

Prompt for Ecclesiastical Reflection Paper

Write a 15–20-minute podcast (between 2,000-2,500 words in length) which uses one primary source from Part II of this course to model sophisticated historical analysis of a theological text that retains significance or importance for addressing social, ecclesial, and/or political issues today. This sophisticated historical analysis must achieve all of the following three goals:

1. Explain the meaning and significance of the historical text in its original context.
 - (around 1000 words to introduce & explain)
 - (This is the “historical” portion of the argument.)
2. Discuss what it means to historically exegete this text both responsibly and critically.
 - (around 500 - 750 words)
 - (This is the “historiographical” portion of the argument.)
3. Explain how the argument of the text relates to a challenge or question faced today.
 - (around 500 - 750 words)
 - (This is the “application” portion of the argument.)

To accomplish the second goal, it may be helpful to consider some of the following questions:

- Are there dangers in drawing too simplistic connections between this text and today’s issues?
How should readers avoid this mistake?
- What dangers are there in making un-nuanced heroes out of historical figures or authors?
- What complexities should readers be aware of?
- Are there any problems with the categories we use to describe the past?
- Considering that many modern-day assumptions about confessional identities have roots in this era, what assumptions do readers need to interrogate – either the author's or *their own*?

A successful podcast will not need to answer all of these questions but will need to substantively address the historiographical question of *how* historical theological texts should be read and used in the service of the church. Explain to your listeners not only *why* the historical text is relevant and helpful but also *how* to read and use it well.

In many ways, this assignment builds on the work you have done in CH 750 both in your historical exegesis and in your ministerial context papers. We have established the need for sympathetic close reading, and we have practiced this skill. Here you are both modeling and explaining what this means for a lay audience.

- Use clear, plain language to both demonstrate and describe how to read sympathetically and critically while connecting a Reformation text to modern-day concerns.
- Use the academic apparatus, including proper quotation and citation to counteract over-generalizations.

NOTE: Although this writing assignment is in the genre of a podcast, you will still need to **follow academic conventions that are appropriate for a graduate-level paper**. See the rubric below for explicit instructions.

Below are suggestions for getting started.

Before writing, it will be helpful to listen to a podcast, such as the episode on Marguerite de Navarre on *Women Worth Knowing*,¹ and consider the following questions: What is successful or helpful about this podcast? What is problematic? What could be detrimental to listeners? Your writing assignment should NOT include a review of this podcast, but the reflection experience will inform your own approach.

You may also choose to consult secondary sources to help you think through the historiographical questions with which this prompt engages. Below are listed some sources available on Sakai – not because these provide “the right answer” but because they each offer some ideas to think with and think about.

Armitage, David. 2022. “In Defense of Presentism.” In *History and Human Flourishing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bauer, S. (2021). “Pontianus Polman Re-Imagined: How (Not) To Write A History Of Religious Polemics.” *Renaissance Studies*, 35(1), 24–42.

Francois, Wim. 2020. “The Antwerpian Printer Jacob van Liesvelt, His Widow, and Their Bibles: Myths and Facts from a Confessional Era.” *Church History* 89 (4): 779–800.

Kelly, Patricia. 2020. “Introduction.” In *Ressourcement Theology: A Sourcebook*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1-10.

Be sure to cite any & all sources that you use!

Have fun, and if you would like to record your podcast (though it is not required to do so), feel free to share it with your cohort after you have turned in the written assignment! ☺

¹ <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/269-women-worth-knowing-62169697/episode/marguerite-de-navarre-94462030/>

Podcast Writing Assignment Rubric

NOTE: Although this writing assignment is in the genre of a podcast, you will still need to follow **academic conventions** that are appropriate for a graduate-level paper.

- You need to state a thesis in the introduction and support your arguments with citations, even though this would be uncommon for a “real podcast.”
- The foundation for your argument is a close, sympathetic reading and critical analysis of the historical text.
- Your language should be clear and jargon-free, but **still academic and sophisticated**.

The challenge is to write in a way that is *both* accessible to non-academics *and* representative of quality graduate-level writing and analysis. See the rubric & tips below for more explicit instructions.

