

Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology
MA1901, Academic Forum, Intro 1
FALL 2023

Last updated 08/26/2023

Instructors:

Chris Renz OP – Office: DSPT 209

Description: The Academic Forum is a four-semester course required of all DSPT MA students, designed to develop skills for master’s level theological and philosophical research, writing, and professional dissemination.

MA 1901, Course Objectives (SEE DSPT Institutional Goals at the end of this syllabus):

By the end of the MA 1901 (Fall and Spring sessions) students will:

1. understand and articulate ways that scholarly research and writing contributes to the development of thought and action in the academy, Church, and society. [Institutional goals A1, A3]
2. acquire and improve the skills necessary for scholarly research and writing. [Institutional goals A1, A2]
3. identify coursework and research strategies for securing a foundation for a thesis topic. [Institutional goals A1, A3]
4. after receiving peer feedback, complete the portfolio requirement for the Research Readiness Paper [Institutional goals A1-A3]

MA 1901, Academic Forum, Intro 1, normally taken in the first semester, explores the vocation of the scholar as it relates to the Dominican charism. Students are introduced to published samples of academic writing to develop a deeper awareness of professional writing styles, presentation, and appropriate use of primary and secondary resources; they also provide peer feedback on shared writing sample. The course meets four to six times per the semester (to be arranged).

Outcomes for MA 1901, Intro 1: By the end of MA 1901, Intro 1 students will:

1. understand the importance of the “active learning” required for professional academic research, and the need to develop a *focused research question* [Institutional goals A1, A3; MA goals 1, 3]
2. identify methods and tools for critical reading and analysis of scholarly works [Institutional goals A2-A3; MA goals 1, 3];
3. identify and incorporate the critical elements of a research paper into their scholarly writing [Institutional goal A2-A3; MA goals 1, 3];
4. practice the above skills by preparing sample thesis sentences for peer feedback [Institutional goal B1; MA goals 1, 3].

N.B. This course presumes participants have participated in the workshop on cognitive preferences given during new student orientation. Any student who has not participated must consult with the professor.

Meeting Days: The course meetings on the following Wednesday, from 9:40 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in DSPT 1: September, 27, 2023; October, 18, 2023; November, 15, 2023; and December, 6, 2023.

Professor Contact. Students may contact the professor through Moodle or via email [crenz@dspt.edu]. Responses will be offered in a timely manner, usually within 1-2 business days (except on weekend) and often sooner. Office hours are posted on my office door, DSPT East 212. Appointments can also be arranged via email.

Course Requirements and Grading. Students are expected to complete all assignments before coming to the session. Active participation in discussions is expected and students will be graded on a Pass/No Pass basis, according to the DSPT common rubrics for institutional core abilities (see “Rubrics for assessing student skills related to institutional goals”). Please consult the table at the end of this syllabus for details about the relationship between course outcomes and the skills used to assess their acquisition by students.

Given the small number of meeting sessions, students are not normally permitted to miss a session and must contact the professor beforehand for permission.

Required Course Materials. Most of the required readings listed in this syllabus are available through the GTU Moodle system. Students are expected to access the online learning platform, Moodle, on a regular basis to ensure that they are keeping pace with the various course requirements. Students are expected to purchase (or have access to):

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ninth Edition (April 16, 2018). ISBN-13: 978-0226430577. \$18.00 at Amazon.

Topical Outline

September 27, 2023: Introduction – the vocation of academic scholar

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, students will understand

1. the nature of the vocation of the academic scholar
2. the role of *the Question* in scholarly research
3. the role of the *academic learner* and the need for a paradigm shift from passive (undergraduate) to active (graduate) study, especially collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches to research and writing.

Required Reading

1. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ninth Edition (April 16, 2018). ISBN-13: 978-0226430577. \$18.00 at Amazon. Chapter 1.
2. “*Misericordia Veritatis* – the call to the intellectual life of the Order Today,” *Acts of the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Preachers, Providence 2001*, n. 104-111.

Before gathering, students are expected to

1. watch the video interview of Nell Irvin Painter and complete the reflection exercise at Moodle;
2. complete the required reading as indicated above;
3. bring a copy (or have available for electronic access) the syllabi from your F23 courses.

During this session we will

- a. discuss academic research and writing as a *vocation*
- b. understand the responsibilities that the learner must assume for graduate-level research and writing

October 18, 2023: Reading Critically

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, students will understand.

