

**East Texas Baptist University
School of Christian Studies**

Master of Arts in Religion Writing Style Guide

Issues of Grammar and/or Style

In formal, written English (the style required for writing assignments in university classes), the following errors are to be avoided:

Issues of General Grammar, Punctuation, and Syntax

1. Subject/Verb Disagreement

Singular subjects require singular verbs; plural subjects require plural verbs. This problem is most common when the subject and verb are separated from each other by one or more prepositional phrases.

Examples:

Incorrect: The line of thunderstorms are visible in the radar image.

Correct: The line of thunderstorms is visible in the radar image.

Note: The error in the incorrect example is the result of associating the verb with the object of the preposition (thunderstorms) and not with the true subject of the verb (line).

2. Verb Tense Inconsistency

Verb tense should be consistent within a given context. Whether present tense or past tense is employed is a matter of convention within a particular discipline, but consistency of verb tense is essential.

Examples:

Incorrect: Wilson presents three basic elements in the process. He stated that these were . . .

Correct: Wilson presented three basic elements in the process. He stated that these steps were . . .

[Note also the insertion of “steps” to clarify “these” and the use of “steps” to avoid repetition of the word “elements.”]

Note: in biblical studies a common convention is that present tense is employed when a text is the subject of the verb, while past tense is appropriate when the author is the subject. If in doubt, consult your professor.

Examples:

Revelation depicts a sequence of divine judgments.

In Revelation, John described a sequence of divine judgments.

3. Split Infinitive

An infinitive verb form is the “fundamental” form of the verb in English. Infinitives are usually in the form: to go, to talk, to think, to wish (i.e., the preposition “to” followed by the first

person singular present tense form of the verb). In formal, written English, the preposition “to” should *never* be separated from the following verb. [While splitting infinitives is no longer classified as a grammatical error in English, splitting infinitives should be avoided in formal written English.]

Examples:

Incorrect: to boldly go where no one has gone before

Correct: to go boldly where no one has gone before

or

boldly to go where no one has gone before

Note: The latter correct option has the effect of emphasizing the “boldness” of the action.

4. Split Verb

Generally, writers should avoid placing an adverb between the subject of the verb and the verb itself. This error is less serious than a split infinitive, but splitting verbs from their subjects can result in unclear writing.

Examples:

Incorrect: She quickly ran to the door.

Correct: She ran quickly to the door.

or

She ran to the door quickly.

or

Quickly she ran to the door.

Note: The last correct option has the effect of emphasizing the “quickness” of the action.

5. Dangling Preposition

In English, a preposition (e.g., to, with, for, at, in) must be followed by the object of that preposition. Consequently, clauses and sentences must not end in prepositions.

Examples:

Incorrect: When asked who he was looking for, the man was silent.

Prepositions are improper words to end a sentence with.

Correct: When asked for whom he was looking, the man was silent.

Prepositions are improper words with which to end a sentence.

6. Sentence Fragment

A complete sentence in English must have an independent clause which must include a subject and a predicate. The predicate will include a verb and may include a direct object. (When an imperative verb is used in an English sentence, usually the subject is implicit rather than explicit: “Go to your room!”)

Examples:

Incorrect: Pieces of a sentence. Which is not good to do. (The first phrase lacks a verb; the second phrase is not an independent clause.)

Correct: You have composed pieces of a sentence. These fragments do not constitute a complete sentence.

7. Run-on sentence

A run-on sentence is a sentence in which two or more independent clauses are joined without proper conjunctions or punctuation.

Examples:

Incorrect: A sentence that runs on and on and joins together one independent clause after another without punctuation will detract from the quality of writing style and the professor will get tired reading it and the student will not like what said sad professor says about it.

Correct: A sentence that runs on and on, joining together one independent clause after another without punctuation, will detract from the quality of writing style. The professor will get tired reading it and the student will not like what said sad professor says about it.

8. Comma Splice

Two independent clauses must not be joined by a comma.

Examples:

Incorrect: Football is rough, volleyball is fast.

Correct: (a) Football is rough; volleyball is fast. [Replace the comma with a semicolon.]

(b) Football is rough. Volleyball is fast. [Make the clauses separate sentences.]

(c) Football is rough, but volleyball is fast. [Add a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, but, yet, for) after the comma.]

