

Columbia Evangelical Seminary
P. O. Box 1189 — Buckley, WA 98321
(360) 802-6437 — ces@tx3.net — www.ColumbiaSeminary.edu
Dr. Ric Walston, President

A (long) note to our Faculty Members:

Hello CES faculty members (please take the time to read this entire letter).

As you know we have an outstanding group of faculty members who come from various backgrounds in both theological persuasion and academics.

Over the years, it has been important from time to time to ask all of our mentors to be “on the same page” as CES with regard to certain aspects of CES academic protocols.

Grading

One of the first items that comes up is grading. There have been times when some faculty members have been a bit, let’s say, “shy” about giving lower grades to students. One faculty member once called me and said, “This student’s paper is no better than a C+. What grade should I give him?” I said, “How about a C+?” Give them what they deserve, nothing less, and nothing more.

Any faculty member who has dealt with transfer students who have come from other schools that make *grade inflation* a habit knows that those schools are not helping students.

I have seen many occasions in which students transfer to CES with master’s and doctoral degrees but they are unable to write a solidly academic paper.

So, two points here: (1) Give the student the grade that he/she deserves. (2) Work with the student to improve his/her academic writing abilities.

A good, general, guideline of grading can be found here on our web site: <http://www.columbiaseminary.edu/forstudents/gradingcriteria.html>

Theological Agreement and Grading

Another issue that has come up, only rarely, is grading according to agreement. There have been only a couple of occasions when faculty members seemed to have negatively graded a student’s work based upon the fact that the student has not agreed with the mentor’s theology.

I too have read student papers with which I disagreed theologically, but the research and the writing was “A” work. So, while I disagreed with the student’s conclusions, I nonetheless gave the student the “A” he deserved.

On two occasions while I was in graduate school, I had professors give me lower grades based upon theology and not upon my research or product. One paper was about Martin Luther’s theology. I received received a “B.” My professor felt that while my work was good, I had not parroted back what he said Luther believed about a certain aspect of theology, and therefore the paper was not deserving of an “A.” Later, I submitted the same paper to a Lutheran scholar who said that he would have given it an “A+.” Another prof. explicitly told me that since I was a conservative Evangelical--and he was far more liberal--I could never get anything higher from him than a “B.” Feeling cheated, I submitted my “B paper” to the the school’s academic dean. After his review, the grade was adjusted to an “A.”

So, please, be careful not to grade students' papers according to agreement with your theology but according to the students' actual work. CES is not a denominationally tied school, and none of the faculty members should grade student papers according to some "theological party line." (Obviously, CES is conservative with regard to the fundamentals of the faith, and these are not up for debate. For more about this, see our statement of faith at <http://www.columbiaseminary.edu/aboutus/beliefs.html>)

A Singular Academic Style

Next, because the CES faculty members have such diverse academic backgrounds, finding a singular academic style that all CES students can follow has been difficult. Not only does the CES faculty represent many schools throughout the US., but some of our faculty members earned their degrees outside the U.S. Nonetheless, CES needs (and has) a general, singular academic style.

There are some over-arching governing rules that CES has set up as *CES Writing Protocols* (CES-WP). These protocols have been formalized into a class that all students writing theses or dissertations must take.

Obviously, we do not required that our faculty members take this class, but for those who might like to go over the CES-WP in more depth, you may read the lecture notes and listen to audio taped lectures that go along with the notes (at no cost) on our web site at <http://www.columbiaseminary.edu/forstudents>. There, you will see links to the CES-WP Lectures.

For those who simply do not have the time to go through these lectures, I have listed some of the CES-WP below for a quick read and reference. *Please be sure to have your students follow these rules.*

Thesis and Dissertation Rejection

On occasion, it has been a problem when faculty members have taken students through a thesis or a dissertation only to have the product rejected here at the office because the work did not follow *CES Writing Protocols*. (On two such occasions, the mentors/students failed to follow CES-WP, and they failed to communicate with the CES office during the process of the students' writing of the dissertations. The end result was that the academic style of the dissertations were so contrary to the CES-WP that they had to be *completely overhauled*. Needless to say, the students were not happy. Thinking they were nearly finished with their degree programs, the work required to "fix" the dissertations took well over a year.)

