



CL7541
Introduction to Research and Thesis Proposal
May 2009 – September 2009

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INSTRUCTORS

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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces participants to a theological use of social science research for their thesis. The primary methodology emphasized is action research using a mixed-method approach, with other methodologies also being considered as alternative options. Participants prepare a thesis research proposal as the project for this seminar, which proposal serves as the framework for guiding the implementation of their research and the development of their thesis.

APPROACH

The intent of this seminar is to provide participants with an introduction to the use of social science research methodologies from a theological perspective. The primary focus is on developing the necessary skills for designing and implementing a research strategy for each participant's thesis project during the final year of the program.

Participants will access and use the necessary resources to learn about conducting social science research. Emphasis will be placed on understanding mixed-methods research which employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Participants will learn how to design a questionnaire as well as an interview schedule, and how to analyze the data which can be gathered through the use of such methods.

OBJECTIVES

Each seminar participant will . . .

1. Become familiar with reading and interpreting research that is consistent with CML DMin program expectations.
2. Become familiar with action research as a preferred methodology in providing leadership within a long-term ministry.
3. Demonstrate skills in developing a mixed-method research strategy to gather data in relation to an action research methodology, or other comparable methodologies.
4. Demonstrate skills in interpreting data from a theoretical perspective and to reflect on it from a theological perspective.
5. Complete the seminar project of developing a thesis proposal for his/her planned thesis research.
6. Engage in peer learning through regular on-line interaction and seminar participation.

COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

Seminar Structure

The seminar is divided into three phases.

Phase I – Preparation May 4 – July 4, 2009

Phase II – Seminar July 6 – 10, 2009

Phase III – Project Completion July 11 – September 30, 2009

Use Of Technology

To facilitate communication, each participant will be expected to have a Luther Seminary email address. This address will allow each person to access the software that is being used for course management, which can be accessed through MyLutherNet.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Required Texts for Everyone

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, Sage, 2006.

Cresswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods*

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- Approaches*. 2nd edit., Sage, 2003.
- Coghlan, David and Teresa Brannick. *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 2nd edit., Sage, 2005.
- Greenwood, Davydd J. and Morten Levin. *Introduction to Action Research*. 2nd edit., Sage, 2007.
- Herr, Kathryn and Gary L. Anderson. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. Sage, 2005.
- Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Sage, 2005.

SEMINAR ASSIGNMENTS

Module Assignments

Each participant is expected to complete four (4) modules for this seminar, in addition to participating in the week-long seminar meeting in July. All of the modules involve activities related to understanding and engaging in social science research from a theological perspective. Attention is especially given to developing a research design for a thesis proposal.

Module 1—Introduction to Social Science Research

The purpose of this module is to introduce participants to the basics of conducting social science research and to frame this approach from a theological perspective.

Required Reading

Creswell, *Research Design*, pp. xix-104.

Assignment

Write a 1500-2000 word **blog** reflection paper on the relationship of theology and social science research. Make an argument for grounding the use of social science research from a biblical and theological perspective. You all may blog away at each others reflection blogs.

Post Assignment by: May 10

Module 2—Understanding Action Research

The purpose of this module is to help participants understand the logic and possible use of action research for a DMin thesis project.

Required Reading

Coghlan & Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, pp. xiii-150.
Herr & Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation*, pp. xi-128.

Greenwood & Levin, *Introduction to Action Research*, pp. ix-265

Assignment

Participants will be divided into groups of four or five and will each take the lead for one of the four weeks of assigned reading to post an 800 word **blog** reflection on the assigned reading for that week. Each of the other persons in the group will be responsible to offer a response blog posting of 250 words by the following week.

Week 1: May 11-17

Read—Greenwood & Levin, pp. ix-130
Primary blog due by May 14
Response blogs by May 17

Week 2: May 18-24

Read—Greenwood & Levin, pp. 131-265
Primary blog due by May 18
Response blogs by May 24

Week 3: May 25-31

Read—Herr & Anderson, pp. xi-128
Primary blog due by May 25
Response blogs by May 31

Week 4: June 1-June 7

Read—Coghlan & Brannick, pp. xiii-150
Primary blog due June 1
Response blogs by June 7

Module 3—Considering Other Research Methodologies

The purpose of this module is to introduce participants to other research methodologies for consideration of use for a DMin thesis project.

Required Reading

Creswell, *Research Design*, pp. 105-227.
Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, pp. 1-150.
Rubin & Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, pp. 1-128.

Assignment

Participants will remain in their groups of four or five with three persons taking the lead for one of the three weeks of assigned reading to post an 800 word reflection on the assigned reading for that week. Each of the other persons in the group will be responsible to offer a response posting of 250 words by the following week.

Week 1: June 8-14

Read—Creswell, pp. 105-227
Primary blog due by June 8
Response blogs by June 14

Week 2: June 15-21

Read—Charmaz, pp. 1-150
Primary blog by June 15
Response blogs by June 21

Week 3: June 22-28

Read—Rubin & Rubin, pp. 1-128
Primary blog by June 22
Response blogs by June 28

Week of Seminar—Understanding the Thesis Proposal

The week of seminar on July 6-10 will be devoted to the following:

1. Reviewing the variety of research methodologies that are available, with a focus on learning how to utilize mixed-method approaches.
2. Helping each participant frame their research question and develop an appropriate research methodology.
3. Practice developing a quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interview and learning how to analyze the data that results.
4. Understand the requirements for developing and writing a CML DMin thesis proposal (a template will be provided).

Module 4—Developing a CML DMin Research Proposal

The purpose of this module is to help each student frame a CML DMin research proposal. This will be developed through six phases with each phase being posted in the appropriate forum. Participants will be divided into two groups and will be expected to offer feedback and advice to one another for each phase that is posted.

Required Reading

Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 151-185.
Rubin & Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 129-273.

Phase 1: Finalizing Research Question and Drafting Introduction

Post Assignment by: July 20

Phase 2: Developing a Literature Summary and Defining Key Theoretical Lenses

Post Assignment by: August 3

Phase 3: Developing a Biblical/Theological Framework for the Study and Defining Key Theological Lenses

Post Assignment by: August 17

Phase 4: Defining and Framing the Research Methodology and Approach

Post Assignment by: September 7

Phase 5: Defining Ethical Concerns, Addressing IRB Requirements, and Developing Time Line and Budget

Post Assignment by: September 14

Phase 6: Redrafting Thesis Proposal for Submission

Post Assignment by: September 30

Additional Reading

It is assumed that participants will access numerous source materials in developing their literature review and biblical/theological frameworks, so this additional reading will be sufficient for meeting the normal reading requirements of 2,500 pages for the seminar.