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Faculteit Religie en Theologie

Guidelines for Writing a Thesis

Faculty of Religion and Theology

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Abstract

This manual contains guidelines and practical suggestions to assist Theology and Religious Studies students in writing their theses. It includes a discussion of formal and methodological criteria, as well as various modes of argumentation. It also outlines guiding principles on how to structure the thesis, how to incorporate written and digital sources, how to conduct a literature search in the databases available on the student's specialized subject, how to create appropriate references and bibliographies, and how to write a thesis proposal.

Abbreviations

Where possible, abbreviations were taken from Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis*.[1]

AnBib   Analecta biblica
AncB   Anchor Bible
AncBD   Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. N. Freedman
AncBRL   Anchor Bible Reference Library
ANFa   Ante-Nicene Fathers
NTS   New Testament Studies
NT   Novum Testamentum
NT.S   *Supplements to* Novum Testamentum
SBL   Society of Biblical Literature
etc.

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[1] Please note that this list of abbreviations is fictitious and is for illustration purposes only. Abbreviations of biblical writings or other often quoted religious sources should *not* be included in this list. A reference to the source of abbreviations (e.g. SBL Handbook) will suffice ("Biblical writings and other classical sources have been abbreviated according to the conventions of ...").

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1.   Introduction

1.1   General Remarks

The Bachelor's and Master's programmes of Theology and Religious Studies require students to write several papers (depending on their specialization and sub-programme), as well as a Bachelor's or Master's thesis. The thesis will complete the degree programme as a whole.[2]

In principle, the approach required for a thesis is no different from that for a paper. Naturally, writing a thesis requires more time, more discipline, a broader overview, more thinking and more reading. However, this increase in the scale of activities does not affect the core task. It is this core task that these *Guidelines* seek to address. The sections below will highlight the key moments in writing a thesis.

Research is not a direct line from question to answers. You will have to return to your data set time and again, and rewrite your lines time and again. It may even be that your research proposal appears not to fit in practice and that you have to start all over again. Regard your research as a perpetuate circle, as is illustrated below.
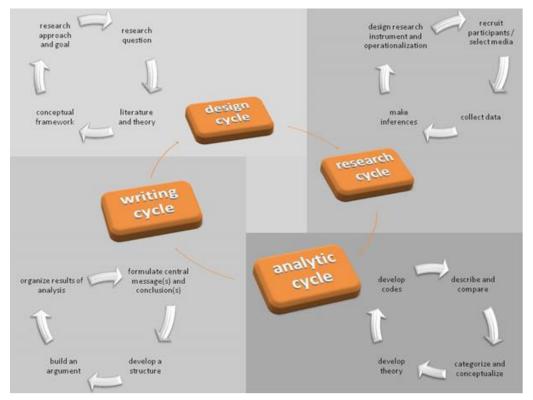
Figure 1: Research Cycle (adopted from Johan Roeland)

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[2] See the criteria set out in the *Thesis Regulations*.

1.2 Thesis Proposal

Under the faculty's *Thesis Regulations,* students must submit a *thesis proposal* (Art. 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). The thesis proposal should contain approximately 1,000 words.

Research Proposal

1. Fact Sheet
   a. name, e-mail address and student number
   b. the specific Master's programme and trajectory for which the thesis is being written
   c. research theme in one short phrase
   d. (prospective) supervisors

2. Background of Research and Researcher
   a. introduction to the topic (research problem)
   b. its relevance for society, science, faith communities, or believers
   c. background/motivation for choosing the specific topic, including the questions whether you have a special wish for a certain outcome: how will you avoid being subjective? Or: how do you guarantee scrupulousness, reliability, impartiality and independence in this specific investigation?
   d. your own strong and weak points (see e.g. Kolb test) and their consequences for this investigation

3. Research Plan
   a. in case you wrote a paper or thesis on this topic before: state the research question of your undergraduate thesis and explain how your current thesis will deepen and/or broaden your undergraduate thesis
   b. survey of the literature or a provisional *status quaestionis*: who have published on this topic; what are the key problems/questions; what methods were used; what positions have already been worked out
   c. main research question in ***one sentence, concluding in a question mark***
   d. determination of the kind of research question: descriptive, comparative, explanatory, evaluative, or prognostic
   e. delimitation: what is the scope of your research and how do you delimit it subquestions, necessary in order to answer the main research question, connected to the chapters that will be necessary:
   • introduction of the problem = first chapter
   • methods, definitions, etc. = second (or second half of the first chapter)
   • then steps toward the central research question
   • conclusion, in which your central research question is answered and discussed
   • limitations of your work plus what needs to be done after your research = part of the conclusion
   f. approach and/or method, including:
   • determination of the kind of research method: qualitative or quantitative
   • a section on your sources and materials
   • a section on your methods, using the Routledge and other articles on methods
   • any extraordinary requirements (travels, archives, library visits, etc.)
   g. plan to archive your material; or: how do you guarantee verifiability of your investigation? Think about backups of digital files and about digital protection.
   h. planning
   i. bibiography

The provisional bibliography should be a brief list of what are probably the most relevant (influential/important) and recent titles for your topic. To compile this preliminary bibliography, try to find a recent literature survey on your topic (a so-called *Forschungsbericht*), or determine which authors or books are most prominent in the current scholarly debate in your field. If necessary, consult experts in your field of research for recommendations.

1.3   Further Conditions for Successful Completion of the Thesis

You need to have a well-defined topic (see below) and sufficient time for writing, thinking, doing library research, etc. Be realistic about the time and energy that you commit to writing your thesis. A thesis is a highly individual project that cannot be measured in exact credit hours. What counts is not the energy invested in it, but the final result.

1.4 Recommended Literature

Baarda, B., *Dit is onderzoek!* (Groningen: Noordhoff Uitgevers, 2009)

Elbow, P., *Writing with Power* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Turabian, K.L., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (rev. ed. W.C. Booth, G.G. Colomb, J.M. Williams; Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, ^{7}2007) xviii + 466pp.

University of Chicago Press Staff (ed.), *The Chicago Manual of Style. The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers* (Chicago, London: Chicago University Press, 1906, ^{16}2010) xvii + 956pp.

2.   From Research Area to Thesis Topic

2.1   What are a Research Area and a Thesis Topic?

The research area is the general subject area in which the discourse (thesis) falls. Examples of research areas are the Reformation, prayer, or the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism. Choosing a research area does not mean that you have selected a topic. Choosing a topic involves focusing your attention on a particular, narrow aspect of a larger research area. Examples of a single aspect are: one or more thinkers, an important theological document, a biblical theme in a particular religious book, a school of thought, or one or more concepts. Make sure that you choose a topic that is of genuine interest to you and that is manageable ('feasible') within the confines of a thesis.[1] A thesis is not a doctoral dissertation!

2.2 Formulating the Topic as a Problem to be Researched

Once you have narrowed down your research area into a topic, you need to formulate the 'focal problem' for that topic. You will need to explain how research on this topic is relevant to a certain religious group and/or to society. You will also need to demonstrate that no satisfactory answers have been given so far, or that our day and age calls for new answers.

2.3   Formulating the Topic as a Research Question

Once you have formulated the problem, it is helpful to start off by casting it in the form of a (feasibly answerable) research question. This will give your research a discernible direction and goal. It will also help the reader follow your argument once you are ready to write up your research. In practice, you should follow these steps:

   (1) Decide on a well-demarcated topic.
   (2) Do some initial reading on your chosen topic.
   (3) Formulate the problem and its relevance today.
   (4) Formulate your topic as a research question.

It is only after you have done some initial reading on your topic that you can formulate a research question more effectively. This research question, which you

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[1] On the theme of this chapter and for a slightly different approach, see also K.L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (rev. ed. W.C. Booth, G.G. Colomb, J.M. Williams; Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, [7]2007) 12–23 ('Moving from a Topic to a Question to a Working Hypothesis').

may need to refine at a later stage, will help you take off to a solid start with your research. You can now focus your efforts.

2.4 Types of Research Questions

Topics can be formulated as different types of research questions. There are five main types within the disciplines of theology and religion studies. In practice, there may be some overlap, and in some cases, these are just alternative possibilities. The type of research question you choose, affects your methods (if you look for arguments, you have to interview people; if you want to evaluate, you have to have a norm) and your conclusions (if you want to compare, you are not allowed to only deliver two descriptions of the two items you want to compare; if you set out to solve a practical problem, you have to provide that solution, or more solutions, in your conclusions).

The types of research questions are categorized according to their degree of difficulty, but note that not only the type of question determines the degree of difficulty of a research.[2] This categorization is based on the Taxonomy of Bloom.
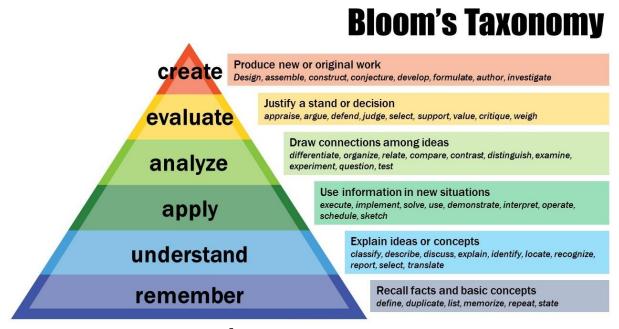
Figure 2: Taxonomy of Bloom[3]

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[2] The *Thesis Regulations* sum up the degree of difficulty of a research by means of the terms: length, complexity, pre-formulated structure, use of sources, depth of discussion and conclusions, writing skills, self-regulation and originality.

[3] Adopted from Patricia Armstrong, *Vanderbilt University*, https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/ (accessed 13 July 2016).

2.4.1   Descriptive research question

A descriptive research question typically begins with 'What is/what does …?' Examples: 'What does the notion of 'myth' mean in Rudolf Bultmann's early work?' Or 'What is the function of Diwali in India?' These 'what is' questions are interesting if the concept is theoretically relevant and/or if there is some kind of difference of opinion or ambiguity about the concept. Usually descriptive questions are more suitable for Bachelor's theses than for Master's theses.

