

**DePaul University**  
**School for New Learning**  
**Tentative Syllabus: “LL 300 Research Seminar”**  
**Term: Winter 2007 Class Number: 23828/9**

**Faculty** William J. Wassner, D.Min.  
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**Location** Oak Forest Campus

**Time** Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon  
**Class attendance is mandatory**

**Dates** 3 January – 20 March 2007

**Credit Hours** 6

**Theme**

**Competences Offered**

- L-8** Can pose questions and use methods of formal inquiry to answer questions and solve problems.
- L-9:** Can design and assess an academic research project related to aspects of **what makes Chicago a special place to live.**

**Areas of inquiry appropriate to this course include but are not limited to:**

- Human Community: Social, psychological, educational, economic, historical, or political inquiries.
- Scientific World: Scientific, environmental, health, or technological inquiries.
- Arts and Ideas: Artistic, literary, religious, or philosophical inquiries.

**Introduction to the Instructor**

Bill Wassner is the pastor of St. Peter’s UCC in South Bend, Indiana. He also serves as an Addictions Counselor and a volunteer chaplain with the Indiana State Police assigned to the Indiana Toll Road. He has taught at the School for New Learning for three years conducting the courses, *The Divine Dialogue*, *Critical Thinking*, and *New Age Ethics*. He has also served as faculty for Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana. He holds masters and doctoral degrees from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

**Course Description:**

The Research Seminar is a course of one quarter’s duration, which is designed to familiarize students with some of the purposes and methods of formal research. Topics discussed include subject definition, the nature of evidence, differentiating information sources, examining potential outcomes of research, and communicating learning experiences.

As community members, as workers, as enlightened consumers, we need to evaluate research and make decisions based on its efficacy. Furthermore, in order to complete the BA degree through the School for New Learning, students must design and execute independent research projects. In this course, students will examine forms of academic and other types of inquiry; will employ a variety of resources to discover and formulate questions of interest; and will design and evaluate techniques for achieving research goals.

The Research Seminar is focused around a broad topic, which can be approached from diverse domains. The topic for this section is **what makes Chicago a special place to live.** Each participant will identify a research question within this broad topic.

**Expected Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, learners will have:

- a general awareness of the types and scopes of various research methodologies;
- an ability to evaluate some types of research;
- an ability to articulate how contemporary human experience might be related to or influenced by research questions and methods; and
- a greater appreciation for the issues and problems related to the study of Religion in Public Life.

### **Learning Strategies**

In this course, students will select and pursue individual fields of investigation from various topics related to the study of **what makes Chicago a special place to live**. While issues/inquiries regarding activities, neighborhoods, arts, athletics, and food are the focus of students' personal endeavors, class meetings are designed to address questions regarding the meaning and scope of research in general.

Each student will be exposed to discussions in small and large group settings, to homework assignments, to group exercises, to reading assignments, and to a significant amount of outside research.

### **Required Learning Tools**

**Lester, James D and James D. Lester, Jr. Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide. 11th edition. Addison Wesley Educational Publishers, New York, 2002.**

This text will be used as a guide for understanding methods of research, for achieving research design skills, and for reviewing many issues related to research paper writing. The text is available in DePaul's bookstore, or can be purchased on line through Amazon.com or bn.com. Both Amazon and Barnes and Noble may have used copies of this book listed on their websites. Half.com may also have used copies available. **Students, however, must note that the 11<sup>th</sup> Edition will be the standard text utilized and for which they will be accountable.**

**There will also be periodic handouts/resources distributed in class.**

### **Citation Format**

In this course, students will choose one method of documenting their work. Students will choose one of the following styles:

MLA, The Modern Language Association style for projects in the arts and humanities  
APA, The American Psychological Association style for projects in the social sciences and sciences.

While there are other styles available, these two will be covered in class. Please bring questions about when and how to use these documentation techniques to the attention of the teacher. While the technical use of these methods of citation is explained in our text, the reasons for using a citation or guidelines for developing a bibliography are not. These issues will be discussed in class. While documentation style can add or detract from the effectiveness of your writing, the issues surrounding when and why are of greater consequence. For further information on MLA or APA styles, consult the course text.

