



The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

I. Faculty Information



Name: Dr. James D. Dvorak (you can address me as “Dr. D.” or “Jim”)

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II. Dr. Dvorak’s Christian Worldview and Teaching Philosophy

Christian Worldview

God created human beings with “minds,” i.e., with the capacity for reasoning, thinking, knowing. Furthermore, he expected human beings to use their minds to the glory of God. However, as the result of the fall of humankind (cf. [Gen 3](#)) and the introduction of sin into the world, not all knowledge is valuable and not all things are worth knowing or even contemplating, especially if those things detract from the glory of God or lead a person away from God and his purposes. Thus, an indispensable part of *Christian* education is to teach learners how to think critically about the information with which they are presented, in order that they may discern what is good and what is not, what is valuable/beneficial and what is not, and what is God-glorifying and what is not—that in “test[ing] everything” learners may “hold on to what is good and keep away from every form of evil” (1 Thess 5:21–22).

Teaching Philosophy

It’s unclear whether the following quotation is from John Dewey, though it is often attributed to him; regardless, it summarizes concisely what I believe to be the purpose of teaching and of education in general:

The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think—rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men.

One value position expressed in this quotation is teaching involves not only the transmission of information about the subject matter but also teaching models/frameworks for making sense of that information, as well as the critical and creative skills necessary for formulating new hermeneutical/interpretive frameworks as needed. As Robert Harris put it, “Education . . . is about learning how to think” (Robert A. Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning* [Eugene, OR:

Cascade, 2004], 12). It is about enabling people to “test everything; hold on to what is good; keep away from every form of evil” (1 Thess 5:21–22).

In terms of teaching practice, I try to find high-impact teaching practices and learning activities that create an environment in which students have the potential to think critically and creatively, to “engage knowledge actively, demanding justification for it, looking into the process of its construction to see what underlying assumptions it is built upon, and how reasonable was the process of inference that led to it” (Harris, *The Integration of Faith and Learning*, 12).

III. Course Description

This course offers a careful study of two New Testament letters that are not often taught or preached. Emphasis is placed on exercising principled interpretation of these letters in their original context, but questions of application in contemporary context is also a significant element in this course.

This course is offered to students in the MDiv, MTS, MATM, MACSC, Cert CS, and, with special permission, DPT students. It may be used toward specializations in Biblical Studies (BS) and Pastoral Studies (PS).

IV. Course Delivery Mode

This semester-long course will be delivered entirely online *asynchronously*, which means that there are no “live” class sessions on Zoom or in person. All weekly activities (readings, assignments, etc.) are assigned at the beginning of each week (of course, you can see the tentative schedule below) and are due at the end of each week. **A “week” in this course runs from 12:00 AM Monday to 11:59 PM on Sunday EDT/EST.** Lessons will be produced and delivered in various ways, largely through video but sometimes through other media/means. All assignments and artifacts must be submitted via A2L. Do not submit assignments to me by email unless I instruct you to do so. If you have any issues with A2L or any of the tools that I use, contact me right away.

V. Course Objectives

Knowing

- Describe the key contextual features—both context of situation, context of culture, and co-text—in which the texts of 2 Peter and Jude were written and that constrain their meaning(s)
- Utilize discourse analysis (a form of Systemic-Functional Linguistic DA called Appraisal Theory) to identify values (interpersonal/orientational meaning) in the letters
- Recognize key resources regarding 2 Peter and Jude in the academic and pastoral literature

Being

- Articulate the formative values of 2 Peter and Jude and how they fit in or contribute to one’s statement of faith—or how one struggles to see how they fit or contribute (personal perspective)

- Express how 2 Peter and Jude are formative for the life of the church in contemporary context and should not be neglected in preaching and teaching (corporate perspective)