Argument

Thesis	____ / 20	20/20 = Clarity, forceful argumentation, <i>explanatory</i> force beyond generalized claims, mounting a specific argument about <i>how</i> or <i>why</i> • State claims for all three parts of assignment (historical, historiographical, & application) and connect them to form one overarching thesis explicitly stated in the introduction.
Ideas	____ / 20	20/20 = good grasp of the material, reflecting understanding • Explain relevant details for understanding the context of the historical text, thoroughly and accurately. • Explicate the historical text correctly. • Identify clear connections between the concerns of the historical text and concerns of today.
Structure	____ / 10	10/10 = clear organization with logical flow that makes good connections between the material • All three parts (the historical, historiographical, & application) connect and <i>build on</i> one another logically. • The conclusion leaves the reader clear on the “key take-aways” or the “enduring understandings” of the podcast.

Analysis

Sensitivity	____ / 25	25/25 = shows nuance and balance in perspective and is based on a sympathetic reading of the texts • Deal with complexity intelligently and responsibly (see below for suggestions). • In the historiographical section, explicitly explain <i>how and why</i> to read and ‘apply’ historical texts with sensitivity.
Substance	____ / 20	20/20 = has clear specific examples which are used with discretion and understanding (with no blatant errors or misunderstanding of ideas, although minor inaccuracies can be overlooked in an otherwise strong essay). • Demonstrate close engagement with the historical text: both close, sympathetic reading <i>and</i> critical analysis. • Provide specific details and citation for modern day issues. • <i>Develop a constructive and sensitive</i> argument in the ‘application’ section.

Academic Writing and Apparatus

Style	____ / 5	5/5 = professionalism and clarity in academic writing style and proper use of academic apparatus (i.e., references). • Word choice is clear and jargon-free, yet academic in the sense that is precise and effective for achieving a depth of analysis that is sophisticated, insightful, etc.
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Tips on How to Succeed

[This list was created after reflection upon the feedback I provided students.]

Argument

Crafting a Thesis

- Once you have stated the *topic* (the “what”) of the paper, ensure that you have made a claim *about* it (the “how” or “why”). Make an assertion about the topic, based on clearly stated support. Take a position on the topic, using specific language.
- An overall argument/thesis should incorporate the historical, historiographical, and application claims from each section, and it should be stated in the introduction.
- Some *theological* claims may be suggested or argued, as appropriate in the ‘application’ section.
 - These must clearly connect with the *historical & historiographical* arguments and the overall thesis.
 - To be strong, these claims should also include specific how/why arguments.
 - Weak: “Today’s churches would do well to seek greater unity.”
 - Strong: “One of the biggest challenges to unity among Christians today is _____ which can be combatted by _____.”

Developing Good Ideas:

- The overall argument should *govern* the entire paper: everything in the paper should be there specifically to further support the logic of this overall argument.
- Be concise and avoid repeating the same idea over and over.

Creating Good Structure:

- In the logical flow of the writing,
 - Ensure that each sentence follows from and builds on the previous sentence, and
 - Ensure that each paragraph follows from and builds on the previous paragraph.
- Explain the connection between the quotations/citations provided and your argument.
 - Paraphrase or “gloss” quotations to explain what they mean/how you interpret them.

Analysis

Dealing with Complexity:

- Use caveat phrases to demonstrate that there are exceptions or limits to your generalizations.
- Provide counter examples to your own claims and demonstrate how you make sense of them.
- Respond thoughtfully to counterarguments; Make appropriate concessions.
- Break down binaries.

Using Specifics:

- Demonstrate direct engagement with the historical author's own language.
- Provide specifics examples to make the modern issue clear and provide citation.
- Use secondary as well as primary texts to support your argument; cite them.
- Theological arguments in the application section may be strengthened by providing (concise) citation to theological texts.

Academic Writing and Apparatus

- Correctly identify the author and text used in citations and quotations:
 - If you cite information from the editor of the primary source, note this simply, such as "Katharina's editor McKee has remarked that"