

Carolina University of Theology

Master's Thesis Package

1/1/2010

Choosing a meaningful research topic for your thesis can be a challenge.

Here are some criteria to help you decide.

After years of **graduate school**, choosing a great **topic** for your **master's thesis** may feel like one of the biggest pressures yet. You're going to be spending months and perhaps years on this research project, and completion of your **Master's degree** is contingent upon your success.

Take a deep breath. Yes, choosing a these topic is a difficult decision, but follow your instincts and you'll find your way to an appropriate and meaningful topic. Here are some criteria to keep in mind when choosing a dissertation or thesis topic.

- **Choose a topic you love.** This may be the most important criteria. You're going to be spending so much time with this project, and your quality of life will be much better if these hours are spent enjoyably. What's more, the quality of your research, writing, and arguments will be much better if you feel genuine passion for your work. Choose a topic you find both fascinating and socially significant. Never let someone pressure you into writing about a certain topic!
- **Pick a topic that will be helpful in your ministry/career path.** If you are going into ministry or currently in ministry, choose topic that is applicable to your area of ministry and will promote growth in that area. If your goal is the academic area of ministry pick a topic that you can easily modify into journal articles or a book, and that will lend itself well to future research. If you want to work at a teaching oriented institution, consider a topic you can use in the classroom.
- **Find a topic that establishes your niche in your field.** Do your research and find a topic that fits into existing bodies of literature, but that builds upon theory and expands it.
- **Choose research that is unique.** Do significant research to make sure this topic has not been done before. Be creative and choose an idea that stands out from the pack as original and innovative.
- **Pick a topic that you already have some expertise about.** This will help preserve your sanity and get you out the door faster. This isn't the time to explore a brand new area. Along the way, take coursework and write class papers that will help you write your dissertation or thesis.
- **Pick a manageable topic.** This is a huge project, but it isn't your life's research. If necessary, your advisor will help you narrow down your topic so that you don't remain in graduate school for many long years.
- **Theses format to follow as outlined in “A Manual For Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations”** by Kate L. Turabian (6th or 7th Edition).

Carolina University of Theology

14654 Joplin Road • Manassas, VA 20112

(703) 791-3499 • • (703) 791-8263 (fax)

CUTofNOVA@aol.com • www.cutofnova.org

Dr. John R. Peyton, President

Dr. Phyllis Thompson, Vice President

Carol Powell, Academic Dean

Masters Degree

Prerequisite: Bachelor of Biblical Studies Degree

Program requirements: 20,000 words

Theological Theses

References: 20 minimum

Phase One: Complete the Theses Topic Request Form (page 4 of this document) and submit it to Carolina University of Theology (CUT) to get staff approval prior to starting the project. When completing Theses/Dissertation Request Form, be sure to include the Title of your Theses, the points to be included in your thesis, and the purpose of your thesis.

Phase Two: Obtain necessary books/manuscripts and other research materials necessary to write your thesis. Prepare Thesis Statement and Outline (see page 5) by set due date; be sure to include the Title of your Theses, a complete outline (see page 5). Furthermore your theses should, include the Title, version or translation of Bible used, a Title page, blank page or copyright page, table of contents, list of illustrations if needed, list of tables if used, preface, acknowledgement, glossary, introduction, chapter, appendix if needed and bibliography. Footnotes must be placed at the bottom of or at least must begin on the page where they are referred.

PLEASE NOTE: ANY SCRIPTURES QUOTED THROUGHOUT YOUR THESES WILL NOT BE USED AS PART OF TOTAL WORD COUNT REQUIREMENT.

Phase Three: The finalized theses. Your final thesis should be as near to perfection as possible. Points will be deducted for each spelling and grammatical error found in your paper. Additionally, CUT requires that your Theses paper be typed, double-spaced, and professionally bound.

A member the Carolina University of Theology Faculty will review, evaluate, and grade the final paper. Upon successful completion of this process, you will receive your degree.

Note: The Theses should be written in accordance with the book: “A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations” by Kate L. Turabian, Sixth Edition, ISBN 0-226-81627-3.

Please note: **NEW REQUIREMENT:**

When submitting your theses for final approval/grading, all theses papers must be bound and also be saved on a CD-RW disk in Microsoft Word Document. Please write your name, thesis topic, and date on CD with a CD Sharpie.

Carolina University of Theology
THESIS TOPIC REQUEST FORM

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DAYTIME PHONE _____

PROGRAM ENROLLED IN _____

THESIS TITLE _____

POINTS THAT WILL BE INCLUDED IN YOUR PAPER:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

PURPOSE OF THESIS: _____

OTHER THINGS TO BE DISCUSSED:

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

Please note: **NEW REQUIREMENT:** When submitting your thesis for final approval/grading, all thesis papers must also be saved on a CD-RW disk in Microsoft Word Document as well as bound.

