

Doctor of Ministry Course Syllabus

MIN 8802 Dissertation Research Seminar:
Formulating the Question

Dr. Andrew Wilson

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 in 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 and reason
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:

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| 1. Attendance and Participation: | 50% |
| 2. Research Question: | 50% |

Class Schedule (10 weeks):

- Aug. 31: Introductions. 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.
- Sept. 7: 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. 14: Write a one-page description of something you might choose as your research question
- Sept. 14: Discuss the ***context of your ministry***: demographics, polity, and leadership challenges.
Read before class: Myers, chapter 2.
Assignment due Sept. 21: Write a one-page description your ministry context, and any specific issues that arise out of that context
- Sept. 21 Discuss your ***theological commitments*** and how they are actualized in your ministry.
Read before class: Myers, chapter 3.
Assignment due Sept. 28: Write a one-page paper about the knowledge base you will need to cultivate in order to be knowledgeable in your ministry
- Sept 28: Survey of the various kinds of ***methodologies and research strategies*** employed in Dissertation Projects.
Read before class: Myers, chapter 4.

Assignment due Oct. 5: Write an elevator speech describing the core operational theory of your ministry

Oct. 5: 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

Oct. 12: Discuss the role of the minister as participant, and collecting data on self and self-learning.

Read before class: Myers, chapters 8

Assignment due Oct. 19: 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

Oct. 19: It is time for you to formulate your **Research Question** in detail

Read before class: Myers, chapter 5

Assignment due October 26: 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 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 church tradition, from scripture (for Unificationists this includes Divine Principle), from secular science, 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.

Oct. 26: 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

Nov. 2: 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

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

Academic Integrity

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