2.4.2   Comparative research question

A comparative research question aims at comparing two (or more) objects and evaluate their differences and similarities. The thesis will therefore at least have two descriptive sub questions and one evaluative one. An example might be: 'What are the similarities and differences between political and religious Zionism?' Or: 'What are the special characteristics of Psalm 18 on the one hand and 2 Samuel 22 on the other (being almost identical poems)?'

2.4.3   Explanatory research question

An explanatory research question asks 'Why …?' Example: 'What reasons did Plato have for excluding artists from his ideal state?' In examining why questions, try to look further than one reason. Contributing factors can be psychological, social, historical, philosophical, religious, etc.

2.4.4   Evaluative research question

An evaluative research question examines 'What is the value of …?' Examples: 'Is Karl Barth's interpretation of Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence still valid in the light of recent developments in Anselm research?' Or 'Can Richard Dawkins' critique of religion be maintained when confronted with the arguments of Paas and Peels in *God bewijzen* (Proving God)?'

2.4.5 Comparative and evaluative research question

One might also try to establish the link between two phenomenon—broadly speaking: 'What is the link between nineteenth century nationalism and anti-semitism?' Or—if persons are involved—a question such as: 'To what extent and in which respects did Adolf von Harnack's work influence the pamphlet *Die Kirche und das Alte Testament* by Notger Slenczka?'

2.4.6 Problem-based research question

If a religious community or a school appears to have a practical problem and you come across this problem during your internship, you may take the problem as the basis of your research. You have to turn the problem into a research question first. For example, elementary school teachers notice that they lack adequate

information about different cultures and religions that are present in their classrooms. The research question might be in that case: 'Which information is needed for (these) elementary school teachers to handle the different cultures and religions in their classroom?' Or 'Which course offers the best information for these teachers in this situation?'

2.4.7 Predictive / prognostic research question

Empirical research deals regularly with prognostic research questions: how will certain phenomena change or how will people react to changing circumstances? These prognostic questions can vary from the highly practical ('How many members will this church have in 2040?') to the conceptual ('How will Dutch Muslims interpret the word *jihad* over the next ten years?').

2.4.8 Explorative research

Sometimes hardly any research is conducted into an interesting area of theology or religious studies. In that case you have hardly any material to build your thesis on, or you even lack a methodological framework. *If your supervisor approves*, you can conduct explorative research. This means that you have to 'borrow' methods from literature that does not discuss your topic, but is nevertheless somehow related. It also means that your conclusions will exist of probabilities and recommendations for further investigation. An example of explorative research was the thesis of 2016 on Islamic spiritual care (SC) in the army. For methods and content the student had to lean on other Islamic SC or on non-Islamic SC in the army. He investigated the role of Islamic SC in practice and asked the Islamic soldiers to evaluate this.

2.4.9 Propositional research

Finally, questions can be formulated in a propositional form or as a working hypothesis. The proposition puts forth a thesis statement that the author will investigate in order to demonstrate its validity. Examples: 'The concept of charity in Buddhism differs from its counterpart in Hinduism'. Or 'The reformation idea of the husband/father as priest of the family changed fundamentally during the twentieth century.' Note, however, that the evaluative and propositional questions are closely related: they only differ in terms of direction. An evaluative text works towards a (propositional) conclusion, whereas a propositional text takes the conclusion as a given, so to speak. Moreover, a working hypothesis can always be cast in the form of a question; i.e. 'Is the concept of charity different in Buddhism and Hinduism?'. In any case, students are advised to formulate their topic as a research question.

Note also that these types of research questions all build on the descriptive type to a certain extent: it is impossible to offer explanations, provide evaluations or

support propositions without giving descriptions. A descriptive thesis, however, is *intended* to describe a certain phenomenon or theory. By contrast, descriptions in the other cases serve as an *aid* in explanation, evaluation or the argumentation supporting the proposition. Let's take, as an example, the research problem cited to illustrate the evaluative type. To address this, you would need to describe – within the framework of an evaluation – what charity in Buddhism and Hinduism entails, including similarities and differences.

It is essential to be aware of the nature of your research question. A descriptive research question calls for a different set-up and tone than an evaluative topic. Avoid as much as possible the pitfall of drifting from one type of question to another as your paper progresses. Remain true to the nature of your main research question as you write. If you yourself have trouble figuring out how a particular chapter or section relates to the main research question, your reader is sure to have the same problem.

2.5 The Research Question and Subsidiary Questions

When writing a thesis, thorough preparation is essential. Your topic or main research question will inevitably require answers to a number of subsidiary questions. This process can be characterized as *exploring* your main research question (topic); it is often useful to deal with the subsidiary questions in consecutive chapters. For example, a student who decides his thesis should tackle the evaluative question about Anselm's proof of God's existence and Kant's criticism of it could ask such subsidiary questions as:

- What is a proof of God's existence?
- What is an ontological proof of God's existence?
- How exactly does Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence work?
- What is the philosophical and/or religious motivation for, or background to, Anselm's proof?
- What are the general points of criticism of Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence?
- What is the exact nature of Kant's criticism?
- What is the philosophical and/or religious motivation for, or background to, Kant's position?
- [etc.]

2.6 A Checklist for Thesis Topics

Before concluding that your research question is fully formulated, assess it, using the following list of questions:
- Is the topic narrow enough to be manageable for a thesis?
- Is the topic formulated as a single, coherent, clear, and answerable question?
- Can it be answered by established academic methods and criteria?

- Are the subsidiary questions clear and unambiguous?
- Are the subsidiary questions relevant to the topic (the main research question)?
- Can they be answered by established academic methods and criteria?

3.   From Thesis Topic to Thesis Structure

The structure of your text should be clear and insightful. Produce an overview of the contents at an early stage, consisting preferably of (provisional) chapter titles, section titles and subsections. Keep your main research question in sharp focus while you do this. In principle, each text has a beginning, middle and end. Depending on the nature of your research problem definition, this three-way division will usually take one of the following forms:

3.1   Introduction and Conclusion

The *introduction* contains:
- a statement describing the topic and its importance;
- a formulation of the topic as a research question;
- an indication of the way in which the research question will be answered: What methods and arguments will you use in your investigation?
- if necessary, an explanation of key terms you plan to use;
- a brief history of research can be incorporated into the opening chapter or be given in a separate chapter.

The *end* contains:
- a recapitulation of the research question and the results of your investigation;
- an indication of the potential value of your research for other academics.

Naturally, the middle section will contain the body of your paper or thesis. That is the section in which you are required to substantiate your formulation of the research question in a series of stages, with recourse to the literature you have studied.

3.2   How to Structure a Thesis: A Method

Once you have chosen a topic and defined it, formulated the subsidiary questions, and established your approach, it is relatively easy to create a thesis structure if you apply the following procedure. The constituent parts of your research project are:

Topic	
Topic as Research Question	
Brief History of Research (with provisional bibliography)	
Approach (Methodology)	

Subsidiary Question 1	
Subsidiary Question 2	
Subsidiary Question 3	
Subsidiary Question 4	

Logically, the approach segment (methodology) follows the statement of your topic and the subsidiary questions. In your thesis, however, you need to discuss the approach (methodology) in the introduction. The brief history of research can be incorporated into the introduction, or given a separate chapter (depending on how extensive this history, or *Forschungsbericht*, is). Finally, your thesis will close with a summary and conclusions, and your provisional bibliography will become a (definitive) bibliography. With these remarks in mind, you can easily work these points into a table of contents:

Topic	> Title (and Subtitle)
Topic as Research Question	> Introduction
Brief History of Research (with bibliography)	> Part of the Introduction (with bibliography at the and of your thesis)
Approach (Methodology)	> Methodological chapter (or part of the Introduction if there is not much to say)
Subsidiary Question 1	> Chapter 1
Subsidiary Question 2	> Chapter 2
Subsidiary Question 3	> Chapter 3
Subsidiary Question 4	> Chapter 4
Research Question	> Answering and further discussing of the research question in the Conclusion

3.3   How to Structure Chapters

When writing, you may apply the same organizational structure to individual chapters: title, introduction, sections, summary and conclusions.

Note: Chapters may be divided into sections and subsections (Dutch: *paragrafen* en *subparagrafen*), sections may be divided into paragraphs (*alinea's*).

# 4.	Tracking Down Literature and Library Resources

When assigning a paper, the supervising lecturer will usually indicate what (secondary) literature to consult. You are required to do your own research for the thesis. Once again, take your topic as a basis and subdivide it into a number of *search terms* (e.g. a concept, the title of a theological work, the name of a biblical scholar, or a school of thought) and use these as a basis for consulting the following sources.

## 4.1	Libsearch: search engine of the VU Library

Start with Libsearch, the search engine of the academic library of VU by accessing https://vu.on.worldcat.org/discovery. Through Libsearch you look all around the world in many great and small libraries, but also in the VU academic library (if you select this option), in its entire collection of both paper and digital resources. For the first time, articles from all digital journals that VU academic library receives are brought together in an accessible form. However, part of the e-collection (i.e. the e-resources) have to be accessed and searched separately.

4.2 E-resources

You will find the important e-resources for Theology and Religious Studies as follows:
- go to the homepage of UBVU (http://www.ub.vu.nl)
- click on the magnifying glass in the Libsearch search box (just above the middle of the page)
- choose (upper right corner) 'links'
- choose 'other vu resources'
- choose 'e-resources A-Z'
- you can limit your option in this alphabetical list of all faculties to the main e-resources of your own faculty (in the menu at the right side):
- choose 'more options' under 'faculties' and select 'Theology'
- click on the red button 'submit'

You will see the 40 e-resources that are important for theology and religious studies. You can access and search in them per item, such as:

- ATLA Religion Database
- Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception
- Encyclopedia of Religion
- Index Islamicus Online
- Oxford Islamic Studies Online
- Encyclopaedia Judaica
- Twentieth Century Religious Thought

There are several other links to databases that are not related to theology and religious studies. These are important for interdisciplinary topics:

- **PubMed** – for medical issues, but also for medical ethics, e.g. euthanasia; available via 'e-resources A to Z'.
- **Rechtsorde** – for legal issues, but also for Church jurisdiction within society, e.g. the ownership of church buildings; available via 'e-resources A to Z'.
- **ScienceDirect** – for more exact sciences, but also for psychology, e.g. the relationship between religion and health; available via 'e-resources A to Z'.
- **Web of Science** – this too is for more exact sciences, as well as for ethics, history, philosophy; available via 'e-resources A to Z'.
- **VU-DARE**: digital archives of open access publications of VU authors, available via 'e-resources A to Z'.