9. Improper Punctuation

The following guidelines for proper punctuation are provided as a quick reference. For additional guidance, consult Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Possessives

Please form the possessive of a proper name in the singular by adding an apostrophe and s:

Jones's book

Stevens's poems

Marx's ideology

Paul's theology

Israel's religion

Jeremiah's laments

The possessive case of the names of Jesus and Moses, and of Greek names of more than one syllable ending in "es" is formed by adding an apostrophe alone:

Jesus' ministry

Moses' leadership

Xerxes' victories

Quotation Marks

The various punctuation errors include improper use of semicolons and colons and the improper placement of quotation marks with respect to other punctuation. In the latter case, the rules are

Quotation marks are placed after commas and periods.

Quotation marks are placed before exclamation marks, semicolons, and colons unless those punctuation marks are present in the quoted material.

Note: These rules reflect usage in the United States; books published in the United Kingdom may follow different rules.

Semicolons

A semicolon marks a greater break in the continuity of a sentence than that indicated by a comma. A semicolon should be used between the parts of a compound sentence (two or more independent clauses) when they are not connected by a conjunction:

“More than one hundred planned communities are in various stages of completion; many more are on the drawing board.”

Colons

The use of a colon in a sentence indicates a discontinuity of grammatical construction greater than that indicated by the semicolon:

“Europe and America share similar problems: their labor forces cannot compete with those of third-world nations.”

Note: A colon must not interrupt the syntax of the sentence. In other words a colon must not separate subject and predicate in a sentence, nor should a colon separate verb from direct object, nor should a colon separate a preposition from the object(s) of the preposition.

Examples:

Incorrect:

The professor: delivered lectures, graded tests, mentored students, and conducted research.

The woman saw: three woodpeckers, two finches, and a cardinal.

The group traveled to: Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Correct:

The professor delivered lectures, graded tests, mentored students, and conducted research.

OR

The professor performed multiple tasks: delivering lectures, grading tests, mentoring students, and conducting research.

The woman saw three woodpeckers, two finches, and a cardinal.

OR

The woman saw six birds: three woodpeckers, two finches, and a cardinal.

The group traveled to Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

OR

The group traveled to the following countries: Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Commas

Use a comma in the following situations.

- In sentences containing two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (e.g., and, but, or, nor, for), a comma is placed before the conjunction.

“This silence is not surprising, for in those circles Marxism is still regarded with suspicion.”

- A series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses takes a comma between each of the elements and before a conjunction separating the last two elements.

“Dishes had been broken, cutlery lost, and carpets damaged.”

- When commas occur within one or more of the elements of a series, semicolons instead of commas should be used to separate the elements.

“Three cities that have had notable success with the programs are Hartford, Connecticut; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Pasadena, California.”

- Interjections, conjunctive adverbs, and the like, are set off with commas when they cause a distinct break in the flow of thought.

“Nevertheless, it is a matter of great importance.”

“It is, perhaps, the best that could be expected.”

- When a dependent clause or a long participial or prepositional phrase begins a sentence, it is followed by a comma.

“If the insurrection is to succeed, the army and the police must stand side by side.”

“After spending a week in conference, the commission was able to write a report.”

- A comma is sometimes needed to prevent a misreading.

“After eating, the lions yawned and then dozed.”

10. Improper Conjunction

The conjunctions in English are “and,” “or,” “nor,” “but,” “yet,” and “for.”

Examples:

Incorrect: “So” is not a conjunction, so you should not use it the way it is used in this sentence unless you have a conjunction in front of it.

Correct: “So” is not a conjunction; therefore, you should not use it the way it is used in the sentence above unless you have a conjunction in front of it.

11. Non-Parallel Listing

Items in parallel structures or in series should have the same grammatical form. That is, they should all be nouns, or all verbs, or all infinitives, and so on.

Examples:

Incorrect: When listing items in a sentence, the author should remember to punctuate the list correctly, to spell the individual items correctly, and that the order of the items should be appropriate.

Correct: When listing items in a sentence, the author should remember to punctuate the list correctly, to spell the individual items correctly, and to order the items appropriately.

12. Comparatives versus Superlatives

Comparative forms of adjectives (better, worse, more correct) are employed to compare two items. Superlative forms (best, worst, most correct) are employed to compare three or more items.

Related to this category are the phrases “very unique” and “most unique.” The adjective “unique” indicates that one and only one of the item exists (or exists with the relevant quality), consequently the modifiers “very,” “most,” etc. are inappropriate in this context.

Examples:

Incorrect: John is the fastest of the two brothers.
John is a very unique athlete.

Correct: John is the faster of the two brothers.
John is a unique athlete.

Issues with Pronouns

13. First Person

In formal, academic, written English (unless directed otherwise), the first person (I, me, us, we) should never be employed.

