1 Credit

Doctor of Ministry Course Syllabus

MIN 8802 Research Seminar 1: Formulating the Question

Fall 2025

# Course Description:

This is the first part of the four-part Dissertation Research Seminar, which is taught over the two years of D.Min course work. The purpose of the Dissertation Research Seminar is to introduce students to doctoral-level research and begin to think about the problem or focus on their ministry that can be the subject of a doctoral dissertation.

We will examine the elements that go into doctoral-level research in ministry. This includes defining the problem in ministry, understanding the context of the ministry, developing one’s own theory of ministry that draws upon knowledge of the field, considering possible ministry strategies for solving the problem, and surveying some research tools that can be used to assess the outcomes of that effort.

Hopefully, students will begin to define a problem or thesis from within their own ministry that they wish to address for their dissertation project. For some students, especially those without an active ministry, determining this starting point may be among the most difficult challenges in the entire course of preparing their dissertation.

# Course Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, students will:

1. Identify a problem in their ministry and discuss how it is or will be addressed
2. Describe the context of their ministry, including demographics, structures, etc. and its effect on the form of their ministry
3. Explain their theory of ministry, drawing on relevant concepts from scripture, tradition reason and experience
4. Discuss elements of doctoral research

# Required text:

Myers, William R. *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program*. 3rd edition. Chicago: Exploration Press, 1993. **ISBN-13:** 978-0913552513 $17.95

*This book is out of print, and it is available to be downloaded as a PDF file from Populi. If you do, print a hard copy for yourself, as we will be using this book every day in class.*

# Supplemental reading:

Davies, Richard E. *Handbook for Doctor of Ministry Projects*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.

*This is not required for this class; however, you will be referring to this handbook as you develop your proposal and write your D.Min. Dissertation.*

# Evaluation:

* 1. Attendance and Participation: 50%
  2. Research Question: 50% `

# Grading: Pass or Fail

# Class Schedule (10 weeks):

**Session 1:** Presentation: Ministry in the 21st Century: Definition and Context

Crafting a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) dissertation project.

**Session 2:** Describe your ministry. Where is it located? What population (e.g. race, religion, income, mode of life, etc.) do you serve? How do you serve them? What are the most important foci or priorities of your ministry?

Look at the challenge of formulating the research question.

: Discuss your ministry, the problems you face, and what ***problem in your ministry***

you may want to pursue as your research question.

*Read before class:* Myers, chapter 1

*Assignment due Sept. 11:* Write a one-page description of tentative your research question

**Session 3:** Discuss the ***context of your ministry***: demographics, polity, and leadership challenges.

*Read before class:* Myers, chapter 2.

*Assignment due Sept. 18:* Write a one-page description your ministry context, and any specific issues that arise out of that context

**Session 4:** Discuss your ***theological framework*** and how they are actualized in your ministry.

*Presentation: Components of a theological reflection*

*Read before class:* Myers, chapter 3.

*Assignment due Sept. 25:* Write a one-page paper about the knowledge base you will need to cultivate in order to be knowledgeable in your ministry

**Session 5**: Survey of the various kinds of ***methodologies and research strategies*** employed in Dissertation Projects.

*Read before class:* Myers, chapter 4.

*Assignment due Oct. 2:* Write an elevator speech describing the core operational theory of your ministry

**Session 6:** Discuss ***outcomes*** that you want to see and how you might collect ***data to demonstrate the outcomes*** in your study. Discuss the types of data you plan to collect.

*Read before class:* Myers, chapters 6-7

**Session 7:** Discuss the role of the minister/ faith/ community leader as participant and collecting data on self and self- learning.

*Read before class:* Myers, chapters 8

*Assignment due Oct. 16:* Write a one-page paper about the personal challenges you face in your ministry and how you will assess your growth to meet those challenges

**Session 8**: It is time for you to formulate you ***Research Question*** in detail

*Read before class:* Myers, chapter 5

*Assignment due October 23:* Write the ***first draft of your Research Question.***

Include these points and number them:

* + 1. Describe the specific problem in the practice of ministry that you will seek to address in your dissertation project. *NOTE: It is NOT your entire ministry!*
    2. Describe the context of your ministry (who, what, where), especially as it relates to the problem you wish to address.
    3. Write a 1-3 sentence statement of the core operational theory (**Theological lenses)** that underlies your ministry
    4. Explain the knowledge base that will inform your approach to the specific problem in ministry that you described in point 1. Specify the elements you draw on from your **tradition**, from **scripture** (for Unificationists this includes Divine Principle), from **social science** (psychology, sociology…) and from your own **experience.**
    5. Give a list of at least three books that you are consulting that inform your theory.
    6. Sketch out your plan for how you will deal with this problem. Indicate how your plan meets the requirements of your particular ministerial context.
    7. Name one or more specific outcomes that you want to achieve in addressing this problem.
    8. Discuss the institutional support you will need for your project.