Doing

- Engage and dialogue with the text of 2 Peter and Jude as well as the secondary literature, being able to distinguish between academic and pastoral resources and being able to weigh what resources, in either category, are of an appropriate level of quality
- Analyze the text of 2 Peter and of Jude using a particular discourse analytical methodology
- Write and present on one's academic and/or pastoral research and application to an appropriate audience

VI. Course Resources

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Required Technology ([see the MDC Educational Technology Help Page](#))

- a functional, reliable, and up-to-date laptop or desktop computer
- a *reliable* high speed internet connection
- Google Chrome or Firefox browser – these work the best with some of the tech I will be using; actually, it's probably best to have multiple browsers installed in case you run into any issues with any one of them
- an app to record screen + webcam videos (with audio, of course) for presentations; one option that is free to you while you are a student (with your MacID username and password) is to go to <https://macvideo.ca>, log in, click "Add New," and select either Web Recorder or Kaltura Capture to record (there's a little setup involved with Kaltura but not too much); once a video is recorded you can share it via MacVideo (sort of like YouTube), either via link or embed code or directly in A2L (e.g., in a discussion forum)
- Good quality microphone—in most cases, especially with PCs (MacBook mics are generally ok), it's better to use an external USB mic than the built-in mic on your laptop; if it's within your budget, I highly recommend YETI Blue mics
- High resolution webcam if one is not already built into your laptop

Required Books/Readings

A "required" book or reading is one that you should have in your possession or have ready access to at all times during the course. A "recommended" resource is one that you should seriously consider having in your possession, but it is not required that you do so. Please note that although readings assignments will be primarily from the required textbooks, you will also on occasion be assigned readings from resources on the recommended list. On such occasions, I will do my best to ensure that the resource is available to you online via Mills Library, DTL, or A2L. It is also possible that a reading is assigned from a resource that is *not* listed here or in the select

bibliography. In such a case, these reading assignments will be posted to the A2L course shell or otherwise linked to (Mills or DTL or other).

deSilva, David A. "Jude and 2 Peter." Pages 865–84 in *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004. [[available on DTL](#)]

Dvorak, James D. "Counter-Hegemonic Strategies in 2 Peter: The More Reliable Prophetic Word Versus 'Plastic' Words." *Dialogismos* 6 (2022): 55-74. [[available online](#)]

———. *The Interpersonal Metafunction in 1 Corinthians 1–4: The Tenor of Toughness*. LBS 19. Leiden: Brill, 2021. (mainly chs. 1–2) [[available online](#)]

Neyrey, Jerome H. *2 Peter, Jude*. Anchor Bible Commentary 37C. New York: Doubleday, 1993. [[available on DTL](#)]

Recommended Books

See the select bibliography in the A2L course site or [here](#) (same in both locations). I will periodically add items to this bibliography, so be sure to view it at regular intervals throughout the course. I have provided links in the bibliography to as many of the items as I could find available in full text online, either through Mills Library or DTL (sometimes elsewhere).

VII. Course Grading Scale and Activity/Assignment Weights

Grading Scale

Percent Grade	*Letter Grade	Grade Point (12pt scale)	Grade Point (4pt scale)	Grading Guidelines
90–100	A+	12	4.0	for work displaying mastery of the subject matter, creativity, and individualized integration of insights and their relationship(s)
85–89	A	11	4.0	
80–84	A-	10	3.7	
77–79	B+	9	3.3	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
73–76	B	8	3.0	
70–72	B-	7	2.7	
67–69	C+	6	2.3	for work which meets basic course requirements but demonstrates a low level of comprehension
63–66	C	5	2.0	
60–62	C-	4	1.7	
57–59	D+	3	1.3	for work that falls below minimum standards
53–56	D	2	1.0	
50–52	D-	1	0.7	
0–49	F	0	0	unsatisfactory work and/or failure to meet course requirements

*Note that in order to earn credit for this course, you must pass with a grade higher than a C+ (i.e., B- or better). Please see the appropriate handbook for more information about the grading scale, esp. if you are an Advanced Elective (e.g., DPT) student.

