

Exercise 4. Tools: Using *New Testament Abstracts* (homework)

What Is New Testament Abstracts?

New Testament Abstracts (NTA) is a journal that abstracts or summarizes publications about New Testament passages and topics. Beginning in 1956, the journal has published three issues per year. It is an invaluable resource at the early stages of research on a New Testament topic, because it allows you not only to scan the title for its suitability for your project (as any database might do), but also to read a summary of the contents to make sure that the article or book is relevant.

Our library has long had a subscription to the print version of *NTA*, and you'll find these volumes in current periodicals and in the ARS under the call number, BS410 .N35. A description of how the print edition is organized is provided below, along with a version of the assignment directions for those students who don't have access to a computer and who must use the print version.

The good news is, you don't have to trek to the library to use *NTA*, because SCU has expanded their subscription to include the online version of the database. In this assignment, you'll learn how to use this electronic resource from the comfort of your own computer.

How to Use the NTA Database

To access the NTA database, go to the library Web site (www.scu.edu/library). Under the "University Library" logo, find the central navigation section "Databases." The databases are accessible in two ways: by subject groupings or alphabetically.

- If you want to search by subject area, click on the "Browse by Subject" window to see the full list of disciplines, then scroll down and select "Religious Studies," and click on the two red arrows to the right of the window. This will open up a list of databases we have in Religious Studies, including the "New Testament Abstracts."
- If you know the name of your database (New Testament Abstracts), you can use the alphabetical list by simply clicking on "N" and scrolling down to the title.

Whichever way you get there, click on "New Testament Abstracts." If you're on campus, the database will open immediately. If you're off-campus, you will be prompted to enter your name and the long number on the back of your Access card (the one that starts 25098...) so as to authorize access. Here is the window you'll see:

The search windows (#1) allow you to put in your search terms and then select a field (#2) directing your search further (e.g., author, title, keyword). At the initial stage of research, it sometimes helps to just leave the field in its default setting ("Select a Field (optional)"), because you don't always know exactly where your search terms might show up, nor do you know what subject categories this particular database uses to catalogue entries. Whatever search terms you use, be prepared to try some synonyms and alternatives if your first search doesn't yield much. Or, if your search returns too many records, you might want to add a second or third search term to narrow your search. Another trick is to collect more hits by using the asterisk key; for example, *feminis** will yield records with both "feminist" and "feminism" in the record.

Numbers 3-4 on the search window above indicate other ways you can narrow your search.

- In "Publication Type" (#3), you can select what types of sources the query will search. The NTA only abstracts articles, books, review articles (often covering several books that address a similar topic) and software, and so you can just search "all" to query the entire database. However, if you would prefer to query only articles and books, hold down the shift key while clicking "Article" and "Book"; this limits your search just to these types of records.
- For this exercise, you may limit your search to the last fifteen years. Type 1996 in the "Year Published from" window and 2011 in the "to" window (#4) in order to pull up more recent entries. If those recent entries are professional, *they* should reference any important earlier works for you.

Now you're ready to search! Just hit the Search button (#5), and the database will find records that match your search parameters. And if that first search doesn't pan out, don't despair; just keep playing around with your pericope, your New Testament book name (e.g., "Gospels-Acts--Mark"), or your search terms, until some results emerge.

Your results will appear in a window that looks like this (the bold words “journal article” and “book” have been added for reference):

The screenshot shows the EBSCO New Testament Abstracts search interface. At the top, the search criteria are 'syro-phenician' and 'canaanite'. The results list three items:

- 91. **Notions of New Testament Priesthood** (Journal article)
By: Zerafa, P. P. Source: Melita Theologica, 48(2, 1996)63-91 Publication Type: Article
Subjects: Biblical Theology--Church and Ministry
Database: New Testament Abstracts
Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████
Find It @ SCU Libraries
- 92. **Postcolonialism and Biblical Reading : An Introduction** (Journal article)
By: Donaldson, L. E. Source: Semeia, 75(1996)1-14 Publication Type: Article
Subjects: New Testament: General--Interpretation
Database: New Testament Abstracts
Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████
PDF Full Text | Find It @ SCU Libraries
- 93. **Their Stories, Our Stories : Women of the Bible** (Book)
By: Kam, R. S. New York : Continuum, 1995. Publication Type: Book
Subjects: Biblical Theology
Database: New Testament Abstracts
Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████

At the top of the central results frame, you can see how many results your search returned (in this case, 118 records). Here are records 91–93. The first two are journal articles; you can tell that because the “publication type” says “article,” and the source titles are followed by a number (the volume), which in turn is followed by an issue number and the year the issue was published (e.g., 2, 1996)—typical elements of a journal reference. Page numbers in the journal follow. The third source is a book; not only does the publication type signal this, but you have the typical elements of a book entry (author or editor, publication city, publisher, year of publication). The other major publication type is an essay in a book, which will include the book title and publication information, along with the pages in the book that the essay covers.

