

Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

Graduate Course Syllabus

Course Number: MCS 810

Course Name: MA Graduating Project

Semester and Year: Spring 2024

Instructor: T. Anderson, D.Min

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Semester Hours: 3

Course Duration: Jan 9 – Apr 6, 2024

Course Description

The Graduate Project is a summative and integrative work that serves as a capstone to the student's entire course of studies in the MA program. Building out of work already done in pursuit of the degree, the student will have this opportunity to consider unresolved questions and to test or apply ideas formed during the student's course of studies. The project will demonstrate effective integration of biblical/theological themes, research into the relevant literature, and appropriate practical ministry application. The objective of the project is for the student to come away from the degree having successfully described and displayed a settled understanding, appreciation, and application of at least one significant aspect of his or her area of study.

Course Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and its Application

- Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the theory and practice of their graduating project topic
- Apply knowledge about their graduating project topic to strengthen their own and other's leadership
- Identify and interpret new ideas and research related to their graduating project topic

Cognitive Complexity

- Engage in academic research, writing, and communication as skilled practitioners who think critically and deeply about issues related to their graduating project topic
- Undertake inquiry and analysis, to solve problems with a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking and risk taking
- Engage in interdisciplinary thinking that bridges multiple disciplines
- Integrate ideas and experiences in a way that generates novel insights related to their graduating project topic

Inter- and Intra-personal Wellness

- Appreciate the role of community in wellness
- Grow in emotional intelligence
- Demonstrate increased professional capacity and autonomy as leaders who employ best practices related to their graduating project topic in ways that strengthen individuals and the groups of which they are a part
- Exhibit superior organizational and time management skills
- Demonstrate academic and personal integrity

Aesthetic Expression and Interpretation

- Consider and practice creative engagement and interdisciplinary thinking
- Demonstrate the ability to engage in a dynamic educational environment within which intellectual and imaginative products are brought into relation with the most pressing human issues of our time

Social Responsibility and Global Engagement

- Analyze, appraise, and evaluate their insights about their graduating project topic in a social context
- Develop the ability to become socially responsive agents with a commitment to understanding global issues
- Build healthy multicultural teams that allow diversity to flourish

Spiritual Formation

- Cultivate a growing relationship with God that increasingly manifests itself in godly character, loving relationships, and missional living
- Demonstrate greater understanding of and active participation in God's work in the world
- Utilize spiritual practices to deepen their love for God and increase their ministry effectiveness
- Exemplify a Christian ethic in pursuit of truth, reconciliation, compassion and hope

Leadership

- Demonstrate a growing capacity to help themselves and others grow in their relationship with God
- In partnership with the Holy Spirit, develop godly character and guide others to do the same
- Discern and live out their God-given calling as evidenced in their biblical purpose, core values, and personal vision
- Participate in and build loving communities that practice the “one another’s of Scripture
- Build healthy teams that work well together to accomplish team goals
- Grow leadership skills and other competencies for living out their calling with devotion and excellence

Course Schedule

Jan 10	Introductory Zoom Meeting
Jan 27	Project Proposal Due
Feb 24	Interim Report Due
Apr 6	Final Project Due

The course will require participation in a mandatory initial group meeting with the professor on **January 10 from 4:00 to 5:00 pm (PDT)** via Zoom. The purpose of this meeting will be for the professor to describe the expectations for the course and to field questions from students. Following this first meeting, students are expected to develop their plans for the project and submit their project proposal template (see Appendix A) to the professor by email as soon as it is ready and **no later than January 27**. Based on what you have proposed, the professor will assign you to a project mentor who will approve the plan (or require a revised proposal) and offer further direction.

Students will need to email a progress report to their project mentor by **February 24** using the Progress Report form (see Appendix B).

The final project will be due to the project mentor by email no later than **April 6**.

Description of the Project

The student is expected to pursue a specific issue in ministry or a significant theological question that has relevance within a local setting or the broader church. This project will evaluate current approaches to the issue and suggest an improved approach. The student will evaluate both current and significant literature on the subject chosen.

Some examples of projects include “Evaluating the Study of ‘Situational Leadership’ and its Implications for the Local Church”; “Current Trends in Asian Christian Education”; “Assessing Current Models for Children’s Ministry”; “A Theology of Rest and Sabbath for Canadian Churches”; “Worship in the Book of Deuteronomy and Implications for Contemporary Application in the Local Church”; or “Adopting a New Administrative Structure in a Large Canadian Church”).

