

Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

CHTH 6R1020

Winter Term 2027 | Tuesday 9:00am – 10:50am | Room: TBA

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 (“Dr. D.”)

Email: dvorakj@mcmaster.ca

Virtual office hours:

- Tuesdays 11:00am – 1:00pm EST (book a 15-minute slot during this timeframe)
- Thursdays 8:30am – 10:30am EST (book a 15-minute slot during this timeframe)

Click here for instructions to book a 15-minute time slot during Dr. D.’s office hours. **Please bear in mind that I live in Central Time Zone, so I am 1 hour later than MDC time.**

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.

The value position it expresses is that teaching involves not only the delivery of content but also—and perhaps more importantly—frameworks for understanding and evaluating both the ideas of others and my own. I believe that instruction involves *both* the transmission of information about the subject matter *and* 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.

III. Course Description

This course is designed to help prepare students for the challenges of teaching. Teaching requires an understanding of students in social, emotional, physical, and intellectual dimensions; every aspect of a student's life is integrated in the learning experience of each student. Teaching and learning may take place in physical and/or virtual environments, each of which offers benefits and challenges. One must consider these factors during the instructional design phase. This course covers both theory and practice of teaching, learning, and course design.

IV. Course Objectives

Knowing...

- *Define* key terms in educational theory
- *Examine* seven fundamental principles of learning
- *Consider* various student-centered methods of enacting the seven fundamental principles of learning
- *Identify* the pros and cons that come with the use of technology in teaching and learning

Being...

- *Articulate* a Christian worldview and philosophy of teaching
- *Establish* appropriate habits for developing into a master teacher
- *Nurture* the internal motivation required to be a lifelong learner
- *Develop* technological savvy and creativity that will foster and bolster teaching and learning

Doing...

- *Develop* a syllabus for a course of your choice in both face-to-face mode and online (asynchronous) mode
- *Design* lessons that integrate sound learning theory and demonstrating proven teaching practices and that can be delivered multi-modally
- *Teach* lessons that demonstrate a student-centered approach
- *Provide* meaningful feedback on lessons
- *Evaluate* the use of technology in teaching and learning

V. Course Resources

The three books listed below are the **primary, required** books for this course (you should purchase them). However, I expect you to read and consult the other resources in the bibliography online (<https://link.ntgreekprof.com/AjwKJE>) as references. Occasionally, I will assign readings from the broader list of sources (you will be notified of this in the A2L course site). I will do my best to note when resources are available electronically from Mills Library or elsewhere online.

NOTICE: 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, students 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.

Lovett, Marsha C., et. al. *How Learning Works: Eight Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. Indianapolis: Jossey-Bass, 2023. [ISBN: 9781119861690 ([accessible online via Mills Library](#))]

Merriam, Sharan B., and Lisa M. Baumgartner. *Learning in Adulthood*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2020. [ISBN: 978-1-119-49048-7]

Ott, Craig. *Teaching and Learning Across Cultures: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. [ISBN: 978-1-5409-6310-9]

VI. Course Grading Scale and Assignment Weights

Grading Scale

Percent Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Point (12pt scale)	Grade Point (4pt scale)	Grading Guidelines
90–100	A+	12	4	for work displaying mastery of the subject matter, creativity, and individualized integration of insights and their relationship(s)
85–89	A	11		
80–84	A-	10		
77–79	B+	9	3	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
73–76	B	8		
70–72	B-	7		

Important Notes:

- Letter grades are given for all courses. Plus and minus signs indicate work of higher or lower quality within the guidelines for each letter grade. Some courses, such as Theological German, may be evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis.
- In the MA and PhD programs, any course below B- does not count for credit and must be repeated (if it is a required course) or replaced with a course in which the student has earned a passing grade.
- Students who fail a course are required to repeat that course (if the course is required in the program) or replace the course with another where they have earned a passing grade. The student will be placed on academic probation until the failed course is repeated or replaced. Failing a second course while still on probation will result in a process of academic review by the VP Academic and may result in denial of further registration in the program and dismissal from the College.
- The absolute deadline for all course assignments is the last day of classes for the term. Any missing assignments will receive a grade of "0" unless the student has already been granted an incomplete or deferral in advance (see policy for "Incompletes and Deferrals").
- Once the final grade sheet has been submitted, the course instructor may not change a grade without consultation with the VP Academic or designate.

Activity/Assignment Weights

Attendance and Participation	0%
Syllabus assignments	25%
Learning design and lesson preparation	25%
Lesson delivery	25%
Writing assignments	20%
Teaching and Learning Technology (TLT) assignments	5%
	100%

VII. Course Requirements/Activities

Due dates for all requirements/activities are posted in A2L.

- *Attendance and Participation* (0%). Punctual attendance and participation in class *are expected*. Participation means engaging in any in-class discussion about topics to be covered; asking questions; responding to others' questions; etc.
- *Syllabus Creation* (25%). Each student will produce a syllabus for a course in the subject matter and topic of their own choosing (within biblical/theological studies). Here are the basic demographics of the course that you should consider:
 - Audience: Thirteen 3rd year (junior) and 4th year (senior) *undergraduate* biblical or theological studies students representing multiple cultures.
 - Mode: You will prepare *two* versions of your syllabus, one for an in-person course and one for an online (asynchronous) course. The major differences will be in the types of assignments and, likely, the use of educational technologies.