If there is a compelling reason why your student(s) cannot or should not follow these rules, you (the mentor) must settle this issue with CES, in writing, before allowing your student(s) exemption from any of these rules. Note also that while there may be more leeway (possibility of exemption) in *term papers*, all theses and dissertations must follow these rules. (Note, however, that too many exemptions in *term papers* will give students an inadequate picture of what *will be required of them* when they write their theses or dissertations.)

Basic CES Writing Protocols for Academic Writing

Here, then, are some of the basic *CES Writing Protocols* of academic writing that we want our mentors to use in their grading of student papers, theses, and dissertations.

1. Do not use first person personal pronouns (whether singular or plural): Never say "I" or "my" or "me" or "mine" or "us" or "our" or "we." We have all seen academic works in which the author used the *academic "we."* For example, the writer might say something like, "Whereas the church once believed that . . . we now believe." And, what the author means by "we" is actually "I" (it is a reference to himself). While this is acceptable in some academic text books, it is *not acceptable* in student academic term papers.

2. Do not address your reader. Never say "you," "your," or "yours" in direct conversation to the reader. For example, do not say something like, "You should consider the three major types of . . ."

3. Do not ask questions of your readers. This is another way that writers sometimes address their readers. For example, do not say something like, "Have you considered the three major types of . . . ?" Students may use the interrogative as a rhetorical device in a general sense when not directly addressing the reader.

4. Rather than asking questions, students should just *State and Defend*. They should simply and clearly state their case, and then defend it. It is vitally important that students realize that their job in writing a Research Paper is simply to *State and Defend*. This is much the same as you would see in a scientific report or a news report. For examples of this, read articles in professional newspapers. The author never refers to himself nor does he address his readers. Next, students must not make unsubstantiated assertions. If an assertion is made (i.e., the "state"), the student must then "defend" that assertion by giving adequate proof, resources, citations, etc.

Next, let us not misunderstand this protocol: one of our mentors wrote this to me:

What I have experienced with at least two of my students is that they place their firm conclusions at the beginning of their papers (presumably due to this protocol), and then proceed to defend that position. To me that's just bad style because the student's adopted position is presented a priori as a foregone conclusion, and it lacks the subtlety that is necessary in "sneaking up on" the reader. In my opinion (and this is what I teach my students), the reader should be allowed to come to his own (and, hopefully, the writer's) conclusion after having been led to it by the evidence. An effective writer wins converts to his position by first assuming (and presenting) a level playing field, by understating his case, and by subtly dismantling opposing views along the way, until all that is left as a viable option is the writer's own view. If, instead, he tells the reader what the conclusion is before he even presents the evidence, he will have lost those in his audience who are predisposed toward an opposing view because they will now be reading his thesis through a defensive and critical wall. Is there flexibility on this rule, and room for personal style?

State and defend is not a prescription for presenting the conclusions at the beginning of papers. The state and defend refers to the fact that (1) students are not to address their readers with questions, and (2) that assertions without proof will not be accepted. However, state and defend is not promoting the idea that the student should present his position *a priori* as a foregone conclusion. Our mentor is right. Part of the art of academic writing is that the student subtly--*but with evidence* and not just empty assertions--leads his reader to his logical conclusion.

5. Do not use academic titles in academic papers. For example, if you are quoting a person with a doctoral degree, do not call that person "Dr." When you first mention the person's name, you list both his first and last name. From that point on you can refer to the person with his last name or with both names occasionally. So, you would not write: "Dr. Robert Benson argues that . . ." It would be simply: "Robert Benson argues that . . ." Then, later, you might quote Robert Benson again, but you can now simply say, "Benson agrees and says . . ." (Also, do not list his name with his degree after his name. Do *not* write, "Robert Benson, Ph.D., argues that . . .")

6. Upper and lower case issues: Do not use an upper case "B" for the word *biblical* when it is being used as a simple adjective. The upper case "B" is used in the word *biblical* only when it is (or is a part of) a proper noun. For example: "Robert Benson argues that the only biblical answer is found in Mark's Gospel." But, when it is used as a proper noun, e.g., Master of Biblical Studies, then the "b" is upper case.