Assignment Category Weights

Category	Weight
Weekly Readings & Viewings and Occasional Formative Assignments	5%
Weekly Online Discussions	20%

Weekly Assignments (in addition to discussions)	15%
Writing Assignments	30%
Presentation Assignments	30%
	100%

VIII. Course Requirements and Expectations

Advanced Elective Students: Students taking this course for Advanced Elective credit (e.g., DPT) will be provided with a syllabus supplement outlining additional requirements that they must meet to receive credit towards their degree program. Advanced Elective students can expect their course requirements to include doctoral levels of reading and research-supported writing, as well as a presentation of their research in a format appropriate to the course. For any questions about what to expect for Advanced Elective requirements in this particular course, please contact the course instructor. **Note:** The syllabus supplement will be made available no sooner than ten days after enrollment in the course. Advanced Elective students are encouraged to register for this course as early as possible to ensure they know their course requirements well in advance of the course start date.

Expectations and Requirements for ALL STUDENTS Regardless of Program or Specialization

– Presence and Meaningful Participation

Your presence and participation in this course are expected. You are graduate students, so I will not condescendingly try to coax you to attend and participate by attaching a percentage of the overall final grade to this course. I know from many years of experience that low levels of presence and participation tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades.

What constitutes “presence” (attendance) and “participation” in an asynchronous course needs definition. You must establish a record of participation in academically related activities to meet the expected level of attendance and meaningful participation. Be aware that merely logging into the online class is *not*, by itself, sufficient as a demonstration of attendance and participation by the student. “Academically related activities” certainly includes participation in and completion of the course requirements that are described below. Additionally, just as students are expected to engage with the course content/materials throughout the week outside of the learning management system (A2L), so also students are expected to engage with one another in formative dialogue “outside of class.” This is an important part of belonging to and maintaining a community of learning and is a staple ingredient in what constitutes “presence.”

– Online Etiquette

It is critical in any MDC class that students show respect for their classmates and the instructor. This is even truer in the online environment because many of the non-verbal cues that we use to interpret what a person is communicating are not present online (except in video posts). Therefore, it is especially critical that we all remain mindful of how our words will be interpreted by those who are reading them. As the instructor of the course, it is my

responsibility to monitor communications to ensure that all students feel comfortable expressing their views in a respectful manner. Much of this course is devoted to the interpretation of Scripture. Invariably there will be disagreements; these disagreements must be discussed and negotiated in a respectful manner. This applies to individual and group communications involving me and the others enrolled in the course. I expect that you will give significant thought to your postings, be they audio, video, or text. Excessive postings are also frowned upon because these amount to dominating the discussion. I reserve the right to ask students to take a step back to allow others discussion time if I feel that an individual is dominating the discussion. In your responses, please try to be clear which point your response refers to. Students who violate guidelines may be dismissed from class.

– *Weekly Readings & Viewings and Occasional Formative Assessments (5%)*

Each week you will be assigned some number of readings, typically more than one, from primary and secondary sources. You will also be assigned some number of audio/video presentations that pertain to the week's topic(s) (I have created my own video player, which also doubles as an index of videos, which you can access via A2L or [here](#)). **Readings and viewings should be completed by Wednesday of each week**, so that you have time to participate fully in and contribute meaningfully to the online discussions about the subject matter. Additionally, you will need to complete these readings and viewings to complete other course activities (e.g., discussions, formative assessments, etc.).

Formative assessments of various kinds (e.g., three-sentence summaries, minute essays, etc.) will be used at various points throughout the course with some built into the course content itself. These are designed to measure at least two things: (1) whether you are reading/viewing the course materials and (2) whether you are comprehending the course materials. That these are called “formative” assessments implies that, when necessary, I will provide further remedial instruction to those who might be struggling with comprehension of the materials—and I am completely fine with doing so as needed.

