# MIN 5804A Masters Colloquium A

Syllabus Dr. Andrew Wilson
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# Course Description

A well-researched and well-written thesis on the appropriate topic or a carefully planned, executed and assessed final project can open doors and set the stage for new opportunities for a graduate of the HJI Master of Arts in Religious Studies. The Masters Colloquia A and B support students to formulate and decide upon a thesis topic and complete their thesis by taking it in two steps. The first step is the selection of the topic for the thesis and the drafting of a Thesis Proposal; this is the purpose of M.A. Colloquium A. The second step is to actually write the thesis; this is done in consultation with the student’s Thesis Advisor and in conjunction with MA Colloquium B.

In the M.A. in Religious Studies Program, students have the option of either writing an academic thesis or choosing instead to undertake a practical project with a shorter write-up that describes the project and includes its content (e.g., a video lecture series for a teaching project or a narrative and photos of a particular ministry) and data on the results. Deciding whether to write a thesis or embark on a project is a matter to be decided in M.A. Colloquium A.

There will be five seminar-style classes during the semester; the dates are listed below.

Because this is a seminar course, student attendance and real-time participation in each class session, whether in person or remotely, is mandatory. *Completion of MA Colloquium A is a prerequisite for registering for the Thesis. 0 credits.*

# Course Requirements:

1. Attend each class session by Zoom and fully participate in class discussions. Listening to a recording after the fact will not suffice.
2. Present drafts of the Thesis/Project Proposal to the class according to the course schedule
3. Begin researching books and articles for the bibliography and discuss them.
4. Submit the final draft of the Thesis/Project Proposal and receive the instructor’s approval.
5. Secure a Thesis Advisor

# Course Objectives

1. Students will decide upon the topic for their project or thesis that is consistent with the purposes of the M.A. Program and their concentration within it (if applicable).
2. Students will clarify how their project or thesis fits within the context of their ministry and career goals
3. Students will identify their strengths and preparation required for embarking on a thesis or project
4. Students will articulate and develop ideas for their project or thesis within the colloquium setting
5. Students will develop the bibliography for their Thesis/Project
6. Students will submit their final Thesis/Project Proposal by May 15.
7. Students will choose their Thesis Advisor

# Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain their academic and professional preparation as it relates to their proposed project or thesis
2. Describe the theological, social and/or cultural resources and challenges within their tradition that impact their project or thesis
3. Discuss the context of ministry for their project or thesis
4. Articulate how the project or thesis contributes to ministry, church and/or society

# Evaluation

Students will be graded on their completed Thesis/Project Proposal, along with their meeting the other course requirements. Grading is Pass/No pass.

# Course Schedule

**February 6: Introduction**

At the first class, students will be introduced to the following questions:

1. What do I want my thesis or project to provide for my professional advancement after completing the MA degree?
2. What is my intended audience?
3. Shall I do a thesis versus a final project?
4. If a project, what will be the setting or context for it?
5. Practical considerations for working in ministry contexts, or other contexts.
6. Ethical considerations for working with human subjects

In class, students will engage in a discussion around these questions and draw conclusions about how these issues pertain to a possible thesis topic. After class, students will post a written summary/reflection on the Discussion Board on Canvas.

**February 20: Self-Reflection and Conceptualization**

Prior to class, by February 19, students will prepare an oral presentation and a written summary that they will post on the Discussion Board on Canvas that includes:

1. Undergraduate and graduate fields of study, including your study at HJI.
2. Key life and field experiences that have made you who you are today.
3. An assessment of your strengths as person.
4. Your sense of where you are called to make a contribution to society, the providence, your church or your community of faith going forward.
5. How your academic study prior to HJI and in HJI, your life and field experiences, your personal strengths, and your sense calling might play into the intended focus of your Master Thesis or Final Project at HJI.
6. Your assessment of your current situation and how you might leverage that into supporting your Master Thesis or Final Project at HJI.

The class will feature the students’ oral presentations and discussion, leading to initial conceptualizations of the thesis or final project.

**March 6: Ideas on the Thesis Topic and first steps towards a Thesis/Project Proposal**

Students will prepare an initial draft of their thesis/project proposal, based on the **Guidelines for a Thesis/Project Proposal** (below, page 5). Students will post their draft proposal on the Discussion Board before class. In class they will present the proposal for discussion.