When stating an opinion or conclusion, the writer need not introduce the statement with “in my opinion” or “I concluded that” because the statement will be assumed to be the writer’s opinion or conclusion without the introductory phrase.

14. Second Person

In formal, academic, written English (unless directed otherwise), the second person (you, your) should never be employed.

The document is assumed to be directed to a reader (the “you” that would be used); therefore, the use of the second person is redundant.

15. Pronoun-Antecedent Disagreement

A pronoun must agree with the antecedent noun (singular pronouns with singular nouns and plural pronouns with plural nouns).

Examples:

Incorrect: Any author can write their book more quickly with a word processor.

Correct: Authors can write their books more quickly with a word processor.

Note: The error in the incorrect example can result from attempting to avoid gender-restrictive language (“his” or “her”). A better solution to avoiding gender-restrictive language is to use a plural noun (as in the correct example), because plural pronouns in English do not have gender specificity.

16. Ambiguous Antecedent

Pronouns (he, she, it, they, them, us, we, etc.) replace specific, explicit nouns in a clause or sentence. When a pronoun is used, the noun for which the pronoun is a substitute (the antecedent) must be clear and unambiguous.

Examples:

Incorrect: Bob, Jim, and Angela were riding motorcycles. Upon arrival at the destination, they were covered in mud.

Correct: Bob, Jim, and Angela were riding motorcycles. Upon arrival at the destination, the friends were covered in mud.

or

Bob, Jim, and Angela were riding motorcycles. Upon arrival at the destination, the vehicles were covered in mud.

Note: The two correct options have different meanings. This difference is a reflection of the ambiguity in the original sentence.

17. Indefinite Pronouns

When a pronoun is employed for which no clear antecedent is present, the pronoun is described as an indefinite pronoun. In written English this error is most common when clauses or sentences begin with phrases such as “it is,” “this is,” “there is,” “there are,” etc.

General guidelines:

avoid using “it” in formal English

treat “this” and “there” as demonstrative adjectives, not as nouns

Examples:

Incorrect: It is difficult to understand poor writing.

This is an easy assignment.

Correct: Poor writing is difficult to understand.
This assignment is easy.

Note: Correcting this error usually involves rewriting one or more sentences, and/or rearranging clauses.

Issues of Style

The following issues relate to the standards for formal, academic, written communication.

18. Improper Capitalization

Proper capitalization of words is determined by English usage, and is not always consistent. Proper nouns are always capitalized (America, Bible), but adjectives derived from those proper nouns are not always capitalized (American, biblical). Consult examples of formal, academic, written English (commentaries, journal articles, etc.) for guidance on this point (or ask your professor). Also, do not over-capitalize; not every reference to spiritual matters or religious objects needs to be capitalized.

Note: Capitalization of pronouns to refer to God is not necessary (even the KJV does not capitalize these pronouns) but is permitted. When in doubt on the capitalization of such pronouns, use lower case or consult the professor.

And he said, I heard **thy** voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. (Gen 3:10 KJV)

He said, "I heard the sound of **You** in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." (Gen 3:10 NASB 1995 Update)

He said, "I heard the sound of **you** in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Gen 3:10 NRSV)

19. Improper Personification with a Possessive

Use possessive forms ('s) only on people or things that are commonly personified.

Examples:

Incorrect: The book's purpose was to encourage Americans to serve as volunteers in their communities.

Correct: The purpose stated in the book was to encourage Americans to serve as volunteers in their communities.

The author's purpose was to encourage Americans to serve as volunteers in their communities.

20. Contraction

In formal English, contractions should never be employed.

Examples:

Use cannot in place of can't.

Incorrect: Repetition is a practice to be avoided. Readers perceive repetition of a word as a practice that reflects poor writing style.
Correct: Repetition is a practice to be avoided. Readers perceive repeated use of a word as a reflection of poor writing style.

25. Improper Italicism

Book titles named in the text of a document should be italicized. Foreign words should be italicized also, unless those words are written in a different alphabet.

Examples:

Incorrect: In *The Meaning of The Word*, Wilson analyzed John's usage of the Greek term *logos*. He argued that the *Sitz im Leben* of the original readers of the Gospel was crucial to comprehending the Johannine message.

Correct: In *The Meaning of The Word*, Wilson analyzed John's usage of the Greek term *λόγος* (*logos*). He argued that the *Sitz im Leben* of the original readers of the Gospel was crucial to comprehending the Johannine message.

