

# Major Essay Instructions

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## For MA students

Your essay must be [4000 words](#) (ca. 12 pages). This essay's bibliography should include at least 8 sources, and the bibliography should only include sources that have actually been cited in the body of the essay.

The essay must closely interact with the original languages of its relevant biblical texts or a standard English translation.<sup>1</sup> If you quote the biblical text in an original language, you must also provide your own translation for that quotation.

## For PhD students (including ThM students)

Your essay must be [8000 words](#) essay (ca. 23 pages). Essays earning an excellent mark ("A") will, in my sole judgment, be of publishable or nearly publishable quality for an appropriate, peer-reviewed academic journal. Consequently, this essay should seek meaningfully to contribute to contemporary, scholarly discussion of its topic.

This essay's bibliography should include at least 20 sources, and the bibliography should only include sources that have actually been cited in the body of the essay. The essay must closely interact with the original languages of its relevant biblical texts.<sup>2</sup> Direct quotations should be brief and focused. If it is helpful for your argument, you may quote Bible translations. Routinely, however, when you quote the biblical text, you should do so (a) by quoting the original language of the text and (b) by providing your own translation for the quotation.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, at least 1 of your essay's secondary scholarly sources must be a in a language other than English and not available in English. Depending on your proficiency in other languages besides English, you may need to make judicious use of [Google Translate](#) or

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from biblical texts do not count toward the essay's required total of sources.

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from biblical texts do not count toward the essay's required total of sources.

<sup>3</sup> In BI 8320, NT 8323, or NT 8331, you should provide your own translation. In BI 7301 and BI 7316 or 5000-level courses, if you are unable to provide your own translation for the biblical text, you should use the translation provided in the ESV, NIV2011, or NRSV. These translations are the most standard ones for academic work that does not directly use biblical texts in their original languages.

network among classmates or other colleagues to understand a given source's text, title, or topic well enough to fulfill this requirement.

## For All Students

When you submit your essay's draft, you must do so via a post in the appropriate discussion forum so that your respondent and I will both have access to it.

I will grade your essay according to [this rubric](#). For the due date for your essay's first and final drafts, please see your course syllabus.

## Audience

Unless directed otherwise, you should envision yourself as writing to a critical, academic audience. As such, you should especially avoid homiletic arguments and rhetoric. Instead, you should focus on making your argument phenomenologically rigorous by focusing on close description of evidence. The kind of argument I am looking for in this assignment is something close to what you would find in a major, critical journal (e.g., *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Novum Testamentum*, *Vetus Testamentum*).

Obviously, there is a difference in how well this will be done in an MA student's paper versus one by a PhD student. A strong PhD essay should be essentially ready for publication. A strong MA essay should be noticeably headed in this direction even if the argument might take some further filling out to get there fully.

## First and Final Drafts

The draft you present should be "essentially final." Drafts that are not essentially final [may negatively impact your presentation grade](#). In addition, drafts that are not essentially final will provide a poorer basis for helpful comments from your respondent, your other classmates, and me. So, less developed drafts will leave you with more work to do to finish the final product and less detailed guidance about what you should particularly consider revising. Late drafts will be handled as described in [this document](#).

After the session in which you present your essay draft, I will include with your presentation rubric a general assessment of the quality of your draft as you present it, as well as comments on how you can best revise your draft. These comments will likely be bigger-picture observations. So, in addition to addressing these matters, you should carefully proofread and edit your essay before submitting its final version.

## Using TutorMe

After you present your essay, you may wish to submit it in Canvas to TutorMe for additional feedback. This is an optional step, but it may help you improve your essay for its final draft.

To help increase the likelihood that TutorMe will provide you with helpful feedback, [this resource](#) explains (slides 18–19) how you can find a TutorMe tutor with expertise closer to biblical studies.