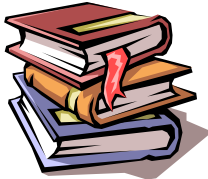


Introduction to Research



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Introduction to Research

- Introductions
- What is research?
- Research and our faith
- The research process
- Doing a thesis at ATS
- Thinking like a reader

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Personal Introductions

- Who I am
- Who you are and why you're here
 - Who are you?
 - Major
 - Your experience in research
 - Thesis topic
 - What you want to get out of the course
 - What you want Dr. Morton to focus on

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Personal Introductions

- Today: the **process** of research.
 - We will cover things you already know.
 - Make contributions from your experience.
 - We can become more aware of our method.
 - Even experienced researchers can learn new things!

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What is Research?

- How would you define **research**?
- Vyhmeister, *Your Indispensable Guide*:
 - “A method of study that, through careful investigation of all evidence bearing on a definable problem, arrives at a solution” (1).
 - Results must be presented clearly and concisely.
 - Others should be able to tell how you arrived at the solution.

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What is Research?

- “Research is a (1) systematic search for (2) adequate information to reach (3) objective knowledge of a (4) specific topic” (I. F. Azofeifa).
 - Systematic search – logical approach.
 - Adequate information – reliable, documented.
 - Objective knowledge – not confirmation of your biases.
 - Specific topic – clearly defined problem.

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What is Research?

- Poor research...
 - Just gathers and reproduces data.
 - Compiles quotations.
 - Rewrites other people's words and ideas.
 - Deals in generalities.
 - Presents one's unsupported opinion.
 - Is an apology for one's own position.
 - Attacks the positions and character of others.
 - Ignores inconvenient evidence.
 - Asks no questions and finds no answers.
 - Is boring to do and boring to read.

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What is Research?

- Good research...
 - Focuses on a good research question.
 - Examines all relevant information.
 - Draws logical, well supported conclusions.
 - Seeks to persuade through sound arguments.
 - Is concrete and specific.
 - Acknowledges one's presuppositions.
 - Shows that the author has assimilated the sources.
 - Includes significant personal thought.
 - Has significance to the researcher and the reader.
 - Is valuable to do and to read.

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What is Research?

- What is research good for?
 - Thorough grounding in a subject
 - Problem solving skills
 - Skills of observation, analysis, synthesis, evaluation
 - Critical thinking skills
 - Good writing skills
 - The joy of discovery
 - The satisfaction of solving a puzzle
 - The opportunity to contribute to human knowledge
 - The edification of the church
 - Developing character (!)

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What is Research?

- “Research done by others determines most of what any of us believes. . . . Only when we know that we can trust the research of others can we free ourselves from those who by controlling our beliefs would control our lives.”
 - (Wayne Booth, et al., *The Craft of Research* 7)

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What is Research?

- General principles
 - Be committed to excellence.
 - Plan your research as a strategy.
 - Develop lateral thinking.
 - Write throughout the process.
 - Writing helps you remember.
 - Writing clarifies your thinking.
 - Writing helps you analyze your sources.
 - Writing gives you perspective on your own ideas.

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Research and Our Faith

- How does research relate to our **faith**?



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Research and Our Faith

- How does research relate to our **faith**?
 - We may do research on Christian topics.
 - We can bring a Christian perspective to secular topics.
 - Research is a search for truth.
 - All truth is God's truth.
 - Research is one way of loving God with our minds (Matt. 22:37).

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Research and Our Faith

- How would a Christian world view affect how you do research?
 - Christians and non-Christians may agree on facts but differ on meaning/significance.
 - George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*
 - Foundational beliefs affect the “big picture.”
 - The more our research gets into questions of meaning, the more our faith plays a part.

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Research and Our Faith

- “Christianity sacralizes—makes sacred—the intellectual life. It gives the questions we struggle with in our work and in our lives a larger significance.”
 - Robert Wuthnow

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Research and Our Faith

- Research from a Christian perspective...
 - Can critique other foundational beliefs.
 - Can expose “myth of liberal neutrality.”
 - Will consider the spiritual dimension.
 - Will expect to touch the transcendent through the finite.
 - Should lead to humility.

– George Marsden

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Research and Our Faith

- Some criticism of “Christian scholarship”:
 - Claims divine sanction for your own views?
 - Claims automatic superiority to other work?
 - Marsden: Adopt “methodological secularization” but not “methodological atheism.”

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Research and Our Faith

- What does it mean to do research as a Christian?
 - Within the framework of our faith.
 - With a foundation of biblical truth, as stewards.
 - Out of our own traditions.
 - Bringing our best efforts to the task.
 - With reliance on the Spirit.
 - With intellectual honesty.
 - With ethical sensitivity.
 - With humility.
 - As an act of worship.

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The Research Process

- Badke's process (6)
 - Begin with a good question.
 - Collect data.
 - Synthesize the data in light of the question to produce information.
 - Develop conclusions and recommendations.

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Research Process: A Topic

- See handout, "The Process of Research."
- Finding a **topic**
 - What is your experience?
 - Start with an **area of interest**.
 - Find a topic within the area of interest.
 - Check textbooks, indexes in the area.
 - Interview experts.
 - Check subject headings in your library.
 - Find areas in which your library has good holdings.

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Research Process: A Question

- Gain a **working knowledge** of the topic through reference sources.
- Use your working knowledge to develop a **research question**.
- Research question = sometimes called a research **problem** or **issue**.
 - **One** research question per research project.
 - Put it in **question form**.
 - NOT a yes-or-no question but **open-ended**.

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Research Process: A Thesis

- Your research will take you from your research question to a **thesis statement**.
- Brainstorm **exploratory questions** to open up areas for research.
- Research widely, analyzing and reflecting as you read.

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Research Process: A Thesis

- Develop **essential questions** that must be answered to answer your research question.
- Use them to focus your research.
- Come to **conclusions** from your research.
- Formulate your findings in a **thesis statement**.
- **Outline** your essential research in light of your thesis statement.

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Doing a Thesis at ATS

- See handout, "Instructions for the M. A. Thesis."
- Look at theses in library.
- Completing this course and getting your proposal accepted are two different things!
- Follow my instructions and you'll be fine.

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Thinking Like a Reader

- See handout, “Connecting With Your Reader.”
 - Research writing is like a conversation.
 - Your readers will judge you by how accurately you judge them.
 - Think about your reader from the beginning of your project.

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Thinking Like a Reader

- All readers share certain interests.
- Who is your community of readers?
- What do they expect you to do for them?
- How much do they know?

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Thinking Like a Reader

- Do they already understand your problem/question?
- How will they respond to your solution/answer?
- What attitude will they take to your research and conclusions?

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