1. how to recognize effective scholarly work
2. the various parts of a research article that provide important information about the nature and quality of the work (the skill of “reading critically”)
3. a useful structure for presenting the results of research in a coherent and engaging manner

Required Reading:

1. Paul K. Piff, Pia Dietze, Matthew Feinberg, Danile M. Stancato, and Dacher Keltner “Awe, the Small Self, and Prosocial Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, (2015) Vol. 108, No. 6: 883–899.
2. Mads Gam Henriksen, Josef Parnas, Dan Zahavi “Thought Insertion and Disturbed For-Me-Ness (Minimal Selfhood) in Schizophrenia” in *Consciousness and Cognition Journal* Elsevier Publication, (2019) Vol 74:1-9

Asynchronous Work: Before attending the synchronous session, students will read all the articles above *following the directions on the instruction sheet* posted at Moodle.

Synchronous Work: We will discuss your own analysis of the research articles and why/not they were effective.

November 15, 2023: The Question and the Thesis Statement

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, students will understand:

1. key elements of a *Research Paper*
2. how to write a thesis statement
3. ways to review and edit their work

Required Reading:

1. Turabian, Chapters 2 and 5
2. [“Rubric for Academic Research”](#) and the [“Research Readiness Review Sheet”](#)

The time together will focus on reviewing elements of a good thesis statement and discuss the skills critical for proofreading and revising work.

December 6, 2023: Presentation and Peer Feedback on Sample Thesis Statements

In this session, students will create a thesis sentence that is to be submitted to the professor one week prior to the meeting date. Each student will **choose a syllabus** from one of their F23 courses and, based on the syllabus content and their experience to date in the course, **develop a thesis sentence** that will be reviewed by the group.

Alternatively, any student who plan to submit the Research Readiness Paper at the end of the fall semester may use that thesis sentence for review by the group. In that case, they should also be prepared to provide a brief overview of the paper.

The submitted samples will be posted at the Moodle page for everyone to review. Students must come to the session prepared to provide helpful peer feedback based on the principles learned up to this point.

DSPT Institutional Goals and Course Goals

A1 Integrative Thinking: the ability to recognize, understand, retain, integrate, and apply the fundamental principles operative in a field of inquiry, and use them to make synthetic judgments.

IA2 Intellectual Humility: an orientation of mind and heart that fosters intellectual collaboration, precludes both rigidity and passivity of mind, and recognizes that contrary opinions are not a threat, but provide the opportunity to test and deepen one's own grasp of the truth.

A3 Self-Direction: the disposition to take primary responsibility for one's own education, manifested in a keen intellectual interest in the topic of studies, and the ability to teach oneself through a habit of skilled and responsible research and resilient exploration.

B1, Ability to Collaborate: expressed in good listening and communication skills which foster decisions stemming from and leading to an open, transparent, and mutually enriching dialog with others in order that the gifts of all can be appropriately acknowledged and utilized.

The following table is designed to assist students in approaching course requirements and expectations. Each outcome is associated with the particular activities and/or assignments that will be used to measure student performance. The last column indicates how the outcome and related work related to both Institutional and Program Outcomes.

Course Outcome	Activities &/or Assignments to Measure Course Outcome	Related Program and Institutional Goals/Outcomes
1. understand the importance of the “active learning” required for professional academic research, and the need to develop a focused research question	a. Participation in discussions b. Class presentation	Institutional Goal A.1, “Integrative Thinking”; A.3 “Self Direction” MPh/MATH: Skills for academic research, writing, and presentation (oral communication)
2. identify methods and tools for critical reading and analysis of scholarly works	a. Participation in discussions b. Class presentation of assignments	Institutional Goal A.2, “Intellectual Humility”; A.3 “Self Direction” MPh/MATH: Skills for academic research, writing, and presentation (oral communication)
3. identify and incorporate the critical elements of a research paper into their scholarly writing	a. Participation in discussions b. Class Presentation	Institutional Goal A.2, “Intellectual Humility”; A.3 “Self Direction” MPh/MATH: Skills for academic research, writing, and presentation (oral communication)
4. preparing sample thesis sentences for peer feedback	a. Participation in discussions b. Class Presentation	Institutional Goal B.1, “Ability to Collaborate” MPh/MATH: Skills for academic research, writing, and presentation (oral communication)