Next, the word *gospel* has an upper case "G" only when it is referring to one of the four Gospels, but not when it is being used as "good news." For example: "The gospel of Christ is being preached around the world."

Next, do not use upper case "h" when using a personal pronoun when referring to God. Example: "God, in his wisdom, sent his Son to die for man's sins." "Jesus let himself be crucified so as to redeem mankind." "Be still, and know that he is God."

Next, students often incorrectly use an upper case “c” in church when they are referring to the church in a general sense.

7. Contractions: *Don't use 'em!* Do not use contractions in your academic papers. Some examples of contractions and their counterparts are: it's = it is; don't = do not; doesn't = does not; shouldn't = should not; can't = cannot; won't = will not; haven't = have not; didn't = did not.

8. Do not abbreviate words and titles in the body of the paper. For example, do not abbreviate book titles from the Bible. Spell out "Revelation 3:10" instead of "Rev. 3:10." Use "1 Corinthians 2:14" instead of "1 Cor. 2:14." (You may, however, abbreviate book titles in the footnotes.)

9. Do not start sentences with a numeral. For example, do not start a sentence with "1 Corinthians 2:14." Rather, spell out the word, e.g., "First Corinthians 2:14," or place it later in the sentence with the numeral.

Example, "Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 2:14 when he says . . ."

10. Pagination: The first page of a paper is to have the page number at the bottom center of the page. All following pages in the paper are to be numbered at the top right (one inch from the top right hand corner). Now, in theses and dissertations: each new chapter has the page number at the bottom center. Also, nothing goes with the page number. It is just 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. Not “page 1” and page 2,” etc.

11. Do not write in the passive voice (this is when the subject of the sentence is being acted upon). Students often do this when they refer to themselves and they cannot say “I” or “mine.” They end up saying something like, “Research on this topic has been done for the last year.” It is better to allow the student the use of the 3rd person reference. “This student (or writer, or researcher) has researched this topic for the last year.”

However, if possible, it is best if students do not refer to themselves in their papers at all. When students do refer to themselves in their papers, it must be in third person, and it should be very rare. Three such references in any 20 pages of work is all that is allowed.

12. When using the ellipsis, be sure to put in the proper spacing between the dots. There is a space before, after, and between each dot. For example, the ellipsis is like this . . . not like this...with it all run together. When starting a quotation with the first part of the line missing, the ellipsis does not have to start the quote.

Example: The Bible says that God loved us so much “that he gave his only begotten Son.”

It does not need to be: The Bible says that God loved us so much “. . . that he gave his only begotten Son.”

13. Do not have many extraordinarily long sentences. (A sentence is considered long when it has 16 to 20 words in it.) Obviously, some sentences will be long (16 to 20 words, or more). But, this should be the exception.

14. Do not use allegorical writing. Just write in direct prose (i.e., ordinary speech or writing, without metrical structure or allegorical terminology).

Example of bad: Martin Luther's raging fire consumed the wood, hay, and stubble of the religious forest of the era.

Example of acceptable: Martin Luther's teaching and preaching exposed the error in the false teachings that were prevalent in the Catholic church at that time.

15. In academic writing, the writing style is not folksy, chummy, or conversational. Avoid cutesy or trendy phrases, and *never use clichés* (in my book, even one cliché can lower the grade of the paper).

16. Footnotes are important for establishing sources and authorities for ideas and quotations, and for connecting the student's work to other scholars in the field. Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper.

Attempt to stay clear of explanatory comments in footnotes. Rule of thumb: If it is important enough to be explained in a footnote, then it is likely important enough to be in the body of the paper. If it is not important enough to be in the body of the paper, then it is likely not important enough to be in a footnote.

Footnotes should appear at the bottom of the page *on which the ideas to which it refers occur*.

Each footnote includes the name of the author from whom the quotation or idea was obtained, the title of the book or article, the page or location in the work, the publisher, and the date and place of publication.