You are strongly advised to create a personal RSS feeder,[4] which will help you to stay up to date on new publications in your field.

4.3   Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries of Bible and Theology

These resources (some of them available online) will help you gain a summary overview of the research on a given topic, and may be helpful in finding a suitable topic for your thesis. The following dictionaries are listed in alphabetical order.

AncBD Freedman, D.N. (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6 vols. Also online.

EKL Fahlbusch, E., Lochman, J.M., *et alii* (Hrsg.), *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon. Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) 5 Bde.

LThK[4] Baumgartner, K., Buchberger, M., Kasper, W. (Hrsg.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, [4]1993–2001) 11 Bde.

NIDB Sakenfeld, K.B. (ed.), *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006-2009) 5 vols. (Also available on CD-Rom).

RGG[4] Betz, H.D., *et al.* (Hrsg.), *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, [4]1998–2007), 8 Bde + Register. An English edition is also available: Betz, H.D., *et al.* (Ed.), *Religion Past and Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 13 Vols + Index.

TRE Krause, G., Müller, G. (Hrsg.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1976–2004), 37 Bde. Also online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl.

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[4] RSS formally stands for *RDF (Resource Description Framework) Site Summary*.

4.4. Bible Software and Related Resources

ATLA   Atla Religion Database, esp. Scripture Index
BW 8.0 BibleWorks 8.0
LLT   Library of Latin Texts. Online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl
TLG   Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. Online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl
DBNL   Search in http://www.dbnl.org/nieuws/hoogtepunten.php?l=6#6 for the text of first prints of Dutch Bible translations.

4.5   Special Bibliographies

DissAb Dissertation Abstracts. Now online: Proquest dissertations and theses
EBB   Elenchus bibliographicus of Biblica (orig. *Elenchus of Biblical Bibliography*). Online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl
IZBG   Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete. International Review of Biblical Studies. Revue internationale des études bibliques
NTA   New Testament Abstracts. Online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl
OTA   Old Testament Abstracts. Online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl
RThA   Religious and Theological Abstracts
ThLZ   Theologische Literaturzeitung [www.thlz.de]
ZID   Zeitschrifteninhaltsdienst Theologie (Tübingen). Now available as Index theologicus online in e-resources www.ubvu.vu.nl

4.6   Reliable Websites

Which websites give reliable information and which do not? There is no simple answer to this question. It goes without saying, however, that you should never blindly trust information found on the Internet. Always consider the origins of any site you consider using. In principle, information from a university, or written by a renowned author known to publish in recognized journals, is more reliable than information from an isolated anonymous source.

- NARCIS (http://www.narcis.nl/?Language=nl): access to Dutch Academic research results online
- OAISTER (http://www.oclc.org/oaister.en.html): digital archive with open access publications from all over the world
- DARE access to academic online resources of VU University Amsterdam https://dare.ubvu.vu.nl/index.jsp
- www.bsw.org (Biblical Studies on the Web)
- www.ntgateway.com
- www.religion-online.org
- www.theology.de > Bibliographien & Onlinedokumenten (Kirche und Theologie im Web)
- www.wikipedia.com

Make a personal database of bibliographic references (e.g. in Endnote) or draw up a list of works that could prove useful. Make an initial selection (e.g. based on title, list of contents and a summary of the work, if applicable). Present this selection to your thesis supervisor and work together with him or her to compile a more or less definitive literature list.

To the best extent possible, rank the works in your literature list. Some will be so important to your thesis that you will need to read them thoroughly. For texts like these, which form the *basis* of your research, you may wish to make a thorough summary. For other works of less direct use to you, a more general or selective reading will suffice. Take notes from these *supporting* works, or make a brief summary.

4.7   Searching in Newspapers
Several websites offer databases of newspapers:
- Search in http://academic.lexisnexis.eu/ for your subject in newspapers from 1980 to today.
- www.delpher.nl (Koninklijke Bibliotheek: Dutch newspapers)
- www.kranten-historisch.startpagina.nl (also international newspapers)
- www.digibron.nl (reformed centre of knowledge)

4.8   Searching the Web
Below are some tips for searching the web:
- Remove all cookies from your computer.
- Search with Google, Ilse, Yahoo, etc.: every search engine gives different results.
- Search with Google, but select 'books'.
- Search via http://scholar.google.nl/ for articles.

4.9   Searching and Switching Made Easier
(See NRC Special edition, *Slimmer zoeken op Internet*, (Smarter Searching on the Internet) 9-10 February 2013)

Key combinations to switch between programs:
- Alt + Tab = Switch between programs. Keep Alt+Tab pressed down, and use the mouse to click on where you want to go.
- Windows + d = Show the desktop; this minimizes all other programs and tab pages.

Character symbols for searching in Google:

- - (minus sign) = Excludes the following: New -York = Search for 'New' but exclude 'York'. Note: use a space before the minus sign, but not after.
- "" (double quotations) = Search only for pages with the exact phrase that appears between quotation marks: "a noiseless patient spider".
- .. (two dots) = This searches for a numerical value between x and y: flood 1950..1955 will retrieve all floods listed with the numbers 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954 or 1955.
- * (asterisk) = This fills in the blank with a random word: a search for another day, another * will retrieve this proverb with 'dollar' or 'problem solved' or any other words used in the blank filled by the asterisk.
- ** (double asterisks) = Fill in the blank with more random words: that has nothing to do with the**of**in China. Note: do not use spaces either before or after double asterisks.
- AROUND(n) = Search for one word near another word with no more than n words in between: pope AROUND(13) crusade = search for a document where the word 'pope' appears within a maximum 13-word range from the word 'crusade'.
- define: = Give a dictionary or encyclopaedia definition of the following word. Examples: define:genocide or define:obama. Note: this works well in English. Note: do not use spaces either before or after the colon.
- filetype: = Retrieve the following in this file format: miljoenennota 2012 filetype:pdf.
- site: = Limit the search to this website or domain: integration exam site:rijksoverheid.nl or worship service site:pkn.nl. To limit your search to a country, enter site:nl or site:de.
- OR = Search for sites containing one or the other (or both) of the search terms: student financial aid OR stufi or king's speech site:nrc.nl OR site:trouw.nl. Note: the word OR can also be replaced by | such as in studiefinanciering | stufi.
- related: = Search for websites with a related theme. A search such as related:nrc.nl will retrieve other newspapers, such as *Trouw*, *Telegraaf*, etc.
- Combine search terms. For example, to find other uses of the expression 'that has nothing to do with the price of tea in China', search with "nothing to do with the * of *" –price –tea.
- Use other search engines, such as Yahoo and Ilse.
- To find databanks: combine "databank" or "database" with the search term. Or combine "vind" or "find" with the search term.
- Ctrl + f is useful for doing specific word searches within websites. 'Previous' and 'Next' will then appear to continue searching.
- In Google searches, specify whether you want to search websites, blogs, books, or other sources.

5.   Citing Authors and Referencing their Work

5.1 Citing, paraphrasing and quoting

You write a thesis, not only on the basis of your own findings and ideas, but also of methodological and substantive literature. All pieces of literature that you have used must appear in the bibliography: books, articles from journals and newspapers, web pages and so on. You do not have to categorize your bibliography. In most cases one comprehensive bibliography is better than one with several categories.

It is, however, good to differentiate between primary and secondary sources:
- A thesis about the sixteenth century differentiates between books written in that century (primary sources from the sixteenth century) and literature about that period (secondary sources from later centuries).
- A thesis about blogs with religious content differentiates between the blogs that were investigated (primary web sources) and literature about blogging (secondary literature, whether books, articles or web pages).

It is also possible to differentiate between general and specific literature or methodological and substantive literature:
- A thesis including the results of interviews with visitors of the 'EO-jongerendag' differentiate between methodological literature about interviewing or empirical research and substantive literature about the EO, its youth events or Christian youth events in general.
- A thesis about the role of religious knowledge within Islam differentiates between general literature about the Islam or Islamic education and specific literature about Quran and Hadith on Quranic verses.

5.1.1 Citing

'To cite authors' means either to quote from their publications or to mention them by name in your main text, no matter where you found it: newspaper, journal, book or web site. Citing commonly occurs when you paraphrase or summarize their contributions to scholarship, or make use of their ideas. You must reference all such citations. It means that you provide your thesis with references, that is, with full bibliographic information about the authors you have cited (quoted, referred to, or borrowed from). How to reference is the subject of section 5.2.

You should always credit (i.e., reference) your sources in the case of: (1) direct and paraphrased quotations and excerpts; (2) facts and statistics that are not common knowledge; and (3) ideas, thoughts, and opinions that are not your own, but that you discovered in the course of your research. You do not need to credit

(reference) a source for information that is common knowledge ('Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands'), or that rests on accepted wisdom, or for references to or brief mentions of commonly known literary, artistic and religious works, such as the *Nachtwacht* of Rembrandt or the lost ear of Vincent van Gogh.

5.1.2 Paraphrasing

If you are paraphrasing (or summarizing) a piece of text, make sure that you distinguish clearly between expressing your own thoughts and expressing the opinions of others in your own words. You can do this by stating at the beginning of a section that you are now going to deal with the views of author X. You could also do this by incorporating constructions into your paraphrased segment, such as: 'according to X, it is the case that …'; 'X goes on to argue that …'; 'X then makes it clear that …'; or 'But is this correct? - X wonders'. You may find that paragraph beginnings are a good place to lead into paraphrases.