### **Evaluation Techniques and Criteria**

Each student will be evaluated on active participation in the following activities:

- A. Class discussions in small and large groups;
- B. Completion of assigned readings and participation in group presentations on readings;
- C. An oral presentation of research skill development;
- D. Completion of a research **proposal**, (further discussed in class) which includes the following dimensions:

1. A **Topic Statement** describing the question to be researched. This section will include a clearly stated question and related hypotheses, a definition of terms, and a statement of interest and of current knowledge (maximum 5 pages). The Statement should include answers to the following questions:
  - a.) What, specifically, will you study? (i.e. what is your research question?)
  - b.) From what academic field or fields will you draw information about your question?
  - c.) What do you already know about the question?
  - d.) What is your hypothesis? (i.e. what is your best guess about the answer to your question?)
  - e.) What do the terms of your question/hypothesis mean?
  - f.) What are the variables related to your hypothesis? (i.e. what other things might influence the answer to your question?)
  - g.) Why are you interested in this topic?

2. A **Review of Literature** in which you:
  - discuss the themes and problems related to the definition of the topic mentioned above, and
  - include mention of existing studies on the topic, and
  - outline an area for further study (maximum 20 pages and no fewer than 20 sources).

The Review of Literature tells your reader about the state of the research material on your topic. It helps you understand what the big questions are, and what work has already been done. Knowing this, you can suggest, in your Research Methodology, a research project to address some aspect of your question, which has not already been researched. Organize your Review of Literature around three or four questions or issues, which are prominent in the works you consider. The Review should address the following questions:

- a.) What research has been done on your topic?
  - b.) How recent was the research?
  - c.) How was the research conducted?
  - d.) How does the research relate to your topic?
  - e.) What are the issues, problems, or questions raised by the research?
  - f.) What research has not been done? That is, what questions have not been explored or mentioned?
  - g.) What does the existing research lead you to believe about your question?
3. A proposed **Research Methodology**, which describes how the investigation might proceed were it to be realized (maximum 3 pages). After familiarizing yourself with the ways in which research is carried out in the area of your question, and after considering what aspect or aspects of your question still must be studied, discuss briefly the following:
    - a.) What information, specifically, will you try to find?
    - b.) How will your research project be structured?
    - c.) What specific methods will you use and why?
  4. A brief statement of **Revised Perspective**, which delineates your initial presumptions as well as adjusted thinking on the topic (maximum 1 page). The Revision should address the following:
    - a.) What is the answer to your research question?
    - b.) Was your hypothesis correct?
    - c.) What information changed your perspective?
    - d.) What information confirmed your perspective?
    - e.) On what evidence do you base your conclusions?
    - f.) In general, how would you characterize the available research material on your topic?

5. An **Annotated Bibliography** citing all sources used in the proposal (no fewer than 20 sources). List, according to the designated bibliographic format, each source you reviewed. Write a brief (four or five sentences) description of the source and its value to your research. Comment on:
  - a.) the type of source (Was this an academic journal? A professional journal?)
  - b.) the author (Is this author prominent in the field? from a related field?)
  - c.) the relevance to your topic (How closely related to your question is the topic of this source?)
  - d.) the timeliness (How old is the source? What difference does this make?)
  - e.) the methods used (How did the author learn what he or she is expounding upon in the source?)

- f.) the relative ease of understanding the material (Was this material accessible? What made it easy/difficult to understand?)
6. An **Abstract**, or synopsis of the proposal to be used in final oral presentations. Summarize your work in one paragraph. Use this abstract to guide you through your oral report.

### **Tentative Class Agenda**

This is a tentative list of in class activities and homework assignments. Actual progress and expectations may differ from this list:

#### **Session 1 - Saturday 6 January**

Syllabus Review  
What is Research? Why do Research?  
Generating Issues/Topics/Questions of Inquiry  
Lester assignments: study groups and Chapter Presentations signup  
Brainstorming, asking relevant questions, topic generation  
**Handouts: UW Research 101, HBS Research Guides, and Due Dates**

#### **HOMEWORK**

**Read for next session: Lester, Chapters 1 through 5  
and Freewrite on research questions**

#### **Session 2 - Saturday 13 January**

Competence Statements  
What is information?  
What is a Research Proposal?  
What is a Topic Statement?  
What is an Annotated Bibliography?  
**Library Presentation on the Internet as a Resource in the Computer Lab**  
**Handouts: USM Checklist for Evaluating Internet Sources  
Sources, Citations, and Plagiarism**