26. Improper Use of Numbers and Numerals

Spell out all numbers through one hundred (e.g., sixty-five, ninety-eight) and all round numbers that can be expressed in two words (e.g., one hundred, forty-five hundred). This rule also applies to ordinal numbers as well. When using a certain century as an adjective, hyphenate.

Examples:

On the 122d and 123d day of his recovery, he received his eighteenth and nineteenth letters from home.

She was a first-century Christian martyr.

She was born in the first century. (*Note*: no hyphen, because the word "century" is not used as an adjective in this sentence.)

Note: This rule does not apply to the use of numerals in footnotes.

27. Cliché

A cliché is a phrase, expression, or proverbial statement that, through excessive use, has lost rhetorical power. Often cliché language is interpreted as shallow, superficial discourse, and is, therefore, to be avoided in formal written English.

Examples:

Incorrect: He acted like a bull in a china shop.

Jesus is the reason for the season.

Correcting this error involves a complete rewriting of the sentence.

28. Sermonic Rhetoric

Sermonic rhetoric is to be avoided in formal written English. Such rhetoric includes prolonged statements of personal faith commitment. Unless the assigned task is the composition of a sermon (or similar composition), the faith statements may be true, but of peripheral relevance (at best) in terms of responding to the assigned task. When

appropriate, a brief statement of the author's theological position/assumptions may be provided.

Examples:

Incorrect: Jesus is truly God and was wholly human. Jesus was sent to Earth to be the true and perfect sacrifice for the redemption of the world. Christ was crucified and resurrected, and is the true and living God. Jesus is the integral to the Trinity, the three in one supreme ruler of all ages, and the final judge of this earth. No one is like unto Jesus, in him is the joy of salvation. The following analysis is based on these convictions.

Correct: An evangelical Christian perspective forms the basis of the following analysis.

29. Combative Rhetoric

Combative language is to be avoided. Such rhetoric can be interpreted as disrespectful of others (including the reader) and as an indication of weakness in the argument being presented.

Examples:

Incorrect: The idiotic ravings of Anderson may be dismissed quickly.

Correct: Anderson's unfounded arguments are refuted easily.

30. Rambling Introduction

Lengthy, rambling introductions are inappropriate, particularly when these introductions summarize well known background information. Introductions should be relatively brief, and are intended to introduce the reader to the particular topic being addressed, not to summarize all of the (potentially) relevant background information. The specific content of the introduction will be determined by the particular readers for whom the composition is intended.

Examples:

Incorrect:

The Bible is the title given to the Christian Scriptures, and is a collection of ancient texts divided into two major sections: The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament opens with an account of the Creation of the World, describes the rise of the nation of Israel, and presents the history of Israel and of God's dealing with his chosen people. The Old Testament constitutes the Bible of Judaism. Because "Old Testament" is an inherently Christian term, within Judaism these texts are identified as the *Tanakh* (an acronym for *Torah* [Law or Teaching], *Nebi'im* [Prophets], and *Kethubim* [Writings], the three major divisions of the Old Testament according to Judaism).

Following the Old Testament is the New Testament, a collection of specifically Christian documents. Within the New Testament several genres of literature are present: Gospels, history, epistles, and an apocalypse. The Gospels present accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus, the founder of Christianity. Three of the

Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) present very similar accounts while the fourth (John) is quite distinct literarily from the other three texts. Because of this similarity in perspective, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known collectively as the Synoptic Gospels (the term “synoptic” being derived from two Greek words that mean “to see together”). Even among the Synoptic Gospels differences can be identified. Examples include inclusion of differing forms of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew and Luke but no inclusion of this prayer in Mark. Similarly, Matthew and Luke both contain versions of a series of statements known collectively as the Beatitudes (a term derived from the Latin word *beati* “blessed,” the word with which each of the Beatitudes begins in the Vulgate text). Like the Lord’s Prayer, Mark does not include the Beatitudes.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the role of the Beatitudes in Jesus’ presentation of his message about the Kingdom of God. . . . [317 words]

Correct:

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus presented an account of his understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God). That message opens with a series of statements known collectively as the Beatitudes. Luke’s Gospel contains a similar list of Beatitudes, though these declarations are absent from the other Synoptic Gospel (Mark) and from the Gospel of John. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the role of the Beatitudes in Jesus’ presentation of his message about the Kingdom of God. . . . [89 words; almost 72% *shorter* yet conveying *more* of the information *truly necessary* to orient the reader to the purpose of the paper!]

Note: When quoting a source, the source should be quoted precisely, even if that source violates one or more of the above guidelines.