5.1.3 Quoting

Quoting means that you literally take over a piece of text from another author. This definition is valid for *every* kind of text: letters, newspapers, journals, books, web sites, blogs, transcribed interviews, even statements from television programmes, games and films. Only quote segments of text that are absolutely necessary to your paper. Writers who resort excessively to quotation come across as lacking the skill to present their selected sources effectively in their own words. And readers that observe many quotations tend to skip these passages.

In quoting, strive to ensure maximum accuracy and a smooth, logical transition away from your own text. The following rules apply to quotes:

1. Thumb rule: if you literally adopt phrases of *five* words or more from another author, you use quotation marks. If you do not use them, we consider your quote plagiarism (see further *Thesis Regulations*, section 3.1).
2. Always use the same kind of quotation marks: either the single or the double ones. Mind that your word processor always gives the same marks: with German or French as basic language your quotation marks will be quite different from Dutch or English.[5]
3. If you adopt a very special phrase from an author, also use quotation marks, even if it is only one word. Theo van Baaren calls India 'a land of wonders', while Hendrik Kraemer calls it 'a land of many religions'.[6]

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[5] If you want to distinguish between (single) quotation marks instead of the word 'so-called' and (double) quotation marks for real quotations, be very consistent in order not to confuse the reader.

[6] Th.P. van Baaren, *Van maansikkel tot rijzende zon: de grote godsdiensten van Azië* (Utrecht: W. de Haan, 1961), 101; H. Kraemer, *Van godsdiensten en menschen: reisindrukken van een tambaram-ganger* (Nijkerk: G.F. Callenbach, 1940), 79.

4. If you adopt a piece of text that will be three lines or more in your own text, mark it by a left indent and using a letter type one size smaller than your main text. In this case you do not use quotation marks. It will look like this:

> Like every other translation of the Bible, Targum Jonathan betrays the presuppositions of its translators, mainly through its deviations from the source text. Many of these deviations have been detected and described by earlier scholars of the Targum.[7]

5. You quote exactly how you found it: do not add italics, remarks or punctuation. This also applies to texts from primary religious texts.

6. If you do want to use italics, always admit that the italics are yours. For example: 'Not *every* education is harmful.' (italics mine)[8]

7. If you do want to add a word or explanation – for instance, if it will remain unclear who is meant by 'he' – always put the added word(s) in square brackets, followed by your initials: 'One year later he [Wilhelm Bacher, evs] became professor of Bible at the newly founded Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest.'[9]

8. If you want to leave out part of the quotation, use suspension points in brackets (...); compare 'Samuel Rolles Driver, who lived from 1846 until 1914, has been important for the textual criticism of the Books of Samuel' with 'Samuel Rolles Driver (...) has been important for the textual criticism of the Books of Samuel'.[10]

5.2 References to literature

5.2.1 In general

In addition to the established international standards, you will be required to use the guidelines in the 15th or 16th edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS) for incorporating bibliographical references.[11] The *CMS* covers almost every conceivable question that can arise in listing citations: from the correct use of capital letters, periods and commas to guidelines for arranging literature selections into reader-friendly bibliographies. The CMS is available in hard copy and in a full online edition.

Given the complexity of listing citations, especially in the author-title system described below, we strongly advise all students to use a bibliography software program and opt for Chicago style. This will fully automate the task of listing references. The programs we recommend include *EndNote* and *Reference*

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[7] E. van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel* (SAIS, 1; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1.

[8] G. Stroecken, R. Verdult, *De mythe van de gelukkige kindertijd: zoektocht naar het miskende kind in onszelf* (Antwerpen & Apeldoorn: Cyclus, 2006), 9.

[9] Van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 5.

[10] Van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 11.

[11] The Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 16 2010).

Manager, or Zotero (http://www.zotero.org), which is available for free. Incidentally, SurfSpot sells Endnote – as well as numerous other software programs – at a discount to students. Endnote, Reference Manager and Zotero are fully compatible with MS Word and LibreOffice.[12] In practical terms, it is best to use an example bibliography to see how certain issues are resolved. The most recent Brill publications adhere to the Chicago style guidelines. The CMS website contains a link to its *Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide*.

The *CMS* offers an online Q&A section that will answer almost any question about literature references (see www.chicagomanualofstyle.org). However, if the CMS does not answer your question, then consistency is the rule to follow. Make your own stylistic guideline and adhere to it consistently throughout your paper or thesis. For papers in biblical studies, students are required to use *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient, Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (see www.sbl.org; hard copy available via Amazon.com). Based on the *CMS,* this manual is a specialized source on the standards used in biblical studies (especially concerning primary source quotations, abbreviation use, etc.).

Note: The guidelines selected here could be discussed endlessly. The CMS also has its share of shortcomings. It is important to bear in mind that this is just one of the many ways in which to present bibliographical information in a well-organized, consistent manner. By adhering consistently to the standards, you can, at the very least, clearly demonstrate how conscientious your work is.

5.2.2 Necessary information for references

You will need the information below to structure your bibliography (at the end of your paper or thesis) and references to sources in your footnotes according to the guidelines. The specific information you will need depends on the type of source: a book (monograph), a journal article, a chapter from an edited volume, an entry in a guide or encyclopaedia, an article in a newspaper or a web page:

(1) **Book**: author's name (initials or first name + last name), title + sub-title, series + series number, place, name of publisher, publication year, and edition.

(2) **Article in journal**: author's name (initials or first name + last name), full title of the article, name of the journal, volume number + publication year, first and last page numbers.

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[12] See the websites for Endnote (www.endnote.com) and VU University Library. The library regularly organizes short instructional classes (workshops) for working with software programs such as Endnote and Reference Manager.

(3) **Chapter** from an edited volume: author's name (initials or first name + last name), full title of the chapter, name(s) of editor(s), title + sub-title of the book, series + series number, place, name of publisher, publication year, edition, first and last page numbers.

(4) **Entry** (lemma) from a **guide or encyclopaedia**: author's name (initials or first name + last name), full title of the lemma/entry, name(s) of editor(s), title + sub-title of the book, series number, publication year, first and last page numbers.

(5) **Article** or letter in a **newspaper**: name of the author (initials or first name + last name), full title of the article, name of the newspaper, publication date, (first and last) page numbers.

(6) **Article** (lemma) on a **web site**: name of the author (initials or first name + last name), full title of the article/lemma, name of the organisation that runs the web site, year of publication, exact url[13] of the web page on which the article is published or its exact doi[14], date of access, if applicable the first and last page numbers (in case of a pdf).

The information in the bibliography at the end of your paper should be laid out differently than the bibliographical information incorporated in the running text and footnotes. It is best to begin by compiling the bibliography before you start processing the information in the footnotes. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 give instructions and examples how to refer to literature.

5.2.3 Choice between two systems

At the faculty of *Godgeleerdheid* of Vrije Universiteit you can choose between two systems of referring to literature: the author year system and the author title system. Your system of choice will depend on the nature and scope of your research, and the guidelines your supervisory lecturer will give you. You will need to make a clear choice of *one* of these two systems, and adhere consistently to your chosen system. In working with bibliography software, you can make your choice when selecting a style. These are the two systems:

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[13] A url ('uniform resource locator') is the unique name of a web site. If you put your cursor in the text from which you cite, copy what is in the heading of your web page and paste it in your footnote or bibliography.

[14] A doi ('digital object identifier') is a unique code that is linked to the content of a website. Even if you change the name (and thereby the url) of a site, the doi code remains the same with the result that its content can always be retraced. The doi system prevents errors such as 'Page not found'.

- The **author-year system** (see 5.3) is used in the main body of the text. References are structured as follows: (author's last name, year of publication: page number). The bibliography presents full bibliographical information, laid out as follows: Author's last name, author's first name (publication year). *Title of publication*. Place of publication: Publisher.

- The **author-title system** (see 5.4) is used in footnotes and end notes. The first mention of a source in a footnote/endnote should include full bibliographical information. However, all subsequent references to that source can suffice with the author's last name, an abbreviated title in italics and page number. Thus the lay-out of the first reference is: Author's first, middle and last names, *Title of the publication: Sub-title of the publication* (Place of publication: publisher, publication year), page number. All subsequent references should include: Author's last name, *Abbreviated title of the publication,* page number. In addition to this, the bibliography at the end should include an entry with all the information in the first footnote, but slightly different in style: Author's last name, initials or first name and initial(s), *Title of the publication: Sub-title of the publication*. Place of publication: publisher, publication year.

For both systems the following rules apply:
- Book titles and sub-titles should always be in italics. By contrast, titles of articles should appear between quotation marks, whereas the journals in which they are published should be in italics. You never have to use italics and quotation marks in one.
- In case of one or two authors, refer to both. In case of three or more: state their names in the bibliography (unless it is really too much, e.g., with ten authors), but use only the first name in the text or in the footnotes and add 'et al.' For example, 'Houtman, Alberdina, Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman and Hans-Martin Kirn' in the bibliography, but 'Alberdina Houtman et al.' in the footnotes and 'Houtman et al.' in brackets in the main text.
- In case of articles, first give the pages on which the article is published and then the page to which you specifically refer: '25-36, esp. 27'.
- Take care: titles in most languages only have one capital letter, but this is different in English. Then all the words of a title are capitalized, except articles (a, an, the), small conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor) and prepositions of less than five letters (on, at, to from, by). Compare the capital letters in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* and the Dutch translation of this title, *Bijbelse verhaalkunst*.

5.3 The Author-Year system

Detailed instructions how to apply the author-year system are given in this section, in case of books (5.3.1), articles in journals (5.3.2), articles in edited volumes

(5.3.3), lemmas in handbooks or encyclopaedias (5.3.4), articles in newspapers (5.3.5) or web pages (5.3.6).

Note: you can put more than one book in brackets. You do not have to open and close brackets with every new reference.

5.3.1 Author-Year system for books

In the running text you refer in the following way:

> (Caputo 1987, 56-67)
> (Israel 2011, 45; Ricoeur 2004, 56)
> (Robinson en Koester 1971, 56).