Please note that the Graduating Project is intended to be more of a project than a written essay. Through this project, students must demonstrate how their thinking has been or could be applied in the field. The result of this project will be a reflective paper of *at least 15 pages and no more than 40 pages*. Note that shorter papers will reflect projects that have a more active field component. Longer papers will rely less on *application* and more upon *analysis*. Of course, all projects must adequately encompass both ends of this continuum. Please note that it is completely acceptable to use work you have written for other ACTS courses for this graduating project. In fact, I would encourage you to do so! You may also want to do the project in a different format (e.g. creating a ministry handbook, developing a training course, creating a series of podcasts, etc.). If this interests you, please contact your project mentor to discuss expectations around a project that is not in a standard paper kind of format. Whatever the form, the project should have the following elements:

Statement of the Issue

The project should present the issue in summary, offering a statement of the intent of the project. The student will want to express what they are working on, why they have chosen the subject, and how they propose to address it through the project. Note that the project should clearly articulate how this project is *summative* and *integrative* of his or her program of studies to this point.

Review of Current Thinking and Practice

The student will interact with current thinkers and practitioners relevant to the subject area, showing an understanding of the state of current thinking and practice both locally, and beyond.

Biblical and Theological Engagement

The student will show that he or she has a sound grasp of the relevant biblical and theological issues, deriving conclusions that are well founded upon an appropriate biblical foundation.

Description of the Student's Personal Engagement with the Issue

The student will describe his or her personal engagement with the project in terms of thinking and practice. Note that every project should describe some level of actual participation with the subject in the field, articulating clearly how such time has been invested in these practical forms of engagement.

Presentation of a Fresh Approach to the Issue

The project should build from observation and practice to offer some distinctive response to the issue, effectively argued and well-founded. This may involve an evaluative critique of leading approaches of the past, along with a proposal for a new approach or perhaps the application of an existing principle. The writing may take considerable effort to explain a particular application to a specific setting and describe implications for the broader work of the Kingdom.

Bibliography

The student should think in terms of a minimum bibliography of 20 sources, including books, periodical literature, credible websites and other resources of a scholarly nature.

Again, the degree to which the student fulfills these requirements depends upon the level to which the student engages in the fieldwork relevant to the project. Students who engage in the subject more actively will present a paper that succinctly addresses these issues. (*Note: in such cases, the student will need to account for and articulate clearly how he or she has utilized his or her time in the field*). In every case, the above elements must still be adequately presented in the final paper.

Students should be prepared to invest approximately 120 hours toward the completion of this project. While these areas of study could benefit from much more attention than this timeframe allows, this course intends to create a product that can be achieved by the average student within this limited amount of time. Students will be wise to budget their time and expectations accordingly. Note that in the 120-hour calculation, we are assuming something approximately 90 to 120 minutes per written page. The remainder of one's time would be spent in field involvement that supports the writing of the paper.

Evaluation of the Project

The assigned project mentor will be responsible for the student's final grade assignment. *Evaluation will focus mostly on the student's faithfulness to the assignment's requirements more than on the details of the student's findings.* In general, projects will be evaluated according to the following grid:

A-Range Grades: The project is clear, and the paper is well written with little need for grammar or formatting edits. The issue is clearly described and relevant to the student's objectives, and is effectively addressed throughout the assignment. The project insightfully derives from the student's previous work in his or her program of studies. The student has made outstanding use of the existing literature, drawing from diverse sources, both faith-based and secular, reflecting fairly upon a variety of viewpoints relevant to the theme. The student brings a unique and well-argued perspective to the subject reflecting a distinct and discerning ministry vantage point. The student describes clear and achievable results for a particular ministry setting, raising further questions that can fuel the student's future engagement with the subject.

B-Range Grades: The project is clear and reasonably well-written, displaying some grammatical or writing deficiencies. The paper offers a promising issue derived reasonably from the student's program of studies and ministry/work experience. While displaying a reasonable grasp of the standard existing literature, the paper lacks a full and compelling integration of current thinking into the student's assessment of the subject. The student presents a reasonable and satisfactory, though perhaps not distinctive, response to the issues, with some attempt to describe potential ministry implications and pose further questions.

C-Range Grades: The project is significantly challenged by issues of grammar, spelling, form, and style. The issue offered by the paper is vague and lacks focus, only marginally connected to the student's previous work in his or her program of studies. While there is

some attempt at a review of current thinking on the subject, the paper misses key discussions, relying instead on personal opinion. There is a lack of integration of sources and unclear or unachievable ministry implications.

F Grade: The project presents grammar, spelling, form, and style unacceptable for graduate-level work. The paper offers no defined and focused issue, showing little awareness of the concerns involved in the current discussion and little or no success in the presentation of meaningful responses to the issues in question and is generally unsuitable for a graduate-level paper.