Frequently the only solution to the problems identified above involves rewriting one or more sentences. Suggestions on rewriting sentences are available in the seventh edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press].¹ Additional guidance on many of these issues is available in style guides and manuals (e.g., Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press], *The Chicago Manual of Style* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press], and *The SBL Handbook of Style* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers]). Students should consult these references for guidance on punctuation, abbreviation, bibliography formats, note formats, etc. **The standard style guide for the East Texas Baptist University School of Christian Studies is the most recent edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.**

1. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed., (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 109-119.

Format Issues

31. Font

The same font (style and size) should be used throughout the document, unless a different alphabet (e.g., Hebrew or Greek) is being incorporated into the text.

32. Justification

Text should be left justified, not right justified.

33. Indentation

Paragraphs should be indented consistently.

34. Block Quotation

Lengthy quotations (two or more sentences and four or more lines) should be indented four spaces from the left margin of the page. (Shorter quotations can be formatted as a block for emphasis.)

35. Line Spacing

The text of the document should be double-spaced (except for block quotations, which are single-spaced).

36. Margins

Margins should be consistent throughout a document and should follow the guidelines of the standard style guide.

37. Pagination

Various issues arise with pagination. “Widow/Orphan” lines occur within a paragraph when a single line of text is placed at the bottom of a page or a single line of text is at the top of the following page. Similarly, when a subheading occurs near the bottom of a page at least two lines of text should follow that subheading or the subheading and the text should be moved to the top of the next page.

Another pagination issue is the placement of page numbers. The page number should be placed at the bottom of the page for the first page in a paper (or in a chapter), and at the top of the page for all other pages.

38. Parenthetical Notes/Endnotes

Parenthetical notes and endnotes are *not* to be used in work submitted for courses in the ETBU School of Christian Studies. *Use footnotes.* The only exception to this rule is that when identifying a biblical reference, the reference may be included in the text in parentheses. [Example: “Jeremiah’s New Covenant oracle (Jer 31:31-34) is the source for the longest single New Testament quotation of an Old Testament text.”¹]

[At bottom of page]

1. That quotation occurs in Hebrews 8.

39. Formatting for Biblical References

The guidelines for formatting biblical references are discussed at length below.

General Content Issues

40. Introduction/Transition

Lack of proper introductions and transitions hinders the reader's ability to follow the points being made in the text. The beginning of a paper should incorporate an introduction to the topic being discussed. By introducing the subject effectively, the author prepares the reader to comprehend and appreciate the argument being presented. The same principle applies within a document when a new phase of the argument commences.

41. Conclusion

At the end of a major section of a document and at the end of the completed document concluding paragraphs or sections should be included to summarize the issues addressed. The intermediate conclusions clarify how much progress has been made in presenting the argument and the final conclusion relates the results of the discussion to the thesis being defended in the document.

42. Reference Required

Unless the information contained in a statement is general knowledge, has been discussed earlier in the document, or is a declaration original to the author of the document, a reference identifying the source of the information is required in formal academic writing.

43. Supporting Evidence Required

A declaration made by an author that is not general knowledge should be reinforced with supporting evidence. A reference directing the reader to supporting evidence available elsewhere can suffice.

Formatting for Biblical References

When citing or referring to a biblical text, the biblical reference may be noted in the text in parentheses (*the preferred method*), or in a footnote or endnote. When quoting a biblical text, the translation should be indicated. Identifying the particular published edition of the Bible is not necessary (e.g., do not indicate the source as “The New Scofield Reference Edition” unless citing a footnote or marginal note unique to that edition). If all of the quotations are from the same translation, at the first occurrence of a biblical quotation the author may state the following: “All biblical quotations are from the [name of translation].” If most of the quotations are from the same translation, at the first quotation from that translation the note should state the following: “Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotations from the [name of translation].” If neither of these cases applies, each note should indicate the translation employed.

Abbreviations for some of the most common translations are:

AV	Authorized Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version
ESV	English Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NASB 1995	New American Standard Bible (1995 Update)
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation (the NET Bible)
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version

Additionally, when referring to an entire book of the Bible or an entire chapter within a biblical book, the convention is to include the entire name of the biblical book. When the reference is to a shorter segment of the text the name of the biblical book is abbreviated.

. . . the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12).

Also, when the title of a biblical book includes a number (1 Kings; 2 Thessalonians), *do not use Roman numerals*.

The standard abbreviations for the titles of the biblical books employed in the discipline of biblical studies are determined by the Society of Biblical Literature,² and are listed below.