TO BE COMPLETED BY UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL ONLY:

TOPIC APPROVED: _____

COMMENTS: _____

UNIVERSITY SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Thesis Outline

A thesis outline is a document that the student creates in order to complete his or her thesis paper. Thesis outlines should be complete and thorough representations of what the student will write about in the paper. There are many ways that a student can create a thesis outline. For example, the student can have help from a professional writer to create the **thesis outline** or the student can work with the professor to ensure that the thesis outlined and is correct and accurate.

In order to create a proper thesis outline, students should first research the topic about which they will create the thesis. Students should then compile and notes so that they can understand exactly what they will write their paper about before they began creating the thesis outline. Thesis outlines should provide thorough road maps for how the student will create the paper. Once the **thesis outlines** are complete, students can begin to fill in the paper on their own.

A thesis outlined should begin with an introduction paragraph. The introduction paragraph should include a thesis statement **thesis statement** is a one sentence statement about what the student will write about in the paper. At each body paragraph should support the **thesis statement** with new information or ideas.

By having a thorough outline for the **thesis paper** students will be able to fill in the **thesis paper** knowing that the flow of the paper and the format of the paper are correct. Thesis outlines therefore may take a while to produce accurately. Students may also want their professors to review their **thesis outlines** before they can begin writing the paper.

Each **thesis outline** should also be completed with the conclusion about which the paper has been written. It is normal for students to write the entire introductory paragraph and the entire conclusion paragraph in the thesis outline, even though they cannot create the entire paper in the thesis outline. Many students have their teachers review their introductory statements and conclusion statements in the thesis outline.

The thesis outline is different than the thesis body of research. A body of research is often compiled and in a notebook or in another form that is easy for a student to review and make notes on when they go about writing their papers. However, the thesis a research must be completed before the student and began writing the thesis outline. The thesis outline, therefore, is an entirely separate task than the thesis research and thesis writing.

**UPON APPROVAL OF YOUR THESIS YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT YOUR
THESIS STATEMENT AND OUTLINE.
SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENT OUTLINE**

Thesis Statement and Outline

(Due Date: _____)

Your thesis topic has been approved. The next step in the process of working with your selected topic is the development of a thesis statement and a preliminary outline. The thesis and outline will essentially serve as the “brain and skeleton” of your final paper, you will begin to flesh it out later on as you progress.

Thesis Statement

Definition: A thesis statement in an essay is a sentence that explicitly identifies the purpose of the paper or previews its main ideas. (Quite often you will revise your thesis statement while you are writing your essay, because you discover what your main points and the purpose of your paper is as you go.)

Three basic steps towards a good thesis statement:

1. First, think about the page length of your assignment.
2. Next, think about what really interests you about the work about which you wish to write.
3. Ask yourself two questions: **What are you trying to prove? How are you going to prove it?**

Characteristics of a good thesis statement:

- 1) **A thesis statement is an assertion, not a statement of fact or an observation.**
- 2) **A thesis takes a stand rather than announcing a subject.**
- 3) **A thesis is the main idea, not the title. It must be a complete sentence that explains in some detail what you expect to write about.**
- 4) **A thesis statement is narrow, rather than broad. If the thesis statement is sufficiently narrow, it can be fully supported.**
- 5) **A thesis statement is specific rather than vague or general.**
- 6) **A thesis statement has one main point rather than several main points. More than one point may be too difficult for the reader to understand and the writer to support.**

Useful Links:

<http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/writing/literature.html>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Thesis.html> (Writing Center)

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/thesis.html>

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/thesistatement.html>

<http://www.english.upenn.edu/Grad/Teachweb/scthesis.html> (examples of “Bad Thesis Statements”)

Example: How to develop your thesis statement

Subject (broad): women in Scandinavian literature

Topic (narrower): Analysis of romantic female figures in Scandinavian literature

Research question (specific focus of paper): What is the development of the romantic female figure, focusing on Elise (*Tardy Awakening*), Cecilia (*The Hosier*), and Nora (*A Doll’s House*)?

Thesis statement: In analyzing the social norms of Scandinavia between 1800 and 1890, one can trace the emancipation of the woman through three romantic figures: Elise, Cecilia, and Nora.

Outline

The Outline should consist of your major points organized into the structure you are planning to use for your paper (this can, and often does, change once you start writing). Below each of your main points you should list minor points that help to support each argument. The outline does not need to be in complete sentences, but does need to be comprehensible.