Emphasis will be placed on writing measurable objectives and appropriate activities/assignments that are intentionally connected.

- *Learning design and lesson preparation* (25%). Each of these assignments will be submitted on their due date via A2L.
 - *In-person/classroom lesson* – Each of you will prepare a lesson on a topic of your choice for delivery in an in-person, classroom setting. You should design the lesson for the context described above (under syllabus assignment and a class length of 50 minutes).
 - *Online lesson* – Each of you will prepare a lesson on a topic of your choice for delivery in an online, *asynchronous* setting. You should design the lesson for the context described above. You must produce both a lesson plan and a basic content production plan, which will be shared with your classmates when you make your presentation to the class.
- *Lesson delivery* (20%). Any artifacts that accompany your lessons will be submitted on their due date via A2L. If you have web-based artifacts, you will submit the link(s); if you have physical artifacts (e.g., props, physical illustrations), you will submit photos of these artifacts or links to videos in which you demonstrate the use of these items.
 - *In person* – Each of you will teach the lesson that you designed for the in-person, classroom setting. These lessons will be discussed during class time, much like a paper read in a seminar style class. You will have 20 minutes to give as much of your mock lesson as will fit in that timespan.
 - *Online* – Three elements will be required for your online lessons (I will produce and post a video to A2L in which I provide more information about the online lesson assignment):

- Each of you, in a video you produce for me to view, will describe the basics of the lesson and how you will teach your topic in the online, asynchronous environment (including such things as how you will “chunk” it into smaller pieces and implement other kinds of assessments and such in between your short video lectures).
 - Each of you must prepare a lesson plan and a production plan (what content will you produce or find and vet for your lesson)
 - Each of you must produce a significant element of your lesson and post it online in an LMS that I will designate (I will communicate this via A2L); i.e., you will produce some form of presentation and at least one assessment to illustrate your creative and appropriate use of technology.
- *Writing assignments* (25%). There are three relatively short writing assignments in this class. Each of these will be submitted on their due date via A2L. Each must carefully follow the MDC style guide.
 - 2500-word essay in which you offer a definition of learning that resonates with you. Your definition must be backed by learning theory.
 - Describe the primary (even if broad) learning theory paradigm in which your definition is rooted (e.g., behaviourism, cognitivism, or some hybrid) and explain such a foundation.
 - Also address how you view the practice of teaching as it relates to your theory of learning.
 - 3000-word essay on one aspect of Adult Learning (andragogy) of your choice. The basic requirements of this essay are:
 - it should define adult learning (andragogy)
 - it should describe how andragogy relates to but is distinct from pedagogy;
 - it must discuss at least one social or cultural factor that influences the practice of andragogical principles.
 - 1000-word Christian worldview and teaching philosophy statement. As an example of a short version for inserting into syllabi, see my statements above in this syllabus. Short versions for syllabi are based on longer, well thought out values and beliefs. So, at the end of your essay (part of your 1000 words), provide the shorter summary form that you could put into syllabi.
- *Teaching and Learning Technology (TLT) assignments* (5%). Each person in the class will submit (via A2L) the following TLT assignments:
 - A video (screen video/recording is preferred over a video taken with your phone, unless you are demonstrating a technology that includes a physical object like a “clicker”). Most of the time, the TLT is an app or software or web app/utility, etc., which is perfect for screen recordings.
 - In the video, you must describe the basic function of the tech tool or app. Basically, tell what it is and generally what it does and how it works.
 - You must describe how it would be beneficial for *teaching*.
 - You must describe how it would be beneficial for *learning*.
 - Where possible, connect the use of the tool to a principle of learning discussed in Merrian & Baumgartner or in Lovett, et al.

- The [TOPR](#) website or similar resource could be useful for you here.
- Here is an example of the kind of technology tool that I want you to look for. When I taught beginning Greek, which I taught asynchronously online for many years, I would use tech tools like [Explain Everything](#) or [ShowMe](#) to demonstrate such things as parsing (often following the GRR model [we will talk about this model later in the course]). I also used my web programming background and experience to create my own [alphabet tool](#) (it's not very fancy by today's standards, but it certainly did what it needed to).