Sample:

¹Norman A. Geisler and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 63.

Footnote issues: Note well that:

- (1) there is no space between the footnote number and the name of the author
- (2) the book title is italicized (book titles are *never* placed in quotation marks--they are either *italicized* or underlined, but not both)
- (3) the publisher's *city* and *state* are listed. Also, the states are listed with only two letters, both upper case, e.g., "MI.:" not "Mich.:" -- "CA.:" not "Calif.:" -- "WA.:" not "Wash.:"
- (4) the "p" is there along with the page number. If it were multiple pages, it would be "pp. 63-64."

Also, books are not "entitled." They are simply "titled." CES understands that the word "entitled" can legitimately be used to say something like,

"Norman Geisler's book entitled *Introduction to Philosophy* covers many of the philosophical issues that confront the church today."

However, in *academic writing*, the word entitled means "a right or claim to something." Therefore, when referring to a book title, use only the word "titled."

Example: "Norman Geisler's book titled *Introduction to Philosophy* covers many of the philosophical issues that confront the church today."

17. Always place a comma after three or more words in a series, and before "and" or "or." *Turabian*, 3.68, explains this well. Examples: "Peter, James, and John were in the class." "I bought bananas, apples, and pears."

Special Note: The AP (Associated Press) style does not use a comma after the coordinating conjunction in this particular construction. AP Example: "Peter, James and John were in the class." Some students who read this construction in their local newspapers may question the accuracy of our rule. However, AP style is not academic style. Academic term papers, theses, and dissertations are not newspapers. Term papers, theses, and dissertations do not follow AP style; they follow academic style. When you have a series of three or more elements, these elements must be separated by commas, and a comma must be placed before the coordinating conjunction.

18. Always place a comma after an introductory dependent clause in a complex sentence. See *Turabian* (3.79).

Example: "Until Jesus returns, the church must continue to evangelize the lost."

19. Always place a comma before the coordinating conjunction separating two (or more) independent clauses. Examples: "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (John 1:5). "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already" (John 3:18). The man ate the entire bucket of chicken, and then he got sick.

Note: *Turabian* differs from the CES-WP on this point. Whereas the CES-WP says *always* place a comma before the coordinating conjunction separating two (or more) independent clauses, *Turabian* says that no comma is necessary if the two independent clauses are very short. This, however, is not acceptable to CES academic standards. Thus, *always* place a comma before the coordinating conjunction separating two (or more) independent clauses no matter their length.

20. Always place a comma around nonessential, nonrestrictive words, phrases, and clauses. (See *Turabian*, 3.72.)

"Which" always introduces a nonrestrictive clause. (must have commas)

"That" always introduces a restrictive clause. (do not use commas)

Example: Bob's dog, which barks constantly, is three years old. (must have commas)

Example: Bob's dog that barks constantly is three years old. (do not use commas)

Note: If you do not know *why* the two words "that" and "which" make the difference in the use of nonuse of commas, you need to research restrictive and nonrestrictive phrases. (You can find this information in good grammars and in the CES-WP lectures at <http://www.columbiaseminary.edu/forstudents>. There, you will see links to the CES-WP Lectures.)

21. Always place a comma after an introductory participial phrase.

Examples: "Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, 'Don't be afraid; just believe'" (Mark 5:36). (The word "Ignoring" is a participle, and "Ignoring what they said" is the participial phrase.)

Second example: Walking through the park, he found a diamond ring.

22. Always place a comma after a second introductory prepositional phrase.

Example: In the book of Acts, Luke records that some Christians spoke in tongues. "In the book" is the first prepositional phrase and "of Acts" is the second prepositional phrase. These two are joined together to introduce the main clause.

Second Example: Of the men who were at the game, he was the shortest.

Note: You do not need a comma after an introductory prepositional phrase with only one preposition if that phrase is three or fewer words.

Example: In the book Luke records that some Christians spoke in tongues.

"In the book" is the first and only prepositional phrase in this sentence, and a comma is not necessary. Some people prefer to place a comma even after an introductory prepositional phrase with only one preposition. *If this is your style, that is fine. However, you must be consistent in your style.* Thus, do not have a comma at the end of an introductory prepositional phrase with only one preposition in some cases and not in others.

