

**DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL**  
**COURSE OF STUDY WRITING GUIDELINES\***

This handout aims to cover some of the basic things you should keep in mind as you write and also provides a guide to documenting the sources you may use.

**PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A PAPER**

Before you start writing your paper, read the directions for the assignment carefully—and follow them! If anything is unclear, talk to your instructor.

**THE WRITING PROCESS**

There are four fundamental stages in the writing process: brainstorming, composing, revising, and editing.

**1. Brainstorming**

Brainstorming involves gathering and using the materials you need for a paper (lecture notes, assigned readings, etc.), thinking about them, and discerning how you might use them. Try talking an assignment through with other students, jotting down ideas, drawing up an outline, etc.

**2. Composing**

Writers generally tend to adopt one of two approaches when composing—either they are planners and like to have an outline drawn up before they begin any serious writing, or they are explorers and write to see what they think and where their ideas might go. Either approach is fine; work with what seems best for you. However, at some point you will have to organize your material in a way that is logical and which your reader can easily follow.

- **Thesis Statements:** Each of your papers will need a thesis statement. Think of a thesis as a statement of a point of view that is contestable and which you intend to defend. For example, “Team X lost all its games last season” is *not* a thesis statement—it is just a statement of fact. “Team X lost all its games last season because its defence was weak” is a thesis statement (albeit a very simple one) because it makes a claim that is contestable (someone could argue that the offence was the real problem). A thesis should not be *opinionated* (“Team X deserved to lose because their coach is hopeless and I don’t like him”), nor does it have to be heavily controversial. Rather it tells the reader about the main issues the paper will discuss and how they will be explained. A strong thesis is direct, focused, and demonstrates understanding of the key issues. Here are some more examples:

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\* These guidelines conform to those generally used at Duke Divinity School and are recommended by the Center for Theological Writing. Course of Study instructors expect students to follow these formatting rules, although instructors may modify them at their own discretion.

- Weak thesis (very little analysis): *Calvin and Luther have different views on the Eucharist. This paper will explore those differences.*
- Weak (no argument; explains organization of paper only): *This paper will first discuss Luther's view of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist, and then it will discuss Calvin's view of real spiritual presence in the Eucharist.*
- Strong (organized, direct analysis of key issues): *Though Calvin and Luther disagreed on the nature of the Eucharist, they both explained the Eucharist as a sacrament of Christ's presence. However, Luther defended the real presence of Christ with descriptions of Christ's resurrected body in "a divine, heavenly mode," while Calvin emphasized the church as participating in the Body of Christ and Christ's "real spiritual presence."*

Many writers begin with a *preliminary* thesis statement before they begin writing, but it is not unusual to change your thesis in the process of writing your paper (just make sure that the evidence and arguments in the paper actually support the new thesis).

- **Organization:** An outline can keep you organized and provide a sense of direction, but it is fine to draw up an outline even at the *end* of writing an initial draft—it will then help you organize the material you have generated. Here's a very basic outline:

Introduction

Sentence(s) introducing paper topic

Thesis (1–2 sentences—depending on the complexity and length of paper)

Roadmap (short account of the main points you will address)

Body

Point #1 to support thesis

Point #2 to support thesis (builds on point #1)

Point #3 to support thesis (builds on pts. #1 & #2)

Conclusion

- **Paragraphing:** What are the features of an effective paragraph? A topic sentence that signals what the paragraph will focus on; evidence/support (which may include use of quotations); and reasoning/argumentation.

Paragraphs should each focus on one significant point that, together with your other points, supports your larger thesis in a connected and coherent manner. There is no single ideal length for a paragraph, although paragraphs tend to be longer if the point you are making is complex—and you may need several paragraphs to discuss a single point fully.

### 3. Revising

Once you have written a solid draft of your paper, you next have to make sure that all the parts fit and build to a coherent and convincing “argument” (“argument” here means a line of reasoning that is likely to convince a reader that you understand your subject matter and that your point of view is a reasonable and well-defended one). Therefore it is important that you check for

- accuracy—review your facts and quotations
- logic—your line of reasoning should not be contradictory or marked by fallacies; your argument and use of evidence should properly support your thesis
- coherence—are you connecting your points? Signal relationships between the points you make by using words and phrases such as: however, nevertheless, consequently, therefore, as a result of, in addition to, first/second/third, as I showed earlier, as I will argue . . .
- clarity—is your writing clear? Will your reader understand what you are saying?
- wordiness, repetition, and general redundancy—these need to be eliminated

#### 4. Editing

- check your paper properly responds to the prompt for the assignment
- check for spelling, punctuation, and grammar mistakes
- make sure you have cited all the sources you have used (**even if you have not directly quoted from them**) and have provided all the necessary bibliographic information, which should be properly formatted

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is academic cheating and may take the following forms: having someone write your paper for you, copying someone’s work (whether the work is written by a fellow student, a published author, or anonymously on the internet), and/or using resources without properly citing them. You are responsible for doing your own work and properly attributing not only the quotations you may use but also any ideas you have acquired from others. Proper quotation and citation should ensure that you do not accidentally plagiarize the sources you use.