#### **HOMEWORK**

**Reread for next session: Lester, Chapters 1 through 5  
Prepare your writing space  
Begin library research  
Submit research question and list of sources as designated below**

**FINAL RESEARCH QUESTION AND TOPIC STATEMENT DUE BY 15 JANUARY.  
PLEASE EMAIL YOUR MATERIALS TO mbjjj5@cs.com**

#### **Session 3 – Saturday 20 January**

Feedback on research question and topic statements  
Discussion of Lester readings  
Academic integrity/avoidance of plagiarism  
Identifying citable material  
Using citations appropriately  
What is a Review of Literature?  
Chapter Summaries

#### **HOMEWORK**

**Read for next session Lester, Chapters 6 through 9**

#### **Session 4 – Saturday 27 January**

Achieving an organized approach  
Review of research terminology  
Discussion of research question drafts  
Research recap  
Update on Progress and Problems  
Further analysis of methodologies

**HOMEWORK**  
**Read for next session Lester,**  
**Chapters 10 through 13,**  
**plus Appendix B**

**PRELIMINARY LIST (10) OF SOURCES DUE BY 30 JANUARY.**  
**PLEASE EMAIL YOUR MATERIALS TO mbjjj5@cs.com**

**Session 5 - Saturday 3 February**

Writing: Basics  
Writing: Getting Started  
Individual question sharing and meetings  
Chapter Summaries  
Review of First Drafts

**HOMEWORK**  
**Continue Library research**  
**Complete second draft and submit as designated below**

**Session 6 – Saturday 10 February**

Correcting and editing: General issues  
The Research Methodology

**FIRST DRAFTS (minus Research Methodology) DUE NO LATER THAN 15 FEBRUARY.**  
**PLEASE EMAIL MATERIALS TO mbjjj5@cs.com**

**Session 8 – Saturday 17 February**

Individual appointments

**HOMEWORK: Continue research, edit drafts as appropriate, and prepare oral presentation**

**Session 9 – Saturday 24 February**

Student Presentations (10 minutes maximum!)  
Peer Review

**SECOND DRAFTS DUE NO LATER THAN 28 FEBRUARY.**  
**PLEASE EMAIL MATERIALS TO mbjjj5@cs.com**

**Session 10 – Saturday 3 March**

Evaluations and Concluding Comments

**HOMEWORK**  
**Complete final draft and submit as designated below**

**FINAL VERSION DUE NO LATER THAN 15 MARCH.**  
**PLEASE EMAIL TO mbjjj5@cs.com.**

**Your materials will be left at the Oak Forest front desk for pick up.**  
**If you would like your paper returned to you, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.**

**Addenda to Syllabus: Research Seminar**

**1. SNL Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory in SNL courses. Students and faculty are expected to arrive on time, and to participate in every scheduled class session. Specific course policies can be listed in the course syllabus, and acceptance of the syllabus indicates agreement to policies outlined in that document.

Missing class makes assessment a difficult process, and all students who miss any classwork are subject to grade reduction by the faculty. Students who miss more than 10% of any given course are subject to failure. **Three absences and/or late assignments (in any combination) will constitute an automatic failure.**

## 2. SNL Incomplete Policy

In Fall Quarter 2001, the School for New Learning began enforcing a recently approved policy on the issuance of the grade of Incomplete (IN) in all undergraduate courses. Overall, the policy is intended to provide specific information to students about their responsibilities in making up Incompletes and the implications of neglecting IN grades.

**<http://condor.depaul.edu/~snl/service/useful2.htm>**

The policy is as follows:

1. The instructor agrees to provide a written policy on IN grades to students at the beginning of each class—either as part of, or as an attachment to, her/his course syllabus.
2. The student who wishes to receive the grade of IN must formally request in writing that the instructor issue this grade. This request must be made before the end of the quarter in which the student is enrolled in a course.
3. The formal request involves the completion and signing of the attached form, specifying:
  - a. A clear deadline by which time the instructor expects outstanding coursework to be completed and submitted for evaluation.
  - b. That the failure to submit outstanding work by this specified deadline will result in an automatic grade change from IN to W or FX, and academic and/or financial consequences.
  - c. That the instructor will evaluate the student's work in a timely manner. The instructor will evaluate outstanding work completed and submitted by the established deadline so that a grade change can be submitted at the end of the quarter in which the work has been submitted.