**Session 9:** Students share their research questions. Then discuss the next steps in preparing to begin the project:

1. Improving one’s knowledge base
2. Identifying research methodology(s) in which one needs to gain competence

**Session 10**: Submit your ***Research Question,*** taking note of the issues brought up in the discussion of your first draft.

*The professor welcomes continue dialogue with students about changes, issues or concerns about their Research Question at any time during their course of study.*

# Course Rubric

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Learning Outcome** | **Beginner** | **Approaching** | **Proficient** | **Advanced** |
| Identify a problem in their ministry and discuss how it is or will be addressed | Describe the work of ministry in general without identifying a problem | Identify and discuss a problem area needing attention | Identify a problem, specify ministry activities to address the problem | Identify a problem and specify ministry activities to address the problem, with deeper analysis |
| Describe the context of their ministry, including demographics, structures, etc. and its effect on the form of their ministry | Recognize few elements of context; unfamiliar with the concept | Describe some elements of the context of their ministry | Describe the key elements of context and discuss how their ministry addresses them | Describe the key elements of context, discuss how their ministry addresses them, and its effect on the form of ministry |
| Explain their theory of ministry, drawing on relevant concepts from scripture, tradition and reason | Describe their understanding of their ministry in dogmatic terms | Articulate a personal theory of ministry | Articulate a personal theory of ministry and connect it to several of the elements of scripture, tradition and reason | Articulate a well thought out theory of ministry that draws upon the elements of scripture, tradition and reason |
| Discuss the elements of doctoral research | Unfamiliar with doctoral research | Describe some research tools for doctoral level research | Describe the elements of doctoral research and use of research tools | Describe the elements of doctoral research and use of research tools for ministerial effectiveness |

**PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:**

Each student's work is expected to be a product of his or her own effort. Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that occurs when a student passes off someone else's work as their own. Plagiarism in its most severe form occurs when a student purchases a paper from a third party or submits an entire body of work written by a third party, as the student’s own. These most serious cases can be reported to the Office of the Provost for disciplinary action. Possible actions include probation, suspension, or dismissal/separation from HJI.Cutting and pasting material from various websites without citing the source of said material also constitutes plagiarism, as is a failure to cite sources in a paper, conveying the impression, intentionally or not, that another writer’s work is the student’s own. In these cases of plagiarism, the instructor may give the student an “F” for the offending assignment, require that the student repeat the assignment, or if the plagiarism continues, give the student an “F” for the course. A pattern of such behavior may be reported to the Office of the Provost. It can lead to serious consequences as listed above.Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT in assignments is permitted only with prior permission of the instructor. If the instructor permits students to use AI for research, students should know that it may give false results and its facts need to be checked and verified. Any passages generated by AI must be given proper citation, just as for citing other authors’ works. In addition, students must append a paragraph at the end of their work explaining how and why they used ChatGPT, which includes what prompts were used and what measures were taken to verify its accuracy. Students may not use AI to produce the content for an assignment. If an AI tool is used without obtaining prior permission and/or without providing the required citation or explanation, it will be treated as plagiarism.

Faculty reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, to find instances of AI-generated writing, as well as plagiarism from other sources, in student assignments.

**NETIQUETTE**:

When posting online or by email, you need to follow the same ethical standards and laws as you would in face-to-face communications. Your language should be respectful of faculty members and fellow students. Do not post private or confidential information about anyone, and do not provide personal information that could put yourself at risk. The Seminaries LMS has robust security measures to protect communication between teacher and student. Yet please be aware that anything that you post in discussions and groups in which other students participate can be retrieved by others and copied.  Do not download and share course materials without permission of the instructor, as this may violate copyright. HJI reserves the right to delete postings on HJI maintained sites that are considered insensitive, harassing, or illegal. Language that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing abusive, hateful, or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise, is a violation of the Student Code.