Note the preference and the exception: The CES preference is that no comma is used after an introductory prepositional phrase with only one preposition *unless* that introductory prepositional phrase with only one preposition is four or more words long.

Example: In the year that he came home, the new sky rise was built.

23. Always place a comma after an introductory interjection, an independent element, a direct address. Example: Oh, that's the one. No, I will not go. Dave, hand me the Bible.

24. Always place a comma between coordinate adjectives. (Adjectives are coordinate if they can be reversed and if you can insert "and" between them.)

Examples: The bright, intelligent man was wearing a flashy tie.
He was a kind, considerate child.

25. Discretionary Comma Placement. You may place a comma in the following, but you don't have to. (Select your personal style, and then *be consistent*.)

a. You may place a comma after introductory adverbs.

Example: Suddenly, the band began to play.

b. You may place a comma after an introductory single prepositional phrase.

Example: At the table, he ate his meal.

26. Use a semicolon after elements in a series when the elements have commas.

Example: The list of students included the following: Bob Jones, 37, of 1318 NE 6th St.; Susan West, 24, of 1244 Florence Ave.; and Steve Turk, of 114 West Minx Blvd.

27. Use a semicolon between independent clauses to show that they are closely related when no coordinating conjunction is present. Examples: "He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light" (John 1:8). "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). She danced all night; her legs were tired. He turned off the lights; the room went dark.

Note: Do not use a semicolon and a coordinating conjunction (unless the clauses of the compound sentence are long and have commas in them). See Turabian, 3.85.

28. Use a colon to introduce more than one item. The list of students included the following: Bob Jones, 37, of 1318 NE 6th St.; Susan West, 24, of 1244 Florence Ave.; and Steve Turk, of 114 West Minx Blvd.

29. Use a colon after an attribution that introduces a direct quotation of more than one sentence. Example: Hank. Thomas said: (what follows should be two or more sentences of direct quote from Dr. Thomas).

30. Use a colon between the chapter and verse in a Scriptural reference. Example: John 3:16. Also, the CES-WP method of showing several verses when those verses are consecutive looks like this: John 3:16-21 and not as John 3:16, 21. John 3:16, 21 means that the reference is to only two verses, John chapter three, verse 16 and verse 21. Students must learn this:

John 3:16 -> Means John chapter three and verse sixteen.

John 3:16-21 -> Means John chapter three and verses sixteen through verse twenty-one.

John 3:16, 21 -> Means John chapter three and verse sixteen and verse twenty-one.

Also, when showing reference to more than one chapter of the same book and verses, it would have a semicolon between the chapter numbers: John 3:16, 21; 4:3-7; 5:1-2, 8.

Next, do not let your Scripture reference "dangle." Also, *your* terminal punctuation comes *after* the Scripture reference.

The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" (Mark 2:24). <-- note, here is a period

Not like this:

The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” (Mark 2:24) <-- no period -- this leaves the Scripture reference “dangling.”

Another correct example:

“So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:28).

And, one more correct example:

“Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’” (Mark 3:34).

31. Do not over dash: See Turabian (3.91 ff). There is a difference between the — dash and the - hyphen. The dash is an elongated hyphen. See *Turabian*, 3.91 for more about this. Some typing keyboards have a dash, and others do not. To make a dash, press OPTION SHIFT and “-” on your keyboard. When a keyboard does not have the dash, you can make a dash by typing in two hyphens. Examples: Dash “—” Double-hyphen dash “--”

One consistent error that people make with the dash is that they often put spaces before and after the dash. There should be no spaces.

Example of wrong: The Bible is the best selling book of all time — if you can call it just a book.

Example of right: The Bible is the best selling book of all time—if you can call it just a book.

Use a dash to show dramatic contrast or emphasis.

Example: I was eating lunch—at precisely one o'clock—when the house caught on fire.

The over use of the dash is a sign of an inexperienced writer. Too often, the unconscious motto of many poor writers is, “When in doubt, dash.” I have seen many papers with many dashes simply because the student does not know how he should properly punctuate. And the dash becomes a sort of punctuational “catch-all.”

