

SPECIAL NOTE: This sample thesis syllabus is designed to serve not only as an illustration of the form and content of a syllabus but also as a guide in the entire production of a thesis.

PRODUCING THE MASTER'S THESIS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Department of New Testament Studies

Dallas Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree

Master of Theology

by

Your Full Name Here

Month Year

Accepted by the Faculty of the Dallas Theological Seminary in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Theology

Examining Committee

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CHAPTER 1
CHOOSING THE SUBJECT

Considering Areas of Interest

The first step in choosing the subject for a thesis is to consider your areas of interest within your major field. These may have developed from your personal study or been aroused by a professors discussion. From your areas of interest, determine the general subject for your thesis. At this stage you may want to discuss the matter with a professor as a prospective thesis adviser.

Checking the Literature

Before making your final choice of a thesis subject, be sure to check the literature for similar works. This includes the cumulative lists of theses and dissertations previously produced at Dallas Seminary as well as the card catalog and other bibliographic sources. Finding similar works does not necessarily rule out the subject, for you may have a different emphasis or conclusion, new evidence for consideration, or an update of the subject. But, you should not merely repeat in different words what someone else has already produced.

Limiting the Subject

This step may relate to the preceding one, because concentration on one facet of a broader subject may provide a valid thesis topic. The subject also needs to be narrowed because of the length of the thesis. Although 10,000 words is a minimum limit

for a thesis, it is also an indication of an approximate desired length. Part of the education in producing a thesis is learning to limit the subject so that it can be developed adequately in close to 10,000 words. A thesis that runs much beyond 15,000 words is missing the mark.

Wording the Title

The purpose of the title of a thesis is to describe the subject and its treatment as accurately and as briefly as possible. Wording the title properly will require considerable attention. When you are satisfied with the wording, fill out the subject approval form (available at the Registrar's Office), and make an appointment with the department chairman for his approval.

CHAPTER 2
PREPARING THE SYLLABUS

Doing the Basic Research

Some preliminary research of the subject may have been done as part of choosing the subject, but now that it has been approved, the work of doing the basic research on the subject begins. This is necessary so that you can see the dimensions of the subject, the parts that must be discussed, and the relative emphasis to be given to each part. It is preparatory to organizing the subject into a unified, coherent discussion that supports your conclusions and applications.

Organizing the Subject

On the basis of this research, the subject must be organized. This involves division into chapters, which are the major levels of division. The chapters in turn must be subdivided into as many levels as are required by the complexity of the subject to treat the material adequately and to make the structure clear. In most master's thesis, this involves up to three levels of subdivision within the chapters. This is the skeleton or outline of the thesis reflected in the Table of Contents.

Writing the Syllabus

Writing the syllabus involves briefly stating the projected content of each section or subdivision of each chapter of the thesis, including the anticipated conclusions. This is why the basic research and the organization of the subject must precede the

writing of the syllabus. Subsequent research may require some changes from what is presented in the syllabus. The written syllabus should include a Table of Contents and a selected bibliography of the basic research.

CHAPTER 3
WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

Continuing the Research

Even though the basic research on the thesis subject has been done before the writing of the syllabus, the full research must be completed before the writing of the first draft. The basic research reflected in the syllabus will guide you in the complete research as to what is contributory and as to what may demand revision of your structure or of your conclusions. Although the organization of the thesis as presented in the syllabus is not sacrosanct, changes seemingly demanded by your further research should be discussed with your advisor.

Writing the First Two Chapters

The next step is the composition and submission of the first two chapters of the first draft of the thesis. Submitting these chapters separate from the entire first draft serves two purposes. First, it requires you to do the additional research and to begin on the writing in scheduled stages. Second, it gives your advisor an opportunity to evaluate your ability to write effectively and your grasp of thesis form in time to provide help if needed.

Completing the First Draft

The balance of the first draft should be submitted to the adviser chapter by chapter. This enables him to guide you as your progress. The complete first draft includes title page, Table of Contents, and bibliography.

CHAPTER 4
WRITING THE FINAL DRAFT

Completing Any Necessary Research

Research on a thesis subject is not finished until the final draft is submitted. Your adviser may suggest additional areas or sources of research on the basis of the first draft. In addition, new material is constantly being produced on almost any subject which must at least be examined.

Rewriting Sentences and Sections

Your adviser and second reader may ask you to rewrite some sentences or, perhaps, even extensive sections of the first draft. They may require revision of the contents of sections of chapters or even whole chapters, adding or deleting material or reorganizing what is presented. You also will want to edit your first draft carefully so that the final thesis is the most effective job you can do.

Correcting Form Errors

Your adviser and second reader may also find thesis form errors on your first draft, which will require correction. Make these corrections yourself since it is not the responsibility of your typist (unless you type your own thesis) to put the thesis in proper form.

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