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

> Caputo, John D. 1987. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project.* SPhEPh; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.[15]
> Israel, Jonathan I. 2011. *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
> Ricoeur, Paul. 2004. *The Conflict of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics.* Edited by Don Ihde. New York and London: Continuum, 1989, repr. 2004.
> Robinson, James M., en Helmut Koester. 1971. *Trajectories through Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

5.3.2 Author-Year system for articles in journals

In the running text you refer in the following way:

> (Dettweiler 2013, 115)
> (Vandermeersch 1985, 255)
> (Wellhausen 1876, 398)

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

> Dettweiler, Andreas. 2013. La letter aux Colossiens: une théologie de la mémoire. *NTS* 59: 109-128.

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[15] Abbreviation of the series (SPhEPh = Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy) must be explained in a list of abbreviations. For the use of standardized abbreviations, see one of the following works: S. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete / International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects* (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, [2]1992) and/or P.H. Alexander et al. (red.), *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999).

Vandermeersch, Patrick. 1985. Michel Foucault: een onverwachte hermeneutiek van het Christendom? *TTh* 25: 250-277.
Wellhausen, Julius, 1876-1877. Die Komposition des Hexateuchs. *JDT* 21 (1876): 392-450; 22 (1877): 407-479.

5.3.3 Author-Year system for edited volumes

In the running text you refer in the following way:

(Ellethy 2013, 78)
(Zwiep 2013, 219)

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

Ellethy, Yaser. 2013. *Shura* in Text and Context: Islamizing Democracy or Democratizing Islam?, in: Govert Buijs, Thijl Sunier and Peter Versteeg (eds.), *Risky Liaisons? Democracy and Religion: Reflections and Case Studies* (A*m*ST*a*R 4). Amsterdam: VU University Press, 78-92.
Zwiep, Arie W. 2013. Eight Kings on an Apocalyptic Animal Farm: Reflections on Revelation 17:9-11, in: Jan Krans et al. (eds.), *Paul, John and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer* (NovTSup 149). Leiden, Boston: Brill, 218-237.

5.3.4 Author-Year system for lemmas in encyclopaedias

In the running text you refer in the following way:

(Bormann 2001, 180)
(Dimant 1992, 245; Strohm 2001, 191)

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

Bormann, K. 2001. Stoa/Stoizismus, *TRE* 32:179-193.
Strohm, Chr. 2001. Neustoizismus, *TRE* 32:179-180.
Dimant, Devorah, 1992. Pesharim, Qumran, *AncBD* 5:244-251.

5.3.5 Author-Year system for newspapers

In the running text you refer in the following way:

(Ribbens 2016, 10)
(Claus 2016, 4)

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

Claus, Sybilla. 2016. Woede verstikt de zwarte ziel, *Trouw* (9 July), 4.
Ribben, Arjen. 2016. Het oor van een gevoelig man, *NRC Handelsblad* (12 July), 10-11.

5.3.6 Author-Year system for web pages

In the running text you refer in the following way:

> (Taylor 2012)
> (SGP 2006, 26)

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

> SGP. 2006. *Man en vrouw schiep Hij hen: Politieke participatie in bijbels perspectief* ,
> http://www.sgp.nl/Media/view/696/Brochure%20Man%20en%20vrouw%20schiep%20Hij%20hen.pdf (accessed 13 July 2016).
> Taylor, Paul. 2012. Are Atheists Forcing Christians to Be Creationists? *Creation Today*, http://www.creationtoday.org/are-atheists-forcing-christians-to-be-creationists (accessed 13 July 2016).

If you cannot find an author or the year of publication, as in Widipedia articles, use a footnote to give the title and the url, as in the following footnote.[16]

5.4 The Author-Title system

Detailed instructions how to apply the author-title system are given in this section, in case of books (5.4.1), articles in journals (5.4.2), articles in edited volumes (5.4.3), lemmas in handbooks or encyclopaedias (5.4.4), articles in newspapers (5.4.5) or web pages (5.4.6).

Note: you can put more than one book in a footnote. You do not have to make a separate footnote with each new reference. And try not to use the 'Enter' in footnotes: use semicolons or full stops instead.

Note: footnote numbers appear *after* the full stop. Sometimes you can put footnote numbers *in* a sentence to make a remark on a particular word.

5.4.1 The Author-Title system for books

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

> Caputo, John D. *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project.* SPhEPh; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.[17]

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[16] 'Liechtenstein', *Wikipedia*, https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liechtenstein (accessed 13 July 2016); see especially the section on 'religion' at
https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liechtenstein#Religie (accessed 14 July 2016).

[17] Afkorting van de serie (SPhEPh = Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy) opnemen in lijst van afkortingen. Voor het gebruik van gestandaardiseerde afkortingen kun je het beste gebruik maken van een standaardwerk als S. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete / International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects* (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, ²1992)

> Israel, Jonathan I. *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
> Ricoeur, P. *The Conflict of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics.* Edited by Don Ihde. New York and London: Continuum, 1989, repr. 2004.
> Robinson, James M., and Helmut Koester. *Trajectories through Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.

In a footnote, in case it is the first reference to this source, you give all the necessary data, like this:

> [1] John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (SPhEPh; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 56-67.
> [2] Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretation: Essays in Hermeneutics* (ed. Don Ihde; New York and London: Continuum, 1989, repr. 2004), 73-76.
> [3] Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 140-171.
> [4] James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 67-70.

In every following footnote you give an abridged version:[18]

> [5] Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 88.
> [6] Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretation*, 98; Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 189.
> [7] Robinson and Koester, *Trajectories*, 35.

5.4.2 The Author-Title system for articles in journals

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

> Dettweiler, Andreas, 'La letter aux Colossiens: une théologie de la mémoire.' *NTS* 59 (2013): 109-128.
> Vandermeersch, Patrick, 'Michel Foucault: een onverwachte hermeneutiek van het Christendom?' *TTh* 25 (1985): 250-277.
> Wellhausen, Julius, 'Die Komposition des Hexateuchs.' *JDT* 21 (1876): 392-450; 22 (1877): 407-479.

In a footnote, in case it is the first reference to this source, you give all the necessary data, like this:

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en/of P.H. Alexander et al. (red.), *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999).

[18] Do not use 'Idem' or 'Ibidem'. As soon as you add a footnote in your text, the term 'Idem' all of a sudden refers to another source.

[1] Andreas Dettweiler, 'La letter aux Colossiens: une théologie de la mémoire.' *NTS* 59 (2013): 109-128.
[2] Patrick Vandermeersch, 'Michel Foucault: een onverwachte hermeneutiek van het Christendom?' *TTh* 25 (1985): 250-277.
[3] Julius Wellhausen, 'Die Komposition des Hexateuchs.' *JDT* 21 (1876): 392-450; 22 (1877): 407-479.

In every following footnote you give an abridged version:

[4] Dettweiler, 'Lettre aux Colossiens, ' 125.
[5] Vandermeersch, 'Foucault, ' 260.
[6] Wellhausen, 'Komposition, ' 424.

5.4.3 The Author-Title system for edited volumes

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

Ellethy, Yaser, '*Shura* in Text and Context: Islamizing Democracy or Democratizing Islam?', in: Govert Buijs, Thijl Sunier and Peter Versteeg (eds.), *Risky Liaisons? Democracy and Religion: Reflections and Case Studies* (A*m*ST*a*R 4); Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2013, 78-92.
Zwiep, Arie W., 'Eight Kings on an Apocalyptic Animal Farm: Reflections on Revelation 17:9-11', in: Jan Krans et al. (eds.), *Paul, John and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer* (NovTSup 149); Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013, 218-237.

In a footnote, in case it is the first reference to this source, you give all the necessary data, like this:

[1] Yaser Ellethy, '*Shura* in Text and Context: Islamizing Democracy or Democratizing Islam?', in: Govert Buijs, Thijl Sunier and Peter Versteeg (eds.), *Risky Liaisons? Democracy and Religion: Reflections and Case Studies* (AmSTaR 4; Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2013), 78-92.
[2] Arie W. Zwiep, 'Eight Kings on an Apocalyptic Animal Farm: Reflections on Revelation 17:9-11,' in: Jan Krans et al. (eds.), *Paul, John and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer* (NovTSup 149; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 218-237.

In every following footnote you give an abridged version:

[3] Ellethy, '*Shura* in Text and Context', 88.
[4] Zwiep, 'Eight Kings', 224.

5.4.4 The Author-Title system for lemmas in encyclopaedias

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

Bormann, K. and Strohm, Chr., 'Stoa/Stoizismus/Neustoizismus', *TRE* 32,
     2001, 179-193.
Dimant, Devorah, 'Pesharim, Qumran', *AncBD*, 1992, 5:244-251.
Duane F. Watson, 'Roman Empire', in: C.A. Evans, S.E. Porter (eds.),
     Dictionary of New Testament Background; Downers Grove, Leicester:
     InterVarsity, 2000, 974–978.

In a footnote, in case it is the first reference to this source, you give all the
necessary data, like this:

[1] K. Bormann, 'Stoa/Stoizismus', *TRE* 32 (2001) 179-180.
[2] Chr. Strohm, 'Neustoizismus', *TRE* 32 (2001) 190-193.
[3] Devorah Dimant, 'Pesharim, Qumran', *AncBD* (1992) 5:244-251.
[4] Duane F. Watson, 'Roman Empire', in: C.A. Evans, S.E. Porter (eds.),
     Dictionary of New Testament Background (Downers Grove, Leicester:
     InterVarsity, 2000), 974–978.

In every following footnote you give an abridged version:

[5] Bormann, 'Stoa/Stoizismus', 185.
[6] Strohm, 'Neustoizismus', 192.
[7] Dimant, 'Pesharim, Qumran', 249.
[8] Watson, 'Roman Empire, ' 975.

5.4.5 The Author-Title system for newspapers

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

Arjen Ribben, 'Het oor van een gevoelig man', *NRC Handelsblad* (12 July
     2016), 10-11.
Sybilla Claus, 'Woede verstikt de zwarte ziel', *Trouw* (9 July 2016), 4.