2. Patrick H. Alexander, John F. Kutsko, James D. Ernest, Shirley A. Decker-Lucke, and David L. Peterson, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 73-74.

Old Testament

Gen	1 Sam	Esth	Jer	Jonah
Exod	2 Sam	Job	Lam	Mic
Lev	1 Kgs	Ps (Pss for	Ezek	Nah
Num	2 Kgs	plural)	Dan	Hab
Deut	1 Chr	Prov	Hos	Zeph
Josh	2 Chr	Eccl	Joel	Hag
Judg	Ezra	Song	Amos	Zech
Ruth	Neh	Isa	Obad	Mal

New Testament

Matt	1 Cor	1 Thess	Heb	3 John
Mark	2 Cor	2 Thess	Jas	Jude
Luke	Gal	1 Tim	1 Pet	Rev
John	Eph	2 Tim	2 Pet	
Acts	Phil	Titus	1 John	
Rom	Col	Phlmn	2 John	

Note: The abbreviated forms for the titles of the biblical books do not include a period at the end of the abbreviation.

Plagiarism

Booth, Colomb, and Williams defined plagiarism as follows:

You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarize even when you do credit the author but use his exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if you placed your work next to the source, you would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow. When accused of plagiarism, some writers claim *I must have somehow memorized the passage. When I wrote it, I certainly thought it was my own.* That excuse convinces very few.

You also plagiarize when you use someone else's ideas and you do not credit that person.

It is trickier to define plagiarism when you summarize and paraphrase. They are not the same, but they blend so seamlessly that you may not even be aware that you are drifting from summary into paraphrase, then across the line into plagiarism. No matter what your intention, close paraphrase may count as plagiarism, *even when you cite the source.*³

Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic violation and incidents of plagiarism will result in the student facing the consequences specified by university policy and in the School of Christian Studies Honor Code.

3. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 167-69.

Inclusive Language

All languages evolve and develop over time. Words are used in different contexts and they are assigned new meanings. In the late twentieth century, the term “man” began to lose some of the generic connotation “mankind” = “humanity” and came to be viewed more as a gender-specific term (= “male”). Responding to this trend, many writers have chosen to avoid using the term “man” when referring to humanity in general. For example, “Jesus died to save men from their sins” is stated as “Jesus died to save people from their sins.” For clarity, inclusive terms such as “humanity,” “people,” “person,” etc. are encouraged, although authors should consider the audience when determining whether or not to employ inclusive language. *In formal, academic writing, inclusive language is preferred strongly.*

Exceptions to the use of inclusive language include references to God (which in orthodox Christian writing are masculine, though not intending to convey the idea that God is male) and references to pastors, for those authors who are convinced that only males are eligible for such roles.

Appendix
Numerical List of Grammar/Style/Format/Content Issues

Issues of Grammar and/or Style

**Issues of General Grammar,
Punctuation, and Syntax**

- 1. Subject/Verb Disagreement**
- 2. Verb Tense Inconsistency**
- 3. Split Infinitive**
- 4. Split Verb**
- 5. Dangling Preposition**
- 6. Sentence Fragment**
- 7. Run-on sentence**
- 8. Comma Splice**
- 9. Improper Punctuation**
- 10. Improper Conjunction**
- 11. Non-Parallel Listing**
- 12. Comparatives versus Superlatives**

Issues with Pronouns

- 13. First Person**
- 14. Second Person**
- 15. Pronoun-Antecedent Disagreement**

- 16. Ambiguous Antecedent**
- 17. Indefinite Pronouns**

Issues of Style

- 18. Improper Capitalization**
- 19. Improper Personification with a Possessive**
- 20. Contraction**
- 21. Colloquialism**
- 22. Improper Identification of Author**
- 23. Abbreviations**
- 24. Repetitive Language**
- 25. Improper Italicism**
- 26. Improper Use of Numbers and Numerals**
- 27. Cliché**
- 28. Sermonic Rhetoric**
- 29. Combative Rhetoric**
- 30. Rambling Introduction**

Format Issues

- 31. Font**
- 32. Justification**
- 33. Indentation**
- 34. Block Quotation**
- 35. Line Spacing**
- 36. Margins**
- 37. Pagination**
- 38. Parenthetical Notes/Endnotes**
- 39. Formatting for Biblical References**

General Content Issues

- 40. Introduction/Transition**
- 41. Conclusion**
- 42. Reference Required**
- 43. Supporting Evidence Required**