1. All papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins (check this setting! Sometimes MS Word defaults to 1.25" margins) using a standard 11- or 12-point font (e.g., Times New Roman or Calibri). Papers should be 10-12 pages exclusive of bibliography.

2. Number the pages.

3. Learn how to use a comma. Really. Please. Here’s one great resource: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/607/02/

4. Use the guide to footnotes and bibliography in the *SBL Handbook of Style* or Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* consistently throughout the paper. Please consult a guide to your chosen style as you prepare your paper. If you don’t know how to cite something, look it up! Do not guess.

   - *The SBL Handbook of Style* contains guidelines for the proper abbreviations for biblical books and other great tips for citations particular to the field of biblical studies.
   - When citing a commentary, reference work, or other type of work by multiple authors, cite the specific article you are referencing by that author’s name; do not simply cite the reference work as a whole (e.g., do not simply cite *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, but rather, Terence Fretheim, “Genesis,” Pages xx-xxx in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, etc.).

5. Your bibliography should include a variety of types of secondary resources, not just commentaries. Seek out monographs and articles from peer-reviewed journals. Some reference works can be helpful, too, especially the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

   - Unless you are pursuing a particular angle about the history of interpretation of your passage, your secondary resources should date from the last 20-30 years at the latest.
   - Never, ever, ever, ever cite Wikipedia in a paper you turn in to me.

6. Write your paper as if your audience comprises your fellow seminarians. That is, do not leave out details relevant to your argument assuming that I (your teacher) will fill them in myself. At the same time, do not include details that even an average eighth-grader would know (e.g., “Genesis is the first book of the Bible”) just to fill space on the page.

   - Do not take this idea of an imagined audience too literally. The tone of your paper should be formal and academic. The imagined audience is there only to give a target at which to aim the level of your discourse.
   - The first person (“I” constructions) is not off-limits in academic papers. As long as the paper does not degenerate into a personal reflection paper, an occasional “I” is quite appropriate. This
is especially true in the thesis statement, which might read, “I propose that...” Or “I will argue that...,” etc.

7. Use strong, active verbs whenever possible. Some sentences require verbs of being, but strong, active verbs impart liveliness to your writing. (or, more blandly, Sometimes being verbs are necessary, but strong verbs in the active voice are usually more interesting. See?)

8. Proofread your paper. We all make typos, and one or two typos may sometimes make it into the final draft. However, grammatical, spelling, or stylistic errors can distract from good ideas. The more errors appear, the more your good ideas recede into the background of your paper.

- Reading your paper aloud can be a good way to proofread. It will not only alert you to small errors you might miss with your eyes alone, but it will also help you identify run-on sentences, places that need commas (i.e., pauses), etc.

9. Every paper, exegetical or otherwise, needs an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. These three sections function essentially to tell us what you’re going to say, to say it, and to tell us what you said, respectively.

- The thesis of your paper should be clear, obvious, and located within the first 1-3 paragraphs (i.e., the introduction).
- Consider structuring your introduction like an upside-down pyramid, making more general statements at first and narrowing to the thesis statement.

10. An exegetical paper is not a sermon. In an exegetical paper, you make a claim about the text. In a sermon, the text makes a claim on you.