You should use dashes very rarely. **The Dash Rule-of-Thumb for college students:** Do not use the dash more than twice per term paper (no matter its length).

32. Use a hyphen (not to be confused with the longer dash) between compound adjectives. Adjectives are compound when both or several adjectives cannot stand independently with the noun.

Example: Max is a four-year-old dog. Notice that Max is not a four dog. He is not a year dog. He is not an old dog. Thus, these adjectives must be hyphenated as four-year-old. Thus, Max is a four-year-old dog.

33. Use a hyphen between compound nouns.

Example: They are bird-lovers.

34. Use a hyphen between adverbs and adjectives unless the adverb ends in "ly."

Example: It is a well-constructed house. It is a newly constructed house.

35. VERY IMPORTANT: How to Use Periods and Commas with Quotation Marks: See *Turabian*, 3.106.

It’s Simple Really: Periods and Commas *Always* Go Inside The Quotation Marks.

Examples: Bob said, "Yes." Notice that the period is **INSIDE** the quotation marks.

"If I go to the park," said Bob, "I am not coming back." Notice that the comma (after "park") and the period are both INSIDE the quotation marks.

The last thing he said was, "Goodbye."

Note: ALWAYS means ALWAYS--thus, Periods and Commas *Always* Go Inside Quotation Marks. Some authors from other countries, for example the United Kingdom and Canada, place their periods and commas outside the quotation marks. But in America, we ALWAYS, put the periods and commas inside quotation marks ALWAYS. (See *Turabian*, 5.17.)

36. How to Use Question Marks, Semicolons, and Colons with Quotation Marks (See *Turabian*, 3.106.) Place question marks and exclamation marks inside or outside the quotation marks depending on whether they are part of the quoted material or not. If they are part of the quoted material, they go inside. If they are not part of the quoted material, they go outside.

Examples:

Not part of the quoted material: Did he really say, "I am the best teacher in this school"?

Part of the quoted material: He asked, "Do you think I am the best teacher in this school?"

Not part of the quoted material: I can't believe she said, "You're overweight"!

Part of the quoted material: She screamed, "You're fat!"

Place semicolons and colons outside the closing quotation marks.

Example: I have never read Jim Tate's journal article "The Truth of Time"; in fact, I have never even heard of it. See *Turabian*, 3.106.

37. Be sure to help students understand that "e.g.," "and" and "i.e.," are and mean different things: "e.g.," means "for example"; whereas, "i.e.," means "that is."

38. Concerning the quotation marks. Two things:

(1) Students are not to use single quotation marks unless they are setting off a quotation within a quotation. If quotation marks are used, they are always double quotation marks, " ", unless it is a quotation within a quotation.

(2) **Quotation Marks Are Not for Emphasis.** The next error that seems to be ubiquitous is the idea that quotation marks are to be used to emphasize words. They're not. In fact, quotation marks are used (1) to indicate that words are being quoted, or often (2) they are used to indicate that a word is being used ironically, or even with opposite meaning. For example, a student once wrote something like this:

Martin Luther had a very "powerful" ministry.

What he meant to write was that Martin Luther had a very *powerful* ministry.

By putting the word *powerful* in quotation marks, the student actually was saying that Martin Luther's ministry was *not* powerful.

39. Politically Correct (PC) Terminology (or PC-Talk): Issues for *Today's* Academics.

CES-WP is more concerned about being grammatically correct than about being politically correct.

Therefore, students should not arbitrarily use "she" in a generic sense as we do with the pronoun "he."

Thus, if the student is writing about mankind in a generic sense, the use of "he" is preferable.

Students *must not attempt to solve this PC problem* by using such constructions as "he/she" or the "he and she."

Some people argue that we should write something like this:

"As a person grows in his or her theology, he or she will discover more and more unanswerable questions."

However, this is unnecessarily bulky and cumbersome. In fact, this sort of writing will not be accepted by CES.

Therefore, students should use the masculine, singular, third-person, personal pronouns in a generic (or inclusive) sense in academic papers.