In a footnote, in case it is the first reference to this source, you give all the
necessary data, like this:

Sybilla Claus, 'Woede verstikt de zwarte ziel', *Trouw* (9 July 2016), 4.
Arjen Ribben, 'Het oor van een gevoelig man', *NRC Handelsblad* (12 July 2016),
     10-11.

In every following footnote you give an abridged version:

Ribben, 'Het oor', 10.
Clause, 'Woede verstikt', 4.

5.4.6 The Author-Title system for web articles

In the bibliography you give all the necessary data:

‘Liechtenstein’, *Wikipedia*, https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liechtenstein (accessed 13 July 2016)
SGP (2006), *Man en vrouw schiep Hij hen: Politieke participatie in bijbels perspectief* , http://www.sgp.nl/Media/view/696/Brochure%20Man%20en%20vrouw%20schiep%20Hij%20hen.pdf (accessed 13 July 2016).
Taylor, Paul (2012), ‘Are Atheists Forcing Christians to Be Creationists?’ *Creation Today*, http://www.creationtoday.org/are-atheists-forcing-christians-to-be-creationists (accessed 13 July 2016).

In a footnote, in case it is the first reference to this source, you give all the necessary data, like this:

‘Liechtenstein’, *Wikipedia*, https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liechtenstein (accessed 13 July 2016)
SGP (2006), *Man en vrouw schiep Hij hen: Politieke participatie in bijbels perspectief* , http://www.sgp.nl/Media/view/696/Brochure%20Man%20en%20vrouw%20schiep%20Hij%20hen.pdf (accessed 13 July 2016).
Paul Taylor (2012), ‘Are Atheists Forcing Christians to Be Creationists?’ *Creation Today*, http://www.creationtoday.org/are-atheists-forcing-christians-to-be-creationists (accessed 13 July 2016).

In every following footnote you give an abridged version:

‘Liechtenstein’, *Wikipedia.*
SGP, *Man en vrouw schiep Hij hen*, 25.
Taylor, ‘Are Atheists Forcing’.

# 6.	Writing and Rewriting

Only on the rarest of occasions will you succeed in writing the definitive version of a major project on your first attempt. In general, it is unrealistic to expect that you can complete even a short text without having to rewrite it. One normally does not write straight from A to Z. When writing your first version it is a good idea to concentrate on coming to grips with demarcating and defining the contents. That is to say, when embarking on your provisional version, focus your attention on the content without worrying too much about exactly how to phrase your thoughts. Once you start rewriting and rewriting again, you can shift the focus towards refining your phrasing, eliminating spelling errors and deciding where to put commas.[13]

Mind the order in which you write, both at macro and at micro level. A thesis is often set up from the big issues to the smaller ones (general chapters that eventually result in the answer to your smaller question) or in chronological order or from smaller issues to the bigger consequences (from the discussion of a text to its implications for the larger theological issues). If you write smaller paragraphs or section, min your order too. It is illogical to refer to 'Abraham, Jacob, Isaac and Ishmael', if the chronological order is rather 'Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob'.

6.0 Thesis matrix as guidance

Your thesis will be graded by means of the thesis matrix. This provides a number of requirements that must be met before you hand in your definitive thesis and nine criteria that will be measured by the matrix.[19] This chapter gives clues how to meet the criteria as best as possible, but first there is a short introduction to the requirements that will not be graded.

### 6.0.1	Title page

Provide the title of your thesis, your name, student number, e-mail address and telephone number. Also the date of completion, the name(s) of your supervisor(s) and the name of the specialization in which the thesis is written.

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[13] See also K.L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (rev. ed. W.C. Booth, G.G. Colomb, J.M. Williams; Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, [7]2007) 98–130.

[19] For an extensive explanation of the matrix, see *Explanation of the thesis matrix...*

6.0.2 Statements

After the title page there must be a page with the signed declaration of originality and a signed declaration in which you allow the VU library to lend your thesis to others.

STATEMENT 1

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original work. It is the result of my own research, and was written entirely by me, except where otherwise stated. Any information and ideas from other sources are explicitly and fully acknowledged in the text or the notes. A bibliography is appended.

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(place and date)   *(signature)*

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if acceptable, to be made publicly available as follows: for photocopying; for inter-library loans; and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations and to be published by VU University Amsterdam.

------------------------------------   ---

(place and date)   *(signature)*

6.0.3 Spelling and grammar

You are supposed to write correct English (or Dutch). During the revision process, pay attention to grammar, word choice, style and spelling. This is easier said than done, because how exactly do you go about it? Spelling is no longer much of a problem: most word-processing programs feature a reliable spelling checker. In doubt you can always consult the sites www.woordenlijst.org for Dutch words or www.merriam-webster.com for English. Both sites are also useful in case you want to know how to hyphenate a word.

Grammar, choice of words and style are more complicated. In this regard, knowledge of your own capabilities has an important part to play. If you have the impression that your texts are not well-written, or if you notice that readers tend to lose interest when reading your work, invest more time in the writing process. In that regard, it is probably also wise to ask your supervisory lecturer to spend more time on this than other students might need. You could also as a fellow

student or a family member with more experience to read and comment upon your chapters.

6.0.4 Length

The length of your thesis depends on the European Credits you will receive. The thesis regulations state:

    a. The Bachelor's thesis earns 12 EC (including the *Thesis Preparation* module) and generally contains between 7,000 and 10,000 words.

    b. The pre-Master's thesis earns 12 EC (including the *Thesis Preparation* module) and generally contains between 7,000 and 10,000 words.

    c. The Master's thesis varies by programme:

        i. The thesis for the one-year Master's programme earns 12 EC (excluding the *Research Skills* module) and generally contains between 15,000 and 20,000 words.

        ii. The thesis for the Research Master's programme earns 30 EC (excluding the *Research Skills* module) and should contain no more than 50,000 words.

        iii. The thesis for the three-year Master's programme earns 18 EC (excluding the *Research Skills* module) and should contain no more than 30,000 words.

6.0.5 References to literature

As you sign for in your first statement attached to your thesis, you will correctly refer to your sources in the text or in footnotes and in your bibliography. The bibliography sums up all the sources you have used. Chapter 5 provides instructions how to do this.

6.0.6 Appearance and layout

The overall structure of the thesis should be balanced and maintain the right proportions. Try to keep the different chapters equal in length. Both the introduction and the conclusion should not exceed 10% of the entire thesis. They are, after all, what they are: an introduction to and conclusion of the proper theme in the body of the thesis.

Ensure that the typed page is easy on the eye and well organized. Resist the temptation to use all the features available in your word processing program. Do not use different colours, different fonts, headings, etc. In any case, pay attention to the following aspects:

- Leave enough space in the margins: 2.54 cm (= 1 inch).
- Use an 11-point font for the running text and a 10-point font for footnotes.
- Use a line spacing of 1.15.

- Start the page number count with the title page as page 1. Page numbers should only be visible from the contents page onwards.

Headings for chapters, sections and subsections should be clearly marked. Ensure that the hierarchy of the text as a whole is reflected in the typography: for example, chapter titles in capitals, section titles in italics and subsection titles unmarked but followed by a blank line. If you have a preference for working with numbers, by all means do so, but exercise restraint in your subdivisions. A reader who finds himself presented with sub-sub-subsection 3.4.3.2.1 is almost certain to have lost all sense of structure before they get that far into the sub-structure.

The *paragraph* (Dutch: *alinea*) is a key content-related and typographic unit of text. Several paragraphs make up a section (Dutch: *paragraaf*), several sections make up a chapter. It is a good strategy to write from paragraph to paragraph, making a clear connection between each new paragraph (and section and chapter) and the previous one. Good paragraphs are usually longer than a sentence, and shorter than a whole page. Paragraphs that are too short make a text too 'airy', while paragraphs that are too long leave the reader gasping for breath.

Use only one type of paragraph. There are at least three types, but choose before you start writing which *one* you will use:
- The paragraph that is concluded by an Enter and an empty line.
- The paragraph that is concluded by an Enter only.
- The paragraph that is concluded by an Enter and started by a Tab. The first paragraph of a section (below the heading) is never started by a Tab.

Section 2.4.7 of these guidelines looks like this, when using the three different types of paragraph marking:

2.4.7   *Voorstel als onderzoeksvraag*
Een laatste mogelijkheid is het onderwerp in de vorm van een voorstel of werkhypothese te gieten. Het voorstel is een stelling waarvan de auteur de geldigheid wil onderzoeken. Bijvoorbeeld: 'Het begrip liefdadigheid heeft in het boeddhisme een andere betekenis dan in het hindoeïsme', of 'Het reformatorische idee van de echtgenoot/vader als priester van het gezin is in de twintigste eeuw fundamenteel veranderd'.

Merk op dat deze typen onderzoeksvragen tot op zekere hoogte allemaal op het beschrijvende type zijn gebaseerd: je kunt niets verklaren of evalueren en geen voorstel formuleren zonder beschrijvingen. Bij een beschrijvende scriptie is het echter je *doel* om een bepaald verschijnsel of een theorie te beschrijven, terwijl beschrijvingen in de andere gevallen een *middel* zijn om iets te verklaren, te evalueren of een voorstel te ondersteunen. In het voorbeeld van de evaluerende onderzoeksvraag moet je beschrijven wat liefdadigheid in het boeddhisme en hindoeïsme inhoudt, inclusief overeenkomsten en verschillen, maar je doet dit binnen het kader van een evaluatie.

Het is essentieel dat je je bewust bent van de aard van je onderzoeksvraag. Een beschrijvende onderzoeksvraag vereist een andere opzet en toon dan een evaluerend onderwerp. Let erop dat je tijdens het schrijven van je betoog niet van het ene type onderzoeksvraag naar het andere afdwaalt. Blijf tijdens het schrijven trouw aan de aard van je centrale onderzoeksvraag. Als jij het zelf lastig vindt om een bepaald hoofdstuk of een passage in verband te brengen met je centrale onderzoeksvraag, dan zal je lezer daar ook moeite mee hebben.