– *Weekly Online Discussions (20% of Final Grade)*

Each week there will be an asynchronous discussion forum that corresponds to the week's reading assignments and video posts. **You should consider how to tailor your responses to your specialization (BS/PS).** Within each forum will be one or more topics, and each topic may have one or more discussion prompt/question. **All initial responses to the prompts (and preferably responses to others' responses) are to be audio or video (preferably video).** You may use text responses, but sparingly (most video streaming platforms nowadays, including MacVideo automatically create closed captions). Please note, however, that posts are not scored on one's technological abilities; they are scored primarily based on the quality of their content using an *analytic rubric* (rubric is posted in A2L course site).

– *Weekly Assignments (in Addition to Discussions) (15% of Final Grade)*

In this category are various sorts of assignments that are directly related to the topic(s) of study each week. These may include (but are not limited to) short writing assignments, short presentation assignments, various types of research assignments (e.g., finding and summarizing quality academic and/or pastoral resources related to the topic, etc.). These are assigned at the beginning of the week along with the reading and videos and due at the end of the week (exact due dates will be posted in A2L).

– *Major Writing Assignments (30% of Final Grade)*

Biblical Studies Specialization and Exegetical Component

Research/Exegetical Paper (8000–10,000 words, following [MDC style guide](#) meticulously) about a text of one's choice from either 2 Peter or Jude or a theme that spans both letters (*one's choice of text/topic should be approved by Dr. Dvorak prior to writing the paper*).

Topics for consideration include but are not limited to:

- introductory issues related to 2 Peter, Jude (e.g., authorship, date, the use of apocryphal works by each [1 Enoch, Assumption of Moses], text critical issues, relationship of the two letters to each other), features of the context of situation (or historical context more broadly), context of culture
- interpretive methodology (e.g., matters related to discourse analysis [including ideational/presentation, interpersonal/orientational, and/or textual/organizational meaning], intertextuality, etc.) with sample application of method to texts in 2 Peter or Jude
- biblical-theological themes that appear in 2 Peter or Jude, demonstrating with solid methodology how those themes are generated textually and what value(s) they promote and/or demote

If you have other ideas, please discuss with Dr. Dvorak before getting started.

I will be paying special attention not only to the content and argument of your paper, but also to how well you follow the MDC style guide, your statement of thesis, theory/model/method, the kinds of resources you marshal in support of your thesis (esp. the “academic” quality), and the like. In short, strive to write something of publishable quality.

Pastoral Studies Specialization

An *expository* sermon manuscript (20 to 25 minute sermon), from either 2 Peter or Jude. You must demonstrate in your manuscript (via footnotes and an annotated bibliography) that you have “done your homework,” so to speak, on the texts you are interpreting and preaching. By this I mean that you need to show that you have worked with the primary text (original language if you have access to Greek), the academic literature (not merely commentaries, either), and the pastoral literature so that you are presenting sermons that have substance and that challenge church members to think deeply as well as to encourage them to change their lives as needed. I am a firm believer that when one enters worship service, she or he should not check her or his head at the door (I also believe strongly that when one enters the seminary/grad school classroom, one should not check their heart at the door).

– *Major Presentation Assignments (30% of Final Grade)*

Biblical Studies Specialization

Twenty to twenty-five minute “academic conference” presentation on some aspect of 2 Peter or Jude. This presentation is to be on a topic **NOT** written about in the research or exegetical paper (see above), although it could cover something tangential to or that has grown out of the research/exegetical paper.

Imagine that you have volunteered to present a paper at MDC Linguistics Circle or TRS—or perhaps that you have had a paper proposal accepted at ETS or SBL—on some topic related

to 2 Peter or Jude (e.g., intertextual references to 1 Enoch or Assumption of Moses). The assignment here is to write up the presentation paper (something that you could read in 25 minutes or less), much like a manuscript, but with footnotes and bibliography as appropriate. Then, create PowerPoint (or keynote or Google slides) slides for the presentation and record yourself (screen recording with your “talking head” in the corner for at least some of the recording [if possible]) presenting the paper. NOTE: in real life (“IRL” as the kids say 😊) at ETS and SBL people typically just read their papers with no slides; however, I want you to *present* your papers. You will submit to Dr. Dvorak (via a specific assignment in A2L) the link to the video (on MacVideo), the PowerPoint (or other) slides, and the paper/essay.