VIII. Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments Due at class time
Theory			
1	Jan 12, 2027	Intro to class (syllabus) What is learning? What is Teaching?	• Syllabus • Merriam and Baumgartner, ch. 3 • Lovett, et al., "Introduction" • Ott, ch. 1
2	Jan 19	Andragogy (Adult Learning) ○ What is andragogy? ○ Presumptions and assumptions	• Merriam and Baumgartner, chs. 1, 3, 4, 5
3	Jan 26	Andragogy (Adult Learning) ○ Going deeper into the theory ○ Complementary theories and models	• Merriam and Baumgartner, chs. 6–8 • Ott, chs. 3–6 What is learning? Essay due by end of week
4	Feb 2	Andragogy (Adult Learning) ○ Complementary theories and models	• Merriam and Baumgartner, chs. 12–15 TLT 1 Due
5	Feb 9	Andragogy (Adult Learning) • Complementary theories and models	• Merriam and Bierema, chs. 11–12 • Ott, ch. 2, 7–10 Adult learning essay due by end of week
Practice			
6	Feb 16	No class: Reading Week	n/a
7	Feb 23	Learning and Adjusting to Institutional Culture What's a syllabus? What goes in a syllabus?	Christian Worldview and Teaching Philosophy due by end of week

8	March 2	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students: <i>Prior Knowledge and Knowledge Organization</i>	Lovett, et. al., ch. 2–3 TLT 2 Due
9	March 9	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students: <i>Learner Motivation and Mastery</i>	- Lovett, et. al., ch. 4–5 - Dvorak, “Battling Your Expert Blindspot.” <i>Didaktikos</i> (September 2018) 15-17 [link to full text in Bibliography] In-person and online syllabi due (by end of week);
10	March 16	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students: <i>Feedback</i>	Lovett, et. al., ch. 6 In-person lesson plan due (by end of week)
11	March 23	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students: <i>Course Climate and Self-Directed Learning</i>	Lovett, et. al., ch. 7–8 and Conclusion Online lesson plan & production plan due (by end of week)
12	March 30	In-person lesson presentations	TLT 3 Due
13	April 6	In-person lesson presentations	TLT 4 Due
14	April 13	In-person lesson presentations	Online lesson delivery due (via A2L) by 5pm

IX. Course Policies

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 at least let you know that I have received your message(s) and that I will respond as soon as I can. **Please note** that I live in Central Time Zone, not Eastern Time Zone where MDC is.
- 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.**
- Office visits** – I will maintain office hours two days per week. My virtual office hours are split into 15-minute individual slots during the following weekly timeframes (if you need longer than 15 minutes, let me know and I will try to accommodate you):
Tuesdays: 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM ET
Thursdays: 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM ET
To reserve a slot, you must use the Outlook Calendar system to see what is currently open and book your time.

1. **Open Outlook Calendar** (via the web version or desktop app) using your institutional student account.
2. **Create a new meeting invite** and add my email address dvorakj@mcmaster.ca to the attendee list.
3. **Add a Zoom link:** Click the Zoom icon in your toolbar to automatically add a Zoom meeting link to your invite. [If you do not have this capability, let me know. I will make sure to add a link for the meeting.]
4. **Click “Scheduling Assistant”** at the top of your meeting window.
5. **Navigate to the day you want:**
 - a. On Tuesdays, look at the 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM timeframe.
 - b. On Thursdays, look at the 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM timeframe.
6. **Find an open slot:** You will see my baseline availability marked as "Tentative." Look for a 15-minute block that does not have a dark blue "Busy" bar over it.
7. **Book it:** Adjust your meeting start and end times to match that open 15-minute window (e.g., Tuesday from 11:15 AM to 11:30 AM), add a title like “Office Hours - [Your Name],” and hit Send.

Once you press send, that slot will instantly show as "Busy" to all other students. Both you and I will have the Zoom meeting link right inside our calendar invites when the time comes.

Absence Due to Illness

- If you must miss class due to an illness, you must contact me (via email) as soon as possible to let me know. Likewise, if I should become ill, I will communicate with you via A2L about how we will make up class sessions.
- For the day(s) that you are out of class, it would be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible.

Inclement Weather

- If, on a class meeting day, MDC closes due to inclement weather, we will not have class. If inclement weather strikes here in Iowa and prohibits me from getting online (e.g., I lose power or internet connection or something), I will do my best to let you know what's up and how we will make up for it.

X. Institutional Policies

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresenting the authorship or ownership of written work through deception or other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include copying or using unauthorized aids during tests or examinations; plagiarism, that is, presenting another person's (or generative AI's) words, ideas, data, or creative work as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement and citation; or submitting work for credit in more than one course without instructor permission.

A special note about Generative AI: Students are expected to do their own thinking and write their own papers and assignments. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work. The use of AI to produce content that is then submitted as though it were the student's own work constitutes plagiarism and

is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. While AI tools may be used to correct errors in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI must not be used to translate assignments from a student's native language into English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in the English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

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 student will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments. When referencing biblical texts, students should preserve the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God while using gender-inclusive language when referring to human beings. Biblical quotations should be taken from a gender-inclusive translation such as: NRSVue (2022), NIV (2011), CEB (2011), NLT (1996), or CEV (1995).

Style

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

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to supporting a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations to participate fully in this course must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) of McMaster University. SAS will work directly with the MDC Registrar to ensure reasonably appropriate accommodations are in place. Students with accommodations must use the SAS portal to activate the accommodations relevant to each course at the start of each term in which they are enrolled. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be applied to coursework or activities that have already concluded.

Contact Information:

- Student Accessibility Services General Inquiries: sas@mcmaster.ca
- Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC): sobotar@mcmaster.ca
- MDC Registrar: mdcreg@mcmaster.ca

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class. Students will be kept apprised of any changes.