



McMaster Divinity
College

GREEK SYNTAX

NT 3P1073

McMaster Divinity College
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Fall 2025
Friday 2:00–3:50pm



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Today, it is possible for preachers and teachers to examine the Greek New Testament using many different resources (including commercial software, free websites, AI models, written commentaries, etc.). Yet responsible users of these tools still need an understanding of Greek grammar, including not just the morphology of individual words but also the syntax that makes entire Greek sentences meaningful. Ultimately, then, responsible interpretation of both primary and secondary texts requires the ability to evaluate syntactic claims responsibly. And for those who do hope to sight-read Greek, learning common syntactic constructions is the next step once the individual words can be recognized.

Each module will begin on Wednesday and end on Tuesday evening. You will begin with an intro video and some assigned reading. These will describe and explain the syntax of Greek. You will then complete some exercises on A2L, with the help of a weekly tutorial meeting. These will review your introductory Greek (i.e. vocabulary and parsing) and your emerging understanding of Greek syntax. They will also force you to find and discuss some examples from the NT, so that you can practice learning to recognize and interpret actual wordings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through their active participation in this course, students will:

KNOWING

- Know some of the most frequent inflections in the New Testament;
- Know how individual words combine in order to make meaningful units;
- Know the main grammatical choices that enable the construction of Greek wordings;

BEING

- Become self-aware as a modern reader of the Bible, recognizing the antiquity of the texts;
- Dispense with over-confidence (or lack of confidence) concerning knowledge of the biblical languages, adopting instead an attitude of life-long learning;

DOING

- Be able to talk intelligently about the structure of a specific wording by invoking alternative wordings (i.e. explain both *what* the wording means and *how* it means what it means);
- Be able to move cautiously from an analysis of Greek grammar to a preliminary understanding of an actual passage of scripture.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This is a graduate-level seminar, so students are expected to attend class and to participate in class discussions. Students who consistently fail to attend class will not be eligible for a passing grade in the course. If an absence is unavoidable, please email me in advance to explain your situation.

In addition, students are required to complete all of the course assignments. Failure to complete an assignment may serve as grounds for failure of the course. All assignments must be formatted according to the MDC Style Guide (i.e. standard page layout, appropriate citation formatting, proper spelling, etc.). Written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn as Word documents (.doc, .docx). Unless alternative arrangements are made in advance, a penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all late assignments. Late submissions (even ones with an extension) will not receive detailed comments from the professor and may not be returned at the same time as work submitted on time. Assignments cannot be submitted after the final week of class without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (mdcreg@mcmaster.ca).

MODULE MATERIALS AND DISCUSSIONS (20%)

Each week on Wednesday, a video will be made available on A2L along with an excerpt from the forthcoming book, *Syntax: How Sentences Make Meaning*. **You will review these materials before the weekly tutorial (i.e. prior to Friday at 2pm)**, then come to class prepared to ask questions. Because the material in this course is very abstract, tutorial discussions will be a vital part of your learning. We will look at examples and endeavour to make the material understandable in relation to the goal of understanding the Greek New Testament. Following each tutorial, **you will report on A2L your attendance and the quality of your preparedness**. These self-reports will be a factor in your final grade, along with your oral participation in tutorial discussions.

EXERCISES (10 x 6% = 60%)

Throughout the semester, there will be ten online modules that include accompanying exercises. **These exercises must be completed on A2L before the end of each module (i.e. prior to Tuesday evening at 11:59pm)**. Each module will include a small vocabulary and parsing component, in which you will parse and/or define twenty (20) words drawn from the most common inflected forms in John 9 and 1 John

(flashcard sets will be available on A2L). Following this, you will be asked to explore the Greek New Testament with a particular focus on the grammar topic(s) for the week. The goal of these exercises is to cultivate two skills: (1) the ability to identify particular kinds of wording; and (2) the ability to discuss with clarity what each particular kind of wording can contribute to the meaning of a text. If you have questions about a particular exercise, please email me or post your question to the weekly discussion forum.

FINAL EXAM (20%)

For the final “open book” examination, you will be given a passage of Greek and some questions like the ones in the exercises. You may consult academic resources to answer the exam questions, provided you cite any sources that discuss the specific Greek text in view (you need not cite general information regarding the Greek language, whether from the class readings or other general resources). The exam is designed to ensure that you can recognize important grammatical constructions as well as explain how they are meaningful. **The take-home exam must be uploaded to A2L by December 12th at 11:59pm.**

GRADING SUMMARY

Module Materials & Discussions	20%
Module Exercises	60%
Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

TEXTBOOKS

All students are required to possess (or have access to) the following:

A standard edition of the Greek New Testament, such as the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th–28th ed.) or the UBS *Greek New Testament* (4th–5th ed.).

Land, Christopher D. *Syntax: How Sentences Make Meaning*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, forthcoming. **[Draft chapters to be disseminated via A2L]**

All students are recommended to possess one of the following:

Mathewson, David, and Elodie Ballantine Emig. *Intermediate Greek Grammar: Syntax for Students of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.

Porter, Stanley E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994

All required textbooks 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.

SCHEDULE

NB: Every effort will be made to avoid cancelling classes, but if a tutorial must be cancelled then an announcement will be posted on Avenue to Learn (A2L).

Module Dates (Wednesday– Tuesday)	Video & Reading Topics (Wednesday @ 6am– Friday @ 2pm)	Zoom Tutorial (Friday @ 2pm) <small>*Professor in Boston (GA as Teacher)</small>	Weekly Exercise (Due Tuesday @ 11:59pm)
Sep 10–16	Introduction to the Study of Sentences	Sep 12	
Sep 17–23	Breaking Apart Sentences	Sep 19	Exercise #1
Sep 24–30	Sentences & Clauses	Sep 26	Exercise #2
Oct 1–7	Verb Phrases	Oct 3	Exercise #3
Oct 8–14	Nominal Phrases & Ad Phrases	Oct 10	Exercise #4
Oct 15–21	Reading Week (No Class)		
Oct 22–28	Complex Verbal Constructions	Oct 24	Exercise #5
Oct 29–Nov 4	Complex Nominal Constructions	Oct 31	Exercise #6
Nov 5–11	Complex Adverbial Constructions	Nov 7	Exercise #7
Nov 12–18	Complex Entities	Nov 14	Exercise #8
Nov 19–25	Coordination & Apposition	Nov 21*	Exercise #9
Nov 26–Dec 2	Intonation, Word Order, and Ellipsis	Nov 28	Exercise #10
Dec 3–9	Exam Review	Dec 5	
Dec 10–12	Exam Week (No Class)		

STATEMENT ON 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, including AI) 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.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

A useful guide to avoiding plagiarism is the Harvard Guide to Using Sources:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

In this course, we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection and the student's continuation in the course represents his or her consent to the use of this service. If a student has objections to the use of this service, alternate arrangements for assignment submission must be made with the professor in advance of the assignment deadlines.

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 do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or 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.

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the latest edition of the McMaster Divinity College *Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*:

<https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

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).

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.

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the respective professor. This syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.