2.4.7   *Voorstel als onderzoeksvraag*
Een laatste mogelijkheid is het onderwerp in de vorm van een voorstel of werkhypothese te gieten. Het voorstel is een stelling waarvan de auteur de geldigheid wil onderzoeken. Bijvoorbeeld: 'Het begrip liefdadigheid heeft in het boeddhisme een andere betekenis dan in het hindoeïsme', of 'Het reformatorische idee van de echtgenoot/vader als priester van het gezin is in de twintigste eeuw fundamenteel veranderd'.
Merk op dat deze typen onderzoeksvragen tot op zekere hoogte allemaal op het beschrijvende type zijn gebaseerd: je kunt niets verklaren of evalueren en geen voorstel formuleren zonder beschrijvingen. Bij een beschrijvende scriptie is het echter je *doel* om een bepaald verschijnsel of een theorie te beschrijven, terwijl beschrijvingen in andere gevallen een *middel* zijn om iets te verklaren, te evalueren of een voorstel te ondersteunen. In het voorbeeld van de evaluerende onderzoeksvraag moet je beschrijven wat liefdadigheid in het boeddhisme en hindoeïsme inhoudt, inclusief overeenkomsten en verschillen, maar je doet dit binnen het kader van een evaluatie. Het is essentieel dat je je bewust bent van de aard van je onderzoeksvraag. Een beschrijvende onderzoeksvraag vereist een andere opzet en toon dan een evaluerend onderwerp. Let erop dat je tijdens het schrijven van je betoog niet van het ene type onderzoeksvraag naar het andere afdwaalt. Blijf tijdens het schrijven trouw aan de aard van je centrale onderzoeksvraag. Als jij het zelf lastig vindt om een bepaald hoofdstuk of een passage in verband te brengen met je centrale onderzoeksvraag, dan zal je lezer daar ook moeite mee hebben.

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> echtgenoot/vader als priester van het gezin is in de twintigste eeuw fundamenteel veranderd'.
>
> Merk op dat deze typen onderzoeksvragen tot op zekere hoogte allemaal op het beschrijvende type zijn gebaseerd: je kunt niets verklaren of evalueren en geen voorstel formuleren zonder beschrijvingen. Bij een beschrijvende scriptie is het echter je *doel* om een bepaald verschijnsel of een theorie te beschrijven, terwijl beschrijvingen in de andere gevallen een *middel* zijn om iets te verklaren, te evalueren of een voorstel te ondersteunen. In het voorbeeld van de evaluerende onderzoeksvraag moet je beschrijven wat liefdadigheid in het boeddhisme en hindoeïsme inhoudt, inclusief overeenkomsten en verschillen, maar je doet dit binnen het kader van een evaluatie.
>
> Het is essentieel dat je je bewust bent van de aard van je onderzoeksvraag. Een beschrijvende onderzoeksvraag vereist een andere opzet en toon dan een evaluerend onderwerp. Let erop dat je tijdens het schrijven van je betoog niet van het ene type onderzoeksvraag naar het andere afdwaalt. Blijf tijdens het schrijven trouw aan de aard van je centrale onderzoeksvraag. Als jij het zelf lastig vindt om een bepaald hoofdstuk of een passage in verband te brengen met je centrale onderzoeksvraag, dan zal je lezer daar ook moeite mee hebben.

6.0.7 Nine criteria

The next nine sections discuss the nine criteria by posing a question and summing up characteristics of that criteria. Most information directly originates in the explanation of the matrix.

6.1   Relevance and Imbedding

Question: Does the introduction make a comprehensive argument for the significance of the student's research within the context of the current academic literature?

Characteristics: The thesis
- includes a adequate literature review that places the student's research within its appropriate scientific context.
- describes what is known about the topic.
- identifies the specific knowledge gaps that the student's project intends to address.
- makes an argument for the broader significance of the student's research when addressing these gaps.

Normally, imbedding and relevance is discussed in the Introduction. How to write an introduction is made clear in the quote from *Advanced Writing in English* here below.[20]

> **The Introduction**
>
> The key element in the introduction is the purpose of the research reported on in the paper. Although the purpose should be made clear as quickly as possible, it is usually better not to open with the objective. Even someone in the same field requires some preparation to understand the problem properly.

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[20] Marianne Sanders et al., *Advanced Writing in English: A Guide for Dutch Authors* (Leuven & Apeldoorn: Garant, 3e druk, 1996), 51-52.

It is better to begin with the general scientific issue and lead the reader to your particular experiments [or questions, EvS]. Move from what is known—citing closely related work that has been done—to the problem which was investigated. The link between the general issue and the specific research problem addressed in the study is usually made by indicating the gap, inadequacy, unresolved controversy or new questions raised by previous work. The general statement of purpose and the research questions and hypotheses follow. This approach helps the reader to understand the relevance of the work in the general scheme of things and to evaluate it as part of the chain of research in the specific area of interest.

The order of presentation of related research may be chronological or move from those studies most distantly related to those most closely related to the research question. In the review of the literature in dissertations or long reports, topic categories may be used.

The introduction should also alert the reader to the method of investigation. The reason a particular method was chosen may also be briefly discussed in the introduction.

After reading the introduction, the reader should have both a clear idea of what was studied and why it is important, and a general idea of how the problem was approached. [In empirical research a separate methodological chapter can follow after the introduction. EvS]

(…)

Step 1: Make a general statement about the issue in your field in which you are interested.

Step 2: Provide information on those aspects of the problem which other researchers have already investigated.

Step 3: Indicate what information is still lacking.

Step 4: State the purpose of your study. Present research questions and/or hypotheses.

Step 5: Indicate the value of the study.

Step 6: Alert the reader to the method used in the study.

6.2   Research Question

Question: Does the introduction clearly articulate the student's research goals, the main research question and the sub-questions?

Characteristics: The thesis includes
- a description of the research problem.
- the research goal and the main research question.
- a logical analysis of the main research question into sub-questions.
- a conceptual framework in which key concepts are defined.

6.3 Methods and Sources

Methods and sources form one criterion together. An empirical research will stress method, its description and its application. A formal research will underline the correct sources, their use and their interpretation. Or a formal research will ask the question in which research tradition the thesis is written. Sometimes, a research knows both empirical and formal aspects.

NOTE: This criterion is *not* about correct footnotes or a correct bibliography. Those are not part of the assessment, but are presupposed (see above, section 6.0.5). This criterion is about the logical coherence between research and methods or research and sources, and about the clear description of both.

Question: Are the methods and sources adequately described and referenced?

Characteristics: The thesis
- provides sufficient information on methods and data, for example by referring to (methodological) literature.
- provides enough information to secure that the right methods and sources are used.
- refers to primary religious sources in a way that the reader knows when arguments from within the religious tradition are used and when from outside.
- would allow someone to repeat the student's research.

6.4 Results (verbal and visual)

The matrix makes a distinction between the actual results and the discussion and conclusions. This fits both empirical and formal research, but the supervisor must decide in each case how to make a proper distinction between results proper and their discussion.

Question 1: Does the thesis provide a comprehensive, understandable and relevant description of the results (or lack of results)?

Characteristics of Results: The thesis
- describes the findings of one's research.
- analyses the sources and findings accurately.
- interprets the results within a specific scientific context as discussed in the Introduction, in relation to the research problem and research question.
- does not lack important elements from the field of research.

Besides the results the matrix asks for visual elements: illustrations or tables. These belong in an empirical environment, rather than in a formal one. Yet, you must ask yourself whether certain elements of your thesis can be presented best

by a table or an illustration, for example a geographical map instead of a description of several geographical places, a table of opinions or arguments, a list of dates with important events, etc. Sometimes it is just pleasant to be addressed visually instead of verbally.

Question 2: If visualizations are included, are they clear, effective and informative?

Characteristics of visualizations
- Appropriate choices should be made regarding how to display data (when to use a figure, what kind of figure to use and how to organize evidence within the figure or table).
- The visual elements of all tables and figures should be clear and easy to read or interpret.
- Figures and tables should include numbering and appropriate, descriptive titles;
- The legends should provide a clear description of each table or figure and not duplicate information that is in the materials and methods;
- Written results should explicitly refer to each table and figure.

6.5 Discussion and conclusions
Empirical research usually separates the results from the discussion of the results. Formal research has difficulty to do so. It is up to the supervisors to indicate which parts of the thesis is 'results' and which part 'discussion'. In both cases, the conclusions belong to this criterion.

Question: Do the conclusions and discussion present logical argumentation regarding the implications of findings and possible future directions?

Characteristics: The conclusion
- briefly highlights major findings, acknowledging complexities of the data, as well as inconsistencies, limitations and alternative explanations.
- explicitly relates the implications of the research findings (results) within the academic context constructed in the Introduction. The narrative should draw connections between the student's research findings and other published work.
- the implications of negative results should be discussed.
- highlights how the project could lead to future research within the field and/or suggests additional research or alternative approaches. Theses with largely inconclusive or incomplete results should focus on the latter.
- if a student has inconclusive or incomplete results, the conclusion and discussion should focus on the limitations of the results and possible explanations.

6.6   Academic reasoning

Question: Are the discussions and conclusions justified and at an academic level?

Characteristics of academic reasoning:
- The student provides arguments and counter-arguments in the most unbiased manner possible.
- The student provides arguments and counterarguments that relate to the views put forth.
- The presentation and discussion in the thesis must take place by means of an appropriate and correctly applied argumentation scheme.
- Arguments and counterarguments are weighed, not counted.

6.7 Critical hermeneutics

Subjectivity and normativity cannot be absent in the theological or religious field. You must, however, show that the research is conducted in such a way that the personal opinions, interpretation, wishes and norms have not been leading. Every research project must include some checks and balances to reach a certain objectivity.

Question: Do the contents (as applicable: introduction, contents, methods and/or discussion) demonstrate critical hermeneutics towards one's own understanding as well as the academic discourse?

Characteristics of contents as applicable to thesis topic:
- The text provides sufficient details so that readers can judge the role of subjectivity in the thesis
- The text shows the student's capability of critical reflection on the diversity of voices within the power-laden world of religious perspectives.
- The student shows insights in historical and social backgrounds of the many aspects of his field of research.