Thesis Paper Outline Format

- I. **Introduction:** *In this section, give the reader an idea of why your paper will be important and/or interesting, what you will be arguing, and make the organization of the paper clear to the reader.*
 - a. Explanation of purpose and background information (optional): *Explain why this topic needs to be written about (may require some background on the topic)*
 - b. Thesis statement: *A basic statement of your position; your answer to your research question*
 - c. Expanded thesis statement: *A brief listing of the major points that you will make in your paper, in the order in which you will make them*

- II. **Arguments:** *Each of your main arguments can either argue a point that supports your position, or argue against something you believe is wrong. This is a lengthy paper, so ideally you will have more than three arguments to make. You should make as many as you can. Organize your arguments to flow from one to the next or, ideally, to put your strongest arguments first and last.*
 - a. Argument 1
 - i. Supporting evidence (author, pg. or para. #)
 - ii. More supporting evidence! (author, pg. or para. #)
 - iii. Even more supporting evidence!! (author, pg. or para. #)
 - b. Argument 2
 - i. Supporting evidence (author, pg. or para. #)
 - ii. More supporting evidence! (author, pg. or para. #)
 - iii. Even more supporting evidence!! (author, pg. or para. #)
 - c. Argument 3
 - i. Supporting evidence (author, pg. or para. #)
 - ii. More supporting evidence! (author, pg. or para. #)
 - iii. Even more supporting evidence!! (author, pg. or para. #)

- III. **Conclusion:** *This section of your paper should summarize and look to the future.*
 - a. Acknowledge the opposing side of the argument
 - b. Re-emphasize your own argument by summarizing the main points that you made
 - c. Draw final conclusions about the strength of your position

Example Outline (refers to example thesis statement: How to develop your thesis statement)

Thesis Statement: In analyzing the social norms of Scandinavia between 1800 and 1890, one can trace the emancipation of the woman through three romantic figures: Elise, Cecilia, and Nora.

- I. Women's issues became a widely discussed issue in Scandinavia around 1860.
 - A. Women demanded equal pay.
 - B. Women demanded independence.
 - C. Women demanded the right to vote.

- II. One finds many examples of female figures who struggle for emancipation from bourgeois restraints in Scandinavian literature.
 - A. Blicher exposes the difficult situations, in which women found themselves.
 - B. Henrik Ibsen, although not openly, opened the door to women's emancipation throughout Europe and Northern America.

- III. Elise
 - A. Living a life in small, petit bourgeois society, forces Elise to keep a secret for 20 years.
 1. She thrives on secrets, as a means to keep a small part of herself.
 2. She is portrayed as "cold" by the pastor, but he is envious of her ability to overcome the restraints of society.
 - B. (examples/evidence)¹
 - C. (examples/evidence)

- IV. Cecilia
 - A. (examples/evidence)
 - B. (examples/evidence)

- V. Nora
 - A. (examples/evidence)
 - B. (examples/evidence)

- VI. Blicher's female figures are the forerunners of Ibsen's Nora, forging their way in a patriarchal society dominated by social mores and norms.

Conclusion

Note: The more detailed your outline is, the easier it will be for you to write your paper in the end. But nothing is written in stone. You can change and switch things around as you start writing your paper.

¹ When you write your outline, don't just write "examples/evidence", but be specific about the example/evidence. This is just a sample to give you an idea of what you are supposed to do and it isn't as detailed as your outline will be.

Fictional Outline for a Thesis with Parenthetical Citation in MLA Format

- I. Introduction
 - a. Background
 - i. The number of flavors of ice cream produced by major companies has quadrupled over the past decade (“Consumer Choice” 25).
 - ii. People debate which flavor is the best.
 - b. Thesis: High-quality vanilla ice cream remains the best ice cream flavor on the market.
 - c. Expanded thesis: People will continue to enjoy vanilla ice cream more than any other flavor for its simplicity, versatility, and its cultural significance.
- II. Argument
 - a. Vanilla ice cream is the best because it is simple, yet never boring.
 - i. Vanilla ice cream can be made with only four ingredients (Breyers 6).
 - ii. In her new book Rachel Ray argues, “The flavor of vanilla is a simple, yet classic one that goes well with any meal!!!” (43).
 - iii. Despite the simplicity of vanilla ice cream, it comes in many different varieties, such as French Vanilla, Vanilla Bean, and other delicious variations (“Edy’s Ice Cream” par. 6).
 - b. Vanilla ice cream is better than any other flavor because it is versatile.
 - i. Vanilla can be eaten plain, but also goes well with many different toppings.
 - ii. Vanilla is the most popular base flavor for Blizzards at Dairy Queen (McBurty 56).
 - iii. Vanilla is easily made into a milkshake as well as eaten plain, which is not the case with a flavor like cookie dough (dangerous when sucked through a straw!) (McKay 73).
 - c. Vanilla ice cream has significance in American culture.
 - i. Chef Julia Child has written, “Vanilla ice cream is one food that bridges generations. I share it with my children and grandchildren each summer” (16).
 - ii. Classic American movies like *Back to the Future* and *Anne of Green Gables* have prominently featured vanilla ice cream (“Ice Cream in the Movies” par. 8).
 - iii. American presidents have served vanilla ice cream at the White House for over 200 years (Clinton 8).
 - iv. Research has found that more Americans prefer vanilla ice cream than any other flavor (“Gallup Poll” par. 3).
- III. Conclusion
 - a. Although chocolate is a close second, vanilla reigns supreme.
 - b. Nothing can beat vanilla ice cream’s simplicity, versatility, and cultural significance.
 - c. In the future, others will attempt to beat it.
 - d. Try as they might, no manufacturer can come up with a way to top classic vanilla.