

## **Certificate in Gender, Theology, and Ministry Project Guidelines**

A key component of the *Certificate in Gender, Theology, and Ministry* is the completion of a service learning or research project. The certificate program requirements specify four settings in which the project may be completed:

Students must complete a service learning or research project in the area of gender, theology, and ministry. The project may be conducted in one of four ways: 1) within a course (but not within any of the three courses that fulfill the previous requirement), 2) within a directed study, 3) as an independent community service project, or 4) within the context of a field education placement (N.B. The field education office is not responsible for facilitating or evaluating this project in any way). Ideally the project will take place during the senior year or during the summer prior to the senior year.

Students may choose to complete either a service learning project or a research project. **A service learning project will normally culminate in a 15 page reflection paper. A research project will normally culminate in a 25 page research paper (including footnotes).** All papers should be double spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font.

Some guidelines for completing projects within each of these four settings follow:

### **1. Within a Course**

To complete the project within the context of a fourth course, students must do the following:

- 1) Obtain permission from the instructor of the course. At this time the instructor and the student should also consult to determine whether the project will meet the requirements for a final paper or similar within the course, substitute for another assignment, or be conducted as a supplement to the assigned work for the course.
- 2) Inform the Certificate Program Director that the project will be completed within the context of the specified course and obtain the director's approval for the topic.
- 3) Submit the paper and/or other relevant materials to the program director, who will then determine whether it satisfies the project requirement for the certificate program.

Note that this judgment is separate from the student's grade for the course in the context of which the paper is completed. If the research project is also submitted to the instructor of the course as a graded assignment, the grade assigned to the paper by the instructor is also a separate judgment from the determination of whether the project satisfies the project requirement for the certificate program.

### **2. Within a Directed Study**

To complete the project within the context of a directed study, you will need to find a faculty member who will serve as advisor for the directed study. Students should consult the list of certificate program affiliates, but may choose to work with a faculty member not on the list. To receive credit for the directed study, students must fill out a form that can be obtained from the registrar's office (the form also requires the signature of the faculty member), then return the form to the registrar.

Directed Studies can be conducted in a variety of ways, and faculty expectations will vary. We offer here a sample rubric representing a typical workload. Given that a semester has 13 weeks, a course-load for an independent study will look something like this:

The **first two weeks** of the course are there for you to shape the precise nature of your project and research, and to gather the materials. By the end of the second week, you should have a clear statement of your project, and an outline of the materials to be read.

The **last two weeks** of the semester are there for you to do the writing and editing of your final paper. The guidelines for this final paper are as follows: A **final paper** (25 pages, double-spaced, times new roman font) is at the end of your independent study. The paper's topic, typically, will be the topic of your research.

In between the first and the last two weeks, **nine weeks** are left for you do your reading, note-taking, research, thinking, and preliminary writing. Think of the work of each week as consisting of a certain amount of reading. As a general guideline, between 50 and 100 pages for each week should be expected.

Here are some standards for what counts as excellent work in a final paper (with thanks to Alice Dreger, who initially formulated these criteria):

*An A essay is excellent in (close to) all respects. Such an essay:*

- is well-argued and well-organized, with a clear thesis.
- is well-developed and argued, with content that is specific, appropriate, and convincing.
- has logical transitions that contribute to a fluent style of writing.
- has few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors.
- demonstrates a clear command of the subject-matter.

*A B essay shares most characteristics of an A essay, but:*

- may have some minor lapses in organization and development.
- may have minor mechanical, grammatical, or diction problems.
- may be less distinguished in its arguments and its command of the subject-matter.

*A C essay is competent, but compared to a B essay it:*

- may have a weaker thesis and less effective development.
- may contain some lapses in organization.
- may have poor or awkward transitions.
- may have more mechanical, grammatical, and diction problems.
- is likely to be less distinguished in its handling of the topic.

*A D essay is likely to:*

- present a thesis too vague or too obvious to be developed.
- display major organization problems.
- lack adequate support for its thesis.
- have confusing or non-existent transitions.
- have ungrammatical or poorly constructed sentences.
- demonstrate problems with spelling, punctuation, diction, or syntax which impede understanding.

*A F essay is seriously flawed. It is likely to:*

- have no clear thesis or central topic.
- display random organization.

- lack adequate support or specific development.
- include irrelevant details.
- fail to fulfill the assignment or be unfairly brief.
- contain major or repeated errors in diction, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

### **3 and 4. Projects conducted as an Independent Community Service Project, or within a Field Education Setting**

Examples of service learning projects in these settings may be obtained from the program director and will soon be made available on line.

The student who wishes to complete a service learning project should identify a project advisor, who may be a faculty member or other qualified individual, such as a local pastor, seminary librarian, or community program director.

The service learning project will normally culminate in a final paper 15-20 pages in length (double space, times new roman font). This paper will normally take the form of a reflective essay that analyzes personal learning experiences and links them with broader themes examined in course work completed for the Women's Studies Certificate. Guidelines for the reflective essay follow:

A reflective essay differs from traditional academic writing in a number of respects: it marshals evidence in a different way, often using anecdotal descriptions of specific events to illustrate its points, and it usually adopts a more personal tone. Reflective essays may or may not announce their central theme in the first paragraph – sometimes authors will choose to have this theme emerge more gradually in the course of the essay. However, a good reflective essay does *have* a clear theme and something very like a thesis. It is NOT simply a personal narrative that describes what you did and how you felt about it. Rather, it asks a specific, focused question and comes to a conclusion about it. It draws on personal experience to interrogate and illuminate larger issues. And while it does not need to “anticipate and respond to objections and counterarguments” in the same way that academic essays should, a good reflective essay will anticipate the reader's responses and seek to persuade the reader that the author is insightful and trustworthy and that his or her experiences and conclusions are generalizable to others in significant ways. In order to ensure that you are linking your experiences with broader course work themes, refer to at least three authors you have engaged.

A reflective essay in the “**A**” **range** develops a clear theme and comes to an interesting and memorable conclusion about it. It skillfully and persuasively links personal experience with larger issues. It is engagingly written and adept at establishing a consistent tone, whether that tone be passionate, moving, humorous, etc.

A reflective essay in the “**B**” **range** does a good job of linking personal experiences with larger issues. It comes to a clear and persuasive conclusion and is generally well-written. It does not exhibit the nuance, power, and style of “**A**” range essays.

A reflective essay in the “**C**” **range** tells one or more stories and offers thoughtful personal reflections on them. However, it lacks the coherent focus and the clear link to larger issues that are evident in “**A**” and “**B**” range essays.

Reflective essays that fail to meet the standards for “**C**” range work will receive a “**D**” or “**F**.”

The final paper and other relevant materials should be submitted to the program director, along with any evaluative comments from the project advisor (where applicable). The program director,

in consultation with the project advisor, will determine whether the project satisfies the requirements for this component of the certificate program. Essays in the D or F range will not satisfy this requirement.