We must remind you that detection of plagiarism will subject you to the Course of Study disciplinary process. Instructors have discretion over the consequences of plagiarism cases within their course.

If you need additional information about plagiarism, Duke libraries have resources at <https://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism> or you can contact Judith Heyhoe in the Center for Theological Writing at [jheyhoe@div.duke.edu](mailto:jheyhoe@div.duke.edu)

#### USE OF QUOTATIONS

In order to support and illustrate the points you make, you will probably make use of quotations. All direct quotations should be placed in “quotation marks.” If the quote contains a quotation mark, “the quote within a quote should be placed within ‘single quotation’ marks” (as I have shown here). Longer quotations (usually five lines or more) are formatted as block quotes that are indented from the left margin the same distance as a paragraph indent. However, be judicious in your use of quotes. If you quote too much, your instructor will judge that there is not enough of *your* thinking in a paper.

In order to use quotes effectively they should be seamlessly woven into your prose and into your argument. Therefore, make sure that each quote fits the grammar of the sentence into which it is

inserted (quotes can be used as separate sentences in your paragraphs, but they may then appear as rather isolated statements) and fits the sense of what you are saying. (For further help on using quotations, go to the Duke Divinity website, “Academics,” “Center for Theological Writing,” “Writing Resources.”)

## FORMATTING YOUR PAPER

Papers should use a standard format as follows:

- use 12 point, Times New Roman
- generally, avoid boldface type, except for headings and sub-headings (although take care to distinguish between levels of headings):
  - **Section**
  - *Sub-section*
  - Sub-sub section
- italics may be used to *emphasize* a word; all *book titles* should be in italics
- papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides
- format paragraphs either as indented paragraphs (hit tab to indent or use your ruler beneath the toolbar to set indents) **or** block paragraphs (these are not indented but have white space between them)
- include your last name and page number in the header of each page, right justified; do not use large header or footers that take up space (to insert a page number and header, go to “Insert,” “Page Number,” select top of page and right, then when the page number appears, place your cursor to the left of the number and type your name before closing the header)

## DOCUMENTATION

There are two main ways to cite the sources of information you use in a paper: you can use either parenthetical citations or footnotes. Parenthetical citations *must* be accompanied by a Works Cited page; footnotes are generally accompanied by such a page. Here are a couple of examples:

Parenthetical: As we can see, the “aim of a spiritual exercise is to develop in people the habits that will enable them to live a more ordered . . . life” (Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 28).

Footnote: As we can see, the “aim of a spiritual exercise is to develop in people the habits that will enable them to live a more ordered . . . life.”<sup>1</sup>

*And at the bottom of the page you should have a footnote as follows:*

<sup>1</sup> Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28.

## Scriptural Citations

When citing the Bible, you will almost invariably use **parenthetical citations** as follows:

Your writing, “Bible Quote” (Gen 1:1-3, NRSV).

Additionally, for parenthetical scriptural references:

- once you have cited the edition of the Bible you are using (e.g., NRSV, NIV, etc.), you usually don't need to reference it again (unless you are using multiple different editions)
- abbreviate the names of biblical books in your citations (Matt), but write out their names in full—Matthew—in your main text
- if you make additional references to a passage/chapter you have identified, it is fine to just cite verse numbers (v. 4 or vv. 6-9). Just make sure you are being clear.

### Formatting Footnotes

Creating a footnote in Word is easy: Place your cursor where you want to insert your footnote number, then go to “References” on the bar at the top of your document and simply click on “Insert Footnote.” Your cursor will then jump down to the bottom of your page and there you can type the information you want in your note. To delete a complete note, delete the footnote number in the body of your paper. Do you want to change your footnotes to endnotes? If you expand the “Footnotes” box on your bar, you can then make changes to how you want your notes to appear.

### Now let's look at examples of formatted footnotes.

The first example is a citation to a **book with one author**. If you want to cite a particular page, change the final period to a comma and add the page number(s). Using “p.” is optional, so you might see any of the following: 103, 120–34 or p. 103, pp. 120–34.

<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

Here's a citation to a **book with editors**:

<sup>2</sup> Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, eds., *The Reception of Vatican II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Next, **an essay in an edited book**:

<sup>3</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, “Reading What Is Written in the Book of Life: Theological Interpretation of the Book of Revelation Today,” in *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation*, ed. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 155–71.