Late submissions without previous written approval by the project mentor will result in a 5% deduction per week.

Formatting of the Assignment

Students are expected to follow the Turabian form of academic presentation. Sample papers and support can be found at http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html.

Working with Your Project Mentors

It is completely appropriate to email and arrange meetings with your project mentor to discuss your project. However, it will not be considered reasonable for a student to ask their project mentor to read their paper, in full or in part, in advance of formal submission.

Statement on Research Ethics

Students are prohibited from utilizing research or data-gathering from human subjects, such as conducting formal interviews, surveys, and use of focus groups, without having received the approval of the TWU Research Ethics Board. All research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community must be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board (information may be found at <https://www.twu.ca/research/research-services/human-research-ethics>). Students are discouraged from projects that require this kind of formal research, given that these requests require several weeks from date of submission for approval, making the course schedule difficult.

Students are encouraged to engage in ministry with people and to evaluate that experience. This is developing and assessing quality in ministry rather than the formal testing of a research hypothesis. *Students must apply to the Research Ethics Board whenever the intent is to do research on human subjects, including interviews, focus groups, and data-gathering.* This does not mean, however, that the student cannot or should not have a conversation with individuals about their observations and ideas. The point is that *students can have conversations with*

people about a subject, but must not have conversation with people who are the subject of a project. Specifically...

...discussion of one's personal learning experience and reflections is acceptable;

...conceptual research using information readily available to the public is acceptable;

...normal "everyday life" conversations with people in the practice of ministry are acceptable, but should not be quoted or formally referenced in the written paper;

...conversations with "investigative colleagues" (mentors and learning directors) are acceptable as long as those conversations do not become the *subject* of the research;

...any conversations or written comments that would impinge upon the privacy of a human subject are prohibited;

...any investigation of "current thinking and practice" must be "publicly accessible".

...research mandated by one's employer as part of the employee's normal job function is acceptable;

In sum, we are looking for projects that are fundamentally about reflection on theological and practical issues at a *conceptual level*, informed by reflection on *personal learning* that has arisen both out of study and out of ministry practice (which is part of the ordinary life of the students involved). Please note that the intention is *not* to set up research projects to test the impact of innovative ministry models on test groups of live subjects.

Assignment Grade Appeals

Students can appeal their grade to me by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. The deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. You can make formal course grade appeals through the ACTS Academic Director's Office

Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

One of the core values of Trinity Western University is the integration of academic excellence with high standards of personal, moral, and spiritual integrity. The University considers it a serious offence when an individual attempts to gain unearned academic credit. It is the student's responsibility to be informed about what constitutes academic misconduct. For details on this, and on identifying and avoiding plagiarism go to the [University Homepage > Academics > Academic Calendar](#) (p. 47).

<https://prezi.com/od62fxnkbmxh/plagiarism-how-to-get-it-out-of-your-life/> (Prezi presentation)

<http://bit.ly/1p00KX3> (Google Slide presentation offering more comprehensive information)

Students with a Disability

Students with a disability who need assistance are encouraged to contact the Equity of Access Office upon admission to TWU to discuss their specific needs. All disabilities must be recently documented by an appropriately certified professional and include the educational impact of the disability along with recommended accommodations. Within the first two weeks of the semester, students must meet with their professors to agree on accommodations appropriate to each class. Students should follow the steps detailed by the Equity of Access Office on their website at: <http://www.twu.ca/student-life/student-success/disabilities-and-equity-access>

Hospitality in the Classroom

TWU is committed to an ethic of inclusion centred on Christian hospitality, reciprocity and reconciliation principles. We seek to cultivate generous learning spaces that are based on respect for differences and are open to diverse views, opinions, and identities that are thoughtfully expressed in a collegial manner. We welcome and value all voices, including those from under-represented groups or those who have been marginalized.

Campus Closure and Class Cancellation Policy

In the event of extreme weather conditions or other emergency situations, go to the <https://www.twu.ca/about-us/policies-guidelines/university-policies/campus-notification>.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Trinity Western University, Langley campus is located on the traditional ancestral unceded territory of the Stó:lō people.

Appendix A: MCS 810 – Project Proposal Template

Student Name: _____ Semester _____

Student's Email: _____ Telephone _____

Proposed Title for the Project: _____

Brief Description of the Context for the Project:

Research Sources for the Project (biblical/theological/theoretical/practical):

Brief Description of the Nature and Implementation of the Project:

Intended Outcomes for the Project:

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Appendix B: MCS 810 – Graduate Project Progress Report

Student Name: _____ Email _____

Project Title _____

Progress Made...

Significant Preliminary Findings...

Remaining Challenges and/or Strategies...