**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RS 497B: Religious Studies ProSeminar**

**Spring 2016; W:4:00-6:45 P.M.**

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Office hour: W 3-4 PM. Phone: 677-2741

Office: SN 239

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

RS 497B has been designed as a *capstone course* for RS majors. As such, it allows students to draw upon the knowledge and critical thinking skills they have accumulated up to this point as RS majors.

This semester we will learn about 3 approaches to doing research—*qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*—and how to apply each to a specific issue by collecting data, analyzing it, and deciding which method would be most appropriate. Students will work collaboratively in groups of 3 throughout the semester on a research project which will culminate in a research paper structured after one of the methods mentioned above.

The general issue or topic for research has to do with how various types of modern Christians in the San Fernando Valley interpret Romans 13:1-7. This text/passage from the New Testament has proven to be problematic historically—and in some cases tragic—in its interpretation and application.

Working collaboratively, students will devise a set of questions to interview members from different types of denominations to see how individuals understand this passage and its application in the modern world. Students may consider different sets of ‘dependent’ variables such as age, race, gender, and political affiliation when collecting data/answers from individual church members. The main or ‘independent’ variable will be determined by the congregant’s denominational affiliation. Research questions will be crafted by each student research group and used as data for analysis. Research projects will try to determine the degree to which one’s religious upbringing and/or denominational background have influenced how she or he understands the authority of ‘Scripture’ and how she or he interprets the Bible—Romans 13:1-7 in particular. Student will also investigate how other dependent variables such as age, race, ethnicity, gender or political affiliation have conditioned how one interprets this text?

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Attendance and Participation: 40%.** Participation includes class discussion, collaborative work in groups, written and oral reports. (**5% points removed for each unexcused absence**).

**No Formal Exams.**

**Research Project and Paper: (60%).**

All papers must evidence the scholarly methodological issues covered in the course text and lectures. Students must decide which research method best suits their research project’s purpose and justify why they have selected this particular approach.

Weekly class seminars provided opportunities for students to develop their research papers. Students will learn about research methods through lectures, readings, discussions, and assignments. Students will also work collaboratively in groups of 3 to design their research project in progressive steps throughout the semester culminating in each group presenting a written research paper.

More will be said about the papers during the semester.

Papers are to be double spaced, 12 point font, and between 20 and 25 pages in length. Footnotes and a bibliography should be in MLA style with an abstract at the beginning and bibliography at the end. An index of questions and answers taken from interviews must also be included but not counted as part of the total required pages.

**Oral Presentation of Research Project:** Beginning the 8th week students will give a 20-25 minute presentation of their research project including the method selected, thesis or purpose statement, h**ypothesis, questions used in interviews,** and projected bibliography. Students will also answer questions from other class members (including Dr. Talbott) concerning their research proposal. The purpose of these presentations is to help students with the project by identifying weaknesses or major problems before submitting it. A ***written* *Introduction, Purpose Statement*, *Hypothesis, Questions used, Outline for the body of* the research paper, and** bibliography will be turned in to Dr. Talbott after the presentation. This presentation represents part of the overall grade 40% participation grade.

**Religious Studies Student Learning Outcomes:**

**Reading assignments:** All weekly reading assignments must be completed before the scheduled class meeting.

**COURSE TEXTS:**

**Required:**

John W. Criswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th edition. SAGE Publications, 2014.

**Recommended**:

New Testament or text of Romans.

Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul*: Fortress Press, 2006.

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at 818.677.2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at 818.677.2611. If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.

**Course *CODE OF CONDUCT*:**

 **The Decalogue for RS 497B**

1. **Thou shall Respect thy neighbor.**
2. **Thou shall Not browse the internet during class.**
3. **Thou shall Turn off cell phones.**
4. **Thou shall Not arrive late.**
5. **Thou shall Not leave early.**
6. **Thou shall Not covet thy neighbor’s work.**
7. **Thou shall Not commit plagiarism.**
8. **Thou shall Not turn in assignments late.**
9. **Thou shall Do the assigned readings before class.**
10. **Thou shall Check Moodle weekly.**

**Weekly Reading Schedule and Seminar Participation:**

**Week 1: Introduction to text and topic. Assign research groups (3 per group). Philosophical Assumptions—paradigms that influence research. The Elusive Quest for Objectivity.**

**Week 2: Class Canceled.**

**Week 3: Creswell chapter 4. Discuss writing/research strategies. Group report on possible research venues. Discuss historical problems interpreting Romans 13:1-7.**

**Introduction to Paul of Tarsus in contemporary scholarship.**

**Week 4: Chap. 1 and 2. Group discuss research methods. Introduction to political, economic, social, ethnic, religious context of first century C.E. Rome.**

**Week 5: Chap. 3. Read and Discuss “Trouble in the Hood: A Multidimensional Contextualization of Romans 13:1-7.” Posted on Moodle. Group report on interview questions and venues.**

**Week 6: Chap. 5. Groups share working drafts of their Introduction to research project. Report on possible questions and method.**

**Week 7: Chap. 6. Groups share written “Purpose Method.” Report on congregation interviews and Data collection. Problems encountered.**

**Week 8: Chap. 7 and 8. Oral Presentation: Groups report orally on their progress based on a written *Introduction, Purpose Statement*, *Hypothesis, Questions* for research project, and an *Outline* for the body of the paper.**

**Week 9: Chap. 9 and 10. Discuss analyzing and interpreting the collected data.**

**Week 10: Group report on body of research paper—written outline. Share quantitative data from interviews.**

**Week 11: Work on rough draft of research paper. Problems.**

**Week 12: Groups analyze and discuss differences between each group. How can we account for these differences?**

**Week 13: Group work.**

**Week 14: Group work.**

**Week 15: Turn in final drafts!**