULIP as made evident throughout his ministry. He staunchly opposed the concept of limited atonement, preferring a general atonement instead. His sermons may prove to be useful counters to the thesis of this paper.

Detailed Outline

The final mini-assignment is your outline. The outline should include up to *five* first-level sections. The first section will be the introduction and the last section will be the conclusion, leaving you with two or three sections for the body of your paper. Under each section heading, you must include *at least two* clearly identified subpoints along with at least one source in which you can find information about that subpoint. This outline will become the basis for the contents page in your paper. Note that because you will not submit rough drafts for your paper, the outline will be the only chance for the professor to assess the logic of your paper.