6.8   General Writing Quality

This criterion is *not* about spelling or grammar. These are supposed to be correct. This criterion is about the quality of your writing (precise, unambiguous, correct terminology), its quantity (not too wordy, not too compact) and its fluency (varied sentence structure, good examples, clear overviews).

Question: Is the writing at an appropriate level for the target audience of upper division undergraduates and faculty in the general field of theology and religious studies?

Characteristics of a high writing quality:

- Your language must be clear and unambiguous (you are not writing poetry or a newspaper article, but an academic treatise). Theologians in particular have a tendency to blur the distinction between description and evaluation (and/or personal faith commitment).
- Your level of writing should not be too specialized (many technical terms or very short descriptions). Write for a fellow theologian, who is not an expert in your discipline.
- Your writing style must be clear:
  o Avoid strange word orders.
  o Avoid long sentences (more than two lines).
  o Avoid more than one subordinated clause in one sentence.
  o Avoid passive verbs.
  o Avoid nouns instead of verbs.
  o Avoid negations, and certainly two negations in one sentence.
  o Avoid, if possible, modal and nuance words, such as 'probably', 'maybe', 'could be', 'several times', 'not always'.
- Your writing style must be appealing:
  o Avoid repetition of words and clauses: use synonyms or personal pronouns (the man... he...; the cat... it...).
  o Be as concrete as possible: 'infrastructure' > 'canals', 'roads', 'rivers', etc.; 'literature' > 'books'; 'loneliness' > 'lonely people'.
  o Be as specific as possible: 'the author' > 'Paul'; 'the holy book' > 'the Qur'an'.
  o Alternate sentence categories: statement, question, enumeration, different word order in sentences.
  o Give examples, an anecdote, a quote from an interview.
  o Give some visualization, but make sure to number these ('Table 1'), title ('Table 1: The popes of the sixteenth century'). If necessary, include a legend ('green = popes from Italy; red = popes with another nationality').
- Your language must be descriptive rather than normative ('on the basis of these arguments the following conclusions emerge ...' rather than 'I personally believe that ...'). It is not enough to state that you have your own presuppositions (we all have); you need to demonstrate that these presuppositions are appropriate and the best guarantee for the understanding of your topic.
- The argument that you are advancing must meet the standard criteria of rationality, coherence, objectivity, etc. In other words, your opponents (those whose views you are criticizing), or readers with a totally different perspective should at least admit that your methodological approach is sound (and, ideally, admit that your conclusions are cogent).[21]
- Always establish your thesis or the point you wish to make in the face of

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[21] See also Frans H. van Eemeren & Rob Grootendorst, *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies: A Pragma-Dialectical Perspective* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1992).

anticipated objections by your readers. It helps to imagine a fictitious opponent, who is highly critical of everything you write.

6.9 Self-regulation

Self-regulation of students is also assessed and graded. This part of the evaluation is a process evaluation, rather than a product evaluation as in the other eight criteria. This criterion belongs to the fifth Dublin descriptor, namely learning skills. It does not refer to the character of the student (although that will be present on the background), but to skills that are useful to develop oneself in a next academic programme or in practice, yet in an academic way.

The degree of self-regulation in a Bachelor's thesis project is, of course, less that in a Master's thesis project. Therefore, the supervisor must choose the left column earlier in a Bachelor's thesis project than in a Master's thesis project.

Question: Does the student take responsibility for the project?

Characteristics of self-regulation: the student
- shows curiosity and eagerness to learn.
- is eager for new ideas, situations and academic tasks.
- looks around him/her and can make new connections.
- recognizes the need for assistance or feedback and actively asks for it.
- takes feedback seriously and processes it appropriately.
- shows flexibility and perseverance.

6.10 Rewriting

Is you have finished your thesis, put it away for at least a week and undertake something else.

Read your thesis after that week and mind the following items (or ask a fellow student or family member to read your thesis and ask him/her to mind the following items):
- Describe each section in one sentence and ask yourself: is this the most logical order to present it? And do I see a certain overlap?
- Is the order logical in this case that you did not have to refer to items you will discuss later? Otherwise, try a different order.
- Do you see overlap? Try to delete sentences or paragraphs.
- Is it pleasant to read or do you have to reformulate some sentences? Cut all the sentences of more than three lines in two pieces.
- Were there moments you had to reread sentences? Are they too difficult or too compact?
- Were there moments you start being bored? Are you too wordy in these paragraphs?

- Are the research questions answered in the end?

Appendix 1: Empirical Research and Personal Data

As a student at the Faculty of Religion and Theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, you may need to work with personal data for research projects that are part of your Bachelor's or Master's thesis or for courses you follow. Working with personal data can mean any action such as collecting, analyzing, handling, storing or using this type of data.

      If you use personal data, these have to be handled with care. In addition, you need to comply with the rules set out by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, in Dutch: Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming or AVG). Not complying with the GDPR may violate the privacy of your inlerlocurs. This document describes how you can process personal data in a safe and secure way.

Personal data

Personal data refers to all information relating to a natural person. This includes information such as names and addresses, bank account numbers, IP addresses, and various background information about persons (e.g. race, religion, health condition, political preference, sexual preference, and study progress). Due to the sensitive nature of these data, you cannot process these as if they were ordinary information. You need to take the following four basic rules into account when working with personal data:

1.   Provide information and ask consent

When you conduct interviews or use questionnaires, you should provide your respondents or data subjects with all information about your research they need to decide on participation. Further, you need their permission (consent) for using the information they provide. Your respondents need to fill out or digitally agree to an information and consent form. In this form, you explain the purpose of your research, why and how you collect personal data, that you will only use these data for your research, and who has access to the data. A checklist with elements that should be included in your information and an example of a consent form can be found on the last page.

      When using existing (secondary) personal data, be sure the organization providing the data is allowed to share the data. When collecting personal data without the involvement of the person(s), for example by extracting data from websites or social media, you have to weigh the privacy rights of the person(s) and your own legitimate interest and make a balanced decision. Your thesis supervisor or teacher can help you with this.

      In case of participant observation among groups or in an organizational setting, permission of the leadership of the group or organization to conduct your research is needed. As consent with conversation partners in informal research settings is not always possible, you need to discuss these situations with your supervisor(s) beforehand. As thumb rule you have the ethical obligation to avoid any harmful impact on the people you study. At all times you need to be open and clear about your research position.

**2.	Consciously collect your data**

Always ask yourself what personal data are necessary for your research. For example, do you really need to collect personal data that can be traced back to a natural person? Do you really need to make recordings? Due to the COVID19 pandemic, interviews are often held via Zoom or Skype. Audio recordings of video interviews are allowed but permission for video recordings needs to be discussed with supervisor(s).

Once your research is finished and the data are no longer needed, delete all data that are traceable to individuals from all your storage locations. The remaining anonymous data should be safely stored until your graduation.

**3.	Work securely: control access to your data**

Make sure no one but you has access to the personal data. Store it safely, for example by pseudonymizing the data (i.e., removing or replacing identifying information), using encryption, and by protecting your computer/usb stick with a strong password. Also recording devices need to be encrypted and password-protected. Do ***not*** use your personal Google Drive, iCloud, Dropbox, Gmail, etc. for sharing and storing personal data. Instead, store your data on Surfdrive provided by the VU.

You cannot just use any software to collect or analyze personal data. You are allowed to use programmes to analyze personal data on your own computer such as SPSS, R, Stata or Atlas.ti (in which case you are not sharing the data). In case of online surveys, you can use Qualtrics. In case of alternative programs, contact your supervisor.

Some personal data are more sensitive than others. If you process any of the data from the following list, you also need to encrypt the data files using 7Zip or your storage device using BitLocker. You should treat these data with extra care and only use them when strictly necessary for your project. For sharing sensitive data via email you need to use Zivver.

> **Special categories of personal data**
>
> **All data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and all genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation. (Source: GDPR, Article 9)**

**4.	Do not include personal data in your thesis**

When writing your thesis or paper, make sure not to include any personal data in it unless you have received explicit consent from the respondent for this (e.g., a quote from an interview). Always pseudonymize data and sources or use aggregated data, so no persons can be identified in your thesis. For example, change the geographic location if necessary. Be aware that pseudonymizing is very complicated: make sure that you change or leave out more than one element of someone's personal data.

In some cases, using personal data in your paper is inevitable. In this case, only share your paper or thesis with your supervisor. Please note that most Master's theses will be send to the university library for online publishing. If you do not want this, discuss this with your supervisor(s) at an early stage.

Informed Consent

As mentioned previously, when you conduct interviews or use questionnaires, you should provide information about your research, and you need the permission (consent) of the respondents for using the information they provide. In the information and consent form you:

- explain the purpose of your research;
- explain why and how you collect personal data. Also, explain that these data will only be used for your research and explain who has access to the data;
- explain that the anonymous/coded data is stored until you graduate;
- explain that the respondent can always withdraw his/her consent;
- are transparent about any risks that might be part of your data collection.

The information and consent form contains the following required elements:

- The title of your study.
- Confirmation that the information and consent form is read.
- Confirmation that there was room for questions by the respondents.
- Reminder on the voluntariness of participation. The right to decline to participate and withdraw from the research once participation has begun, without any negative consequences, and without providing any explanation.
- Permission for participation in the study. This permission must be voluntary and unambiguous.
- Date, name, and signature of the participant and researcher

The information and consent form is typically used for respondents that are at least 17 years old and mentally competent. When you work with people under the age of 17 or mentally incompetent adults, contact your supervisor(s) or teacher(s) for advice.

Example consent form

Student-researcher:

Supervisor(s):

Research:

1. I confirm that I have received and understood information about the study above and that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am allowed to withdraw myself at any time, without giving a reason.

3. I confirm that I know that the information I provide will be anonymized. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product.

4. I agree to participate in this research project.

5. I agree that my interview will be recorded. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location on the student-researchers' password-protected computers and will be destroyed after graduation.

Participant name:

Date of birth:

Interview date:

Signature participant: _____

Signature student-researcher: _____