Next, an **article in a scholarly journal**:

<sup>4</sup> Paul Chung, “Karl Barth's Theology of Reconciliation in Dialogue with a Theology of Religions,” *Mission Studies* 25.2 (2008): 211–28.

An **article in a magazine or newspaper** (today most of us access articles online, so I have included the necessary online reference below. If you are citing an actual newspaper, obviously you don't need the http information):

<sup>5</sup> John Corry, “‘Gospel and Guatemala’ A Look at Proselytizing,” *The New York Times*, March 28, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/03/28/movies/gospel-and-guatemala-a-look-at-proselytizing.html> (accessed Feb. 14, 2017).

Citing **material posted online by your instructor (some students have access to an online site called Sakai)** for a class paper. Your professor may provide complete bibliographical information for the material posted on Sakai/online, but if s/he hasn’t, it is fine to simply cite the basic information you do know:

<sup>6</sup> Jane Doe, “Old Testament Exegeses” (Sakai). **Or**, for example: Jane Doe, “Old Testament Exegeses” (Sakai: OLDTESTAMENT.752.001.F16 **or Online Site: Course Name**).

However, in certain circumstances (if your paper is going to be submitted outside the Divinity School), it might be necessary to track down the complete information. A good source of reliable information is the WorldCat site at <https://www.worldcat.org/>.

Want to cite **lectures notes**?

<sup>7</sup> Susan Eastman, “The Gospel of Luke” (lecture, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC, April 10, 2009).

**Internet references.** Given the variety of internet sources we can access and the fact that sites do not always provide complete identifying information, citing an internet source of information can be tricky—and the formatting of such references seems to be endlessly evolving. Nevertheless, at the very least you should try to provide the name for the particular webpage you have consulted (for example, “Four Areas of Focus: Ministering with the Poor”); the host or owner of the site (The People of The United Methodist Church); a date (note that some websites include dates and others do not. If the website provides a day, use it; if it does not, note the date when you accessed the site); finally, provide the URL/web address:

<sup>8</sup> “Four Areas of Focus: Ministering with the Poor,” The People of The United Methodist Church, 2019, <http://www.umc.org/topics/four-areas-of-focus-ministering-with-the-poor>.

or

<sup>9</sup> “Four Areas of Focus: Ministering with the Poor,” The People of The United Methodist Church, accessed February 27, 2019, <http://www.umc.org/topics/four-areas-of-focus-ministering-with-the-poor>.

### **Citing Sources You Have Already Cited in the Same Document**

What should you do—if you are using footnotes—if you have already cited a source and want to cite it again? Do you have to duplicate all the information? No. There are a couple of things you can do.

1. You can provide a shortened reference:

First Citation: <sup>1</sup> Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 1984), 45.

Additional Citation: <sup>2</sup> Arias, *Announcing*, 48. (Note that you use the author's last name, a shortened title, and then the page number.)

2. You can use "ibid." if you have a series of citations that cite the same source as that named in the previous footnote. ("Ibid." means "in the same source.")

First Citation: <sup>1</sup> Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 1984), 45.

Next Citation: <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 48. If the page number is the same, you need only type "Ibid." Note that you should have a period at the end of "ibid." as it is an abbreviation for "ibidem"; also, note you may also have to use shortened references if a reference to another work intervenes in a string of references thus:

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal Press, 1984), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Arias, *Announcing*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**A word of caution to EndNote users:** EndNote is a great program for storing bibliographic information and, to some extent, formatting that information. However, don't assume that the way it formats a reference is always right—it often isn't.

**For information, go to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is available online through Duke University Libraries if you have a Net ID.**

### **Bibliography/Works Cited**

Instructors may require a Works Cited page (which includes those works you actually cite in your references) or a Bibliography (which includes works that you have cited and works you have read for the assignment but did not cite) at the end of your paper. However, both a works cited page and a bibliography are formatted in the same way as follows:

- Start your list of references on a new page. To start a new page, at the end of your current final page insert a page break: in Microsoft Word, place your cursor after the last word you have typed, go to "Insert" on your toolbar, and then click "Page Break"
- Then, once you have typed "Works Cited" or "Bibliography," hit return a couple of times and format for a hanging indent. This is done by clicking "Home" on your toolbar, then "Paragraph," then in the box labeled "Special," selecting "Hanging" and then clicking "Okay." Here is what a hanging indent looks like:

Author Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book: A Superlative Guide to Documentation*.  
Place: Publisher, Date.

- Alphabetize your entries by the author's last name. If you have multiple entries for an author, use a line like this ———. underneath your first entry for an author (see example below). If an entry does not have an author's name (some web references don't), simply alphabetize according to the first word of the entry.



## Works Cited

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Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2004.