**March 27: Complete first draft of the Thesis/Project Proposal including bibliography; Identification of a prospective Thesis Advisor**

Students will fill in their draft thesis/project proposal, including an initial bibliography, and post it on the Discussion Board before class. They will also identify a prospective thesis advisor from the members of the HJI faculty. In class they will present their draft proposals for discussion.

**April 24: Fifth Class: completed Thesis/Project Proposal and agreement with the Thesis Advisor**

Students will upload their completed Thesis/Project Proposal on the Discussion Board before class. In class they will make an oral presentation on their proposed Thesis/Project, including a summary of their bibliographic research. They will identify their Thesis Advisor, who must be a member of the HJI faculty.

**May 15: Final submission of the Thesis/Project Proposal**

Approval of the student’s Thesis/Project Proposal signifies that they have passed MA Colloquium A.

Once the proposal is approved, students will fill out the **MA Thesis/Project Proposal Form,** have it signed by the Thesis Advisor, and submit it, along with the Thesis/Project Proposal, to the Registrar in order to register for their thesis in the following semester. From that point on, supervision of the Thesis or Project shifts to the Thesis Advisor.

# Academic Integrity

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 Policy

When posting online, 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 Seminary’s 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. UTS reserves the right to delete postings on UTS 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.

# Guidelines for the Thesis/Project Proposal

**1. Title**

**2. Introduction:** A general statement of your thesis or the issue you are addressing in your project. In 2-3 pages, it should answer such questions as:

1. What was the exact problem or issue on which I will focus my study?
2. Have others tried to address this problem or issue? If so, what did they do? What will I borrow from them and what will I do differently?
3. What is the specific context in which I will do my project or conduct my research? How will I work on my thesis/project within that context?
4. What are the core beliefs that will guide me in the project, and what theological, scriptural and academic teachings will I draw upon as resources?
5. How do I propose to solve the problem or issue, or what conclusions would I like to offer?
6. How does my thesis or project contribute to ministry or society?
7. How does my thesis or project fit with my concentration in the MA program?

**3. Outline:** A 1-page outline consisting of chapter titles and section headings, with a brief explanation of what will go in each chapter and under each heading. The explanations should specify how the chapter contributes to your overall thesis.

**4. Bibliography:** The initial bibliography should have a minimum of five books or articles that you have consulted for preparing your Proposal. By the time your project or thesis is finished, your bibliography should have expanded to at least 20 titles.

**5. Thesis advisor:** You should identify who will be your Thesis Advisor and meet with him or her at least once and ascertain that he or she is supportive of what you are doing, before you turn in your Thesis Proposal.

**You will need to submit the completed Thesis/Project Proposal, along with the MA Thesis/Project Proposal Form signed by the Thesis Advisor, in order to register for the Thesis/Project and MA Colloquium B next semester.**

# Student Learning Assessment Rubric

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning Outcome** | **Beginning** | **Improving** | **Proficient** | **Outstanding** |
| Explain academic and professional preparation as it relates to the proposed project or thesis  | Discussion of academic and professional preparation is vague and lacking in detail, with little or no connection to the proposed project or thesis | Discusses academic and professional preparation and its relevance to the proposed project or thesis in general terms | Discusses academic and professional preparation in a way that shows its relevance to the proposed project or thesis. | Discusses academic and professional preparation with specific details that show its relevance to the proposed project or thesis. |
| Describe theological, social and/or cultural resources and/or challenges within their tradition that impact the thesis | Identifies resources in the tradition  | Discusses resources in the tradition and their value to the thesis | Discusses resources in the tradition and identify challenges in the tradition needing consideration | Structures thesis proposal in light of resources and challenges in the tradition |
| Discuss context of ministry for the project or thesis | Identifies the meaning of context | Discusses context of their ministry | Discusses ways that context impacts the thesis | Discusses how context that can impact the project or thesis and how to deal with it |
| Articulate how thesis contributes to ministry, church and/or society | Identify an issue in ministry and/or society  | Identify the expected contribution of the project/thesis  | Discuss the expected contribution of the project/thesis | Discuss the expected contribution of the project/thesis and explain what aspect of the thesis will fulfill this purpose. |