What sets NTA apart from other databases is that all of the entries include abstracts, or brief summaries of the contents. This is especially useful because it is not always clear from the title alone what a source covers, or what method it uses. If you click on the blue underscored title, you’ll be able to read the abstract, as in the following example:

The screenshot shows the EBSCO New Testament Abstracts search interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'New Search', 'Scriptures', 'Citation Matcher', and 'Indexes'. A search bar contains the terms 'syro-phenician' and 'canaanite'. Below the search bar, there are options for 'OR' and 'AND' searches. The search results are displayed in a table with one entry. The entry details include the author, source, ISSN, publication year, subjects, scripture citation, abstract, publication type, ATLA number, accession number, database, and full text database. On the right side, there is a 'Tools' section with links for 'Add to folder', 'Print', 'E-mail', 'Save', 'Cite', 'Export', 'Create Note', 'Permalink', and 'Bookmark'.

You can add the source to your folder from this window (see “Tools” to the right of the result window). If the article itself is in the library’s electronic holdings, there will be a link to a pdf file of the article to the left of the result window (see “PDF Full Text”). If a pdf file is not available, use the “Find IT @ SCU Libraries” link when you’re ready to start hunting down your sources (a stage that is not yet required, though it could save you some time to do it while working on this exercise).

Assignment Directions

Select a pericope for your exegetical paper. A pericope is a short sense unit: a small episode, a parable or other literary form (for example, a controversy story, miracle story), a logical sense unit in an epistle. It’s not the telescope that rises from a submarine (that’s periScope!). There’s no prescribed length for your pericope, though these generally run roughly 5-20 verses in length. NOTE: Even though it’s early in the quarter, do try to land now on the passage you’ll address in your exegetical paper. That way, this assignment and subsequent ones can allow you to build your larger project slowly and get feedback along the way.

Open up New Testament Abstracts electronic database and search your terms or passage, as directed above. Find results. Read the title and abstract. If the article sounds like something that might be useful for your paper, AND if it’s in a language you can read, click the “Add to folder” link at the bottom of the record. The sources you mark will be added to the “Folder” icon in the blue menu bar at the top of the page. Find at least five relevant sources.

When you’ve finished running through the results, click on that “Folder” link to see all the records you’ve selected. From that page, you can print your results, save them to a flash drive, or email them to yourself. It’s recommended that you save them in electronic form (via email or saved to a flash drive), since you can copy and paste them into your typed assignment and then reformat the entries.

Type up one sheet with the appropriate heading and margins (see the Style Sheet on the course website), a sentence stating what pericope you’ve chosen, and the list of five (or more) English-

language sources you've found, presented in proper bibliographic format, alphabetically by author's last name. For this exercise, you don't need to take any *notes* on the abstract itself; you ONLY need the bibliographic information.

Please note: your paper won't be accepted if you simply reproduce the bibliographic style of *NTA*; you must use the bibliographic style described on the course website (abbreviated on p. 123). Here's a quick shorthand to the proper style (YOU don't need to put "book," "essay in an edited volume," etc. — these are just listed here so that you see how different sources are formatted).

Book	Magonet, Jonathan. <i>Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah</i> . Sheffield: Almond, 1983.
Essay in an Edited Volume (<i>cite by essay author/title, not book editor/title</i>)	Klassen, William. "Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: The State of the Question." In <i>Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, vol. 1, Paul and the Gospels</i> (ed. Peter Richardson; Studies in Christianity and Judaism 2; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986) 1-19.
Essay in Book by a single author	Montgomery, Maxine Lavon. "Charles Chesnutt, The Marrow of Tradition." In <i>The Apocalypse in African-American Fiction</i> (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996) 15-27.
Subsequent Essay in same book	-----, "Toni Morrison, Sula." In <i>The Apocalypse in African-American Fiction</i> , 74-87.
Journal Article	Garrett, Susan R. "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1-24." <i>CBQ</i> 52 (1990) 656-80.

Notice that you do not need to include the database record (a very long url). That would be like writing on your bibliography exactly where you found every source. Since the reader of your paper might not have access to our library, they'd have to find the sources another way.