Pastoral Studies Specialization

Twenty minute “pastoral conference” presentation on the importance of preaching/teaching 2 Peter and/or Jude in a church context.

Imagine that you have been invited to address a group of pastors or, perhaps, a denominational group about some current issue in the church or in culture about which 2 Peter and/or Jude has something to say. Write up a manuscript of your presentation, create PowerPoint (or alternative presentation software) slides, and use an app to record your presentation (screen video + webcam). Upload the video to MacVideo. Submit the video link, the slides, and your manuscript to Dr. Dvorak via A2L (there will be a specific assignment where you will upload all of these materials).

IX. Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week	Dates	Topic (specific assignments and due dates are posted in A2L)
1	Sep 9–15, 2024	Introduction to the course; Introduction to interpretive methodology
2	Sep 16–22, 2024	Interpretive methodology; Intro to 2 Peter and Jude
3	Sep 23–29, 2024	Intro to 2 Peter and Jude
4	Sep 30–Oct 6, 2024	Jude 1–2; 3–4; 5–7
5	Oct 7–13, 2024	Jude 8–13; 14–16
6	Oct 14–20, 2024	READING WEEK – no new material presented
7	Oct 21–27, 2024	Jude 17–19; 20–23; 24–25
8	Oct 28–Nov 3, 2024	2 Peter 1:1–2; 1:3–11
9	Nov 4–10, 2024	2 Peter 1:1–21
10	Nov 11–17, 2024	2 Peter 2:1–2; 4–11
11	Nov 18–25, 2024	ETS/SBL (Nov 20–26) (Dr. D. out of town but you still have work to do) 2 Peter 2:12–22
12	Nov 25–Dec 1, 2024	2 Peter 3:1–7; 8–9
13	Dec 2–8, 2024	2 Peter 3:10–13; 14–16; 17–18
14	Dec 9–13, 2024	Wrapping up

X. Course Policies.

It is the responsibility of the student to consult the student handbook(s)/catalogue for additional institutional policies.

Style – All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses, <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in points/grade reductions.

Communication –

- *Email* – the best way to communicate with me, aside from speaking to me directly at class meetings, is by email (dvorakj@mcmaster.ca). My personal policy is to respond to the messages you send to me within 24 hours of receiving them. I am not always able to fulfill this ideal; nevertheless, I do my best to let you know that I have received your message(s) and that I will respond as soon as I can.
- *A2L* – I will make extensive use of Avenue to Learn (A2L) in this course; it will be the primary hub for all course content and course communication. **It is *your responsibility* to log into the system regularly to check for announcements, course content, and course activities.**
- *Phone* – You may call my office phone (905-525-9140 x24518) if you need to. If you get my voicemail, please leave a message and I will do my best to return your call.
- *Virtual Meetings* – since this is an asynchronous online course, I will not have standard office hours. However, I will meet with any of you by appointment as needed. Please contact me or Ms. Melanie McGlynn (mcglynnm@mcmaster.ca) via email to set up an appointment.

Illness Policy – If you need to miss any part of the course due to illness, please contact me as soon as you can to make sure that you do not get behind in the course content (and, where applicable, assignments are due). Although course content will remain available from week to week to the end of the course, do not assume that you did miss something important. Communicating with me is in your best interest.

Academic Honesty – Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI attempt do such work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool (e.g., Grammarly) to help you “tidy up” your English grammar, usage, and mechanics—

especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content *as if you created it* is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

AODA – In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Gender Inclusive Language – McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

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