

ACADEMIC SESSION 2018-2019

DR4044 HONOURS DISSERTATION

30 Credits: 11 Weeks

PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR/COURSE TEAM

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Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key institutional policies which have been made available within MyAberdeen (<https://abdn.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/Policies>). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and how seriously the University takes your feedback.

These institutional policies should be read in conjunction with this course guide, in which School specific policies are detailed. Further information can be found on the [University's Infohub webpage](#) or by visiting the Infohub.

TIMETABLE

This course meets from 14:00-15:00 PM in **Taylor A30** on Tuesdays, in weeks 1, 4 and 10

Students can view their university timetable

at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course involves the writing of a dissertation in one of the sub-disciplines in Divinity and Religious Studies. Independent Research work is done under the supervision of a member of staff.

WHAT IS AN HONOURS DISSERTATION?

The dissertation is an extended essay of 10,000 words (inclusive of bibliography and references). This component of the honours degree is designed to show that you're able to:

- carry out independent research on a subject
- analyse and evaluate work of scholars who have written on that subject
- reach your own conclusions on the basis of this analysis and evaluation
- write up the results of your research in a clear and coherent manner

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The general aims of this course include

- to provide an opportunity for students to contribute to the design of an extended research project
- to assist students in developing independent research skills (bibliographic work, analytic skill, etc.)
- to foster the capacity to write a substantial research paper (constructing an argument, developing a structured thesis)

Students participating in the course will achieve the following:

- acquire substantial knowledge in a specific area
- develop enhanced independent research skills
- develop a greater capacity to write a substantial argument

LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Most of the work of the dissertation will be done independently, as students focus on their individual projects. This will be done in consultation with your supervisor. Students should seek to arrange at least three meetings with your supervisor over the course of the half-session. The supervisor will not schedule these – it is up to the student to arrange for these meetings.

In addition to these supervisory meetings, students are required to attend the **three seminar sessions** (in weeks 1, 4, 10) conducted by the course coordinator, which focus on information about writing a dissertation.

You are expected to attend the support sessions connected to this course, and to negotiate at least three supervisory sessions with your supervisor. Failure to discuss your dissertation and its development with your supervisor can result in the loss of your class certificate.

HOW DO I FIND A TOPIC AND A SUPERVISOR?

Once you've come up with some initial ideas about a topic, you should approach a Divinity and Religious Studies staff member who teaches in that general area (e.g., in Religious Studies, Practical Theology, Church History) and ask whether he or she will act as your supervisor.

Your supervisor will give you help with clarifying your topic. That topic should not duplicate material covered elsewhere in the honours syllabus.

WHAT ROLE DOES MY SUPERVISOR PLAY IN MY DISSERTATION?

Your supervisor's job is to help you focus and plan your dissertation.

This help will usually involve the following:

- An initial meeting to discuss the topic, title, research method and techniques for locating relevant books, articles and other resources
- A review meeting at which you'll discuss your progress and the bibliography you've put together
- A meeting at which you will submit a preliminary outline of your dissertation and discuss this with your supervisor (the outline will normally be in the form of a summary, a table of contents, and a statement of your main argument(s) (i.e. your thesis).
- A meeting to discuss a plan of your draft chapters

Your supervisor **will not read** or discuss any full length drafts or final draft of your dissertation. Note also that it is not your supervisor's job to proof-read or correct the drafts of your dissertation or to give you ongoing coaching. You are responsible for arranging appointments for supervision meetings and for handing in material on time.

ASSESSMENT

One 10,000 word dissertation (100%)

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to **MyAberdeen- Organisations- Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates**. The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

Final copy is to be submitted by 3pm on December 14th 2018

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Submit **TWO bound paper copies**, each with a completed essay cover sheet to the **drop boxes in CB008 in 50-52 College Bounds** and **one official electronic copy to TurnitinUK via MyAberdeen**. Both copies to be submitted by 3.00pm on the due date.

Paper Copy: Two paper copies, typed and double spaced, together with an **Assessment cover sheet** – this should have your ID number **clearly** written on the cover sheet, with **NO** name or signature but **EVERYTHING ELSE** completed, including tutor's name – and should be delivered to the drop boxes in CB008, 50-52 College Bounds.

Electronic Copy: One copy submitted through Turnitin via [MyAberdeen](#). (for instructions please see <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eLearning/turnitinuk/students/>)

Students are asked to retain the Turnitin receipt so they are able to provide proof of submission at a later date if required.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student ID number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 DRxxxx Essay 1.

When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. DRxxxx Essay 1.

Both copies to be submitted by 3.00pm on the due date.

Please note: Failure to submit both an electronic copy to TurnitinUK, and an identical paper copy, will result in a deduction of marks.

Failure to submit to TurnitinUK will result in a zero mark.

N.B Turnitin doesn't accept Mac documents in Pages. If using a Mac please go to File and export work as a Word document.

HOW SHOULD I PRESENT THE RESULTS OF MY RESEARCH?

First of all, your dissertation needs a:

- TITLE PAGE stating the author and title of the dissertation.

This should be followed by a:

- TABLE OF CONTENTS listing your chapter headings and the pages on which the chapters begin, and a
- TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS explaining any abbreviations you've used throughout the dissertation

There is no standard format for the body of the dissertation, but most are set out as follows:

- INTRODUCTION stating the main objectives of the thesis and the main sources of information on which it will be based.
- CHAPTERS (usually three or four) each following the structure of
 - chapter introduction
 - chapter body
 - chapter conclusion
- CONCLUSION which doesn't just repeat the points made in each chapter, but states the overall conclusions to which the chapters point together.

Along the way you will have to back up your analysis and arguments with evidence drawn from your research materials. This is normally done in the form of FOOTNOTES

For further information on when and how to footnote see:

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Essays, Theses and Dissertations*. 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/index.html>

or

Glanville Price and Brian Richardson eds., *MHRA Style Guide. A Handbook for Authors, Editors, and Writers of Theses*. 2nd Edition. (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2008).

<http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml>

At the end of the dissertation you should include a:

- BIBLIOGRAPHY listing all the books, articles and other resources you have used in the preparation of the dissertation. In historical dissertations it is customary to separate primary texts (e.g. manuscripts, early printed texts) from secondary ones. Entries in the bibliography should follow a conventional style such as the Turabian style or the Modern Humanities Research Association style (see above).

One last thing worth noting is that typing slips, spelling mistakes, and poor written style are likely to have an adverse affect on the examiner's assessment of even a good dissertation. Before you hand in your final draft, check it yourself. If possible have a second person check it as well. By the time you finish the dissertation you will probably have become so close to it that you miss mistakes or passages in which you might have expressed yourself more clearly. A second pair of eyes will help you identify these shortcomings.

HOW SHOULD MY DISSERTATION LOOK?

The final draft should be typed or printed in double spacing on A4 pages and inserted in a loose-leaf or spring binder (you can have it soft-bound, but this is not required). As noted above, the dissertation should be 10,000 words (that's about 32—40 A4 pages of double-spaced type) and there should be a declaration of the number of words at the beginning of the dissertation. You'll need to hand in two copies. One of these can be collected from the school office once the degree results have been published. It will come with the marker's assessment of the dissertation.

Recommended Reading:

Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G. & Williams, Joseph M., *The Craft of Research* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).