

Historical Research Design and Methodology for a Doctoral Thesis

The class will meet for two hours every three weeks on Thursday for the entire fall semester.

(28.09.17, 19.10.17, 09.11.17, 30.11.17, 21. 12.17.) Time 16:00-18:00

Registration limited to 7 graduate students.

Register per email: Rebecca.giselbrecht@theol.unibe.ch (Re: "Historical Research Design", Doktoratsprogramm HS 2017)

Universität Bern, Unitobler, Länggass-Str. 51, Bern, A 2016
Institut für Christkatholische Theologie

The aim of the class is to facilitate a structured theoretical framework and methodological foundation for doctoral students in the early phase of their doctoral studies. Lectures, assigned reading, group discussions, both in the classroom and online, as well as practical demonstrations, aim to supply information and motivation to successfully begin research and complete writing a dissertation.

The practical course outcome will be a research plan and a documented procedure to follow in order to complete a dissertation within a realistic period of time. The course output will be a well-constructed and defensible research proposal.

Students are expected to master one or more bibliographical and data collection software product(s) that they will work with during their doctoral studies.

1. Introduction to Research Design

- Literature review techniques (how to read, analyze, categorize and document core and secondary literature)
- How to read a book and review it
- Using technology for documentation, data collection and storage
- How to save and bookmark citations of references

2. Historical Research Methods

- Theoretical frameworks
- Historical methods
- Concise definitions of a topic
- Identifying a central research issue
- Developing research questions

3. Collecting Data and Source Material

- Data collection and documentation
- Developing criteria for analysis
- Understanding the idiosyncrasies of historical sources

4. Writing your research proposal

- Central issue

- Research questions
- State of research
- Sub-topics
- Methodology
- Source material
- Biases and limitations
- Expected outcomes

5. Defending Your Proposal

- The Use of Argumentation
- Developing a Realistic Timeline

Reading for this course includes four books on historiography and methodology. The group will choose four books to read, review, and discuss. Suggestions of specific methodological/theoretical literature of particular relevance to the student's dissertation are welcome suggestions. Please bring suggested books to the first meeting.

Literature List

- Bebbington, David. *Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought*. Regent College Publishing, 1979.
- Booth, Wayne et al. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Bradley, James E. and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research Reference Works, and Methods*. Eerdmans, 1995.
- Clark, Elizabeth, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*. Harvard University Press 2004.
- Gadamer, Hans–Georg, *Truth and Method*. Continuum, 1975.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*. University of California Press, 2012.
- Haight, Roger. *Christian Community in History, Vols 1 & 2*. Continuum, 2005.
- McDowell, W.H. *Historical Research: A Guide*. Pearson Education, 2002.
- Pokorny, Petr. *Hermeneutics as a Theory of Understanding*. Eerdmans, 2011.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *From Text to Action*. Northwestern University Press, 1991.
- Taylor, Charles. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Duke University Press, 2004.
- White, Hayden, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.