

The Complete Person: Maturity and Integrity According to James NT 2XJ3 & NT 3XJ3

McMaster Divinity College
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Monday 8:30–10:20am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Martin Luther is infamous for calling the Epistle of James “a right strawy epistle,” but most Christians ignore Luther’s straw man and embrace the Epistle as compelling and perennially relevant. Indeed, people often memorize and cherish the words of James, finding in them a practical yet radical ethic that is akin to Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. In this course, we will explore James’ teachings and reflect upon their relevance for life in the twenty-first century. In particular, we will explore the emphasis that James places on maturity and integrity as hallmarks of the human life lived well.

In addition to the above, this course will provide Pastoral Language students with an opportunity for further engagement with the Greek of the New Testament. In particular, students will learn how to use their knowledge of Greek in sermon preparation without falling into the most typical errors.

SPECIALIZATIONS

Students taking this as a Biblical Studies (BS) course will be encouraged to explore the historical and cultural setting of the Epistle, as well as scholarly debates concerning the interpretation of its contents.

Students taking this as a Pastoral Studies (PS) course will be encouraged to explore how the message of the Epistle is relevant for Christian faith and practice in the 21st century, with a special emphasis placed upon the matters of spiritual maturity and ethical integrity.

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will be encouraged to:

Knowing

- Remember the structure and content of the Epistle of James
- Become familiar with introductory issues and scholarly debates concerning the Epistle
- Understand the major theological and ethical teachings found in the Epistle
- Gain additional exposure to the Greek of the NT (NT 2XJ3 only)
- Learn to avoid common linguistic errors (NT 2XJ3 only)

Being

- Appreciate the importance of participating in critical and respectful discussions concerning biblical texts
- Become sensitive to the historical and cultural environment in which the early church first communicated the gospel
- Become competent interpreters of the New Testament
- Embody the ethical seriousness that is so evident throughout the Epistle of James
- Become cautious interpreters of Greek texts (NT 2XJ3 only)

Doing

- Read books that engage with James in a careful and critical manner
- Take time to reflect on the meaning of James
- Talk intelligently about James
- Discuss how James is relevant to contemporary Christianity
- Take time to examine the Epistle of James in its original language (NT 2XJ3 only)

COURSE PREREQUISITES

Prerequisites for NT 2XJ3: NT 1C03 and NT 1A03, or equivalent.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: Students are required to complete all of the following assignments. No unfinished assignments are permitted. *Each written assignment should be uploaded in Microsoft Word format to the designated Avenue to Learn dropbox. A penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all late assignments. Assignments cannot be submitted after December 14th without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (thomn@mcmaster.ca).*

Primary Reading and Reflection (20%)

Each student will read the Epistle of James and produce five (5) thoughtful journal entries of approximately 400 words each. The topics of the entries are listed in the schedule below (e.g.

Entry #1 = Suffering and Trust [1:2–15]; Entry #2 = Grace and Law [1:16–2:26]; etc.). The entries should not summarize the Epistle’s content but should reflect upon its theological and practical significance. Please avoid getting hung up on minor interpretive details; the goal is to become more conscious of how the text addresses us as modern readers. The journal will be evaluated in terms of depth of awareness, with a view towards self-consciousness (i.e. awareness of one’s self as a product of diverse experiences and influences), other-consciousness (i.e. awareness of the ways in which different people approach their experiences and influences differently), and God-consciousness (i.e. awareness of the One who speaks through the scriptures and who judges our hearts as we read them). The journal entries are due **Sunday, December 11th @ 9:00pm**. For students who are uncertain about what constitutes an effective reflection journal, a detailed grading rubric is available on A2L. If you wish to receive feedback early in the semester, you may email the professor a sample entry.

Secondary Reading and Discussion (10%)

Prior to each class session, students will read some preparatory material (either from a recent commentary on the Epistle of James or from electronic readings made available on A2L). They will then spend the first 20 minutes of class discussing the assigned reading in small groups. There will also be an online discussion board so that students can (if they wish) continue to discuss issues arising from the readings. NB: Students are expected to attend class and to participate in class discussions. If a student consistently fails to attend class, he or she will not be eligible for a passing grade in the course.

Open Letter to the Church (20%)

Drawing upon his or her engagement with the Epistle of James, each student will compose an “open letter” addressed to a well-defined 21st-century Christian community. This community can be a congregation, a denomination, or a geographical region in which there are followers of Jesus.

The letter in question must attempt to influence its readers in a manner similar to the Epistle of James. It must be filled with the major themes of the Epistle of James (i.e. those listed in the schedule: suffering and trust; grace and law; maturity and integrity; wealth and injustice; healing and community). It should not, however, attempt to use “biblish” so as to sound like a Bible translation; rather, the letter should be written in the everyday language of the community being addressed (unless this language is not a variety of English, in which case colloquial English must be used instead!).

A cover page on the assignment should name and briefly describe the specific community that the student is addressing. This should then be followed by an open letter of approximately 2,000 words. In all matters, the letter must follow the “McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses.” It is due on **Monday, December 12th @ 11:59pm**.

Argumentative Essay

During the course of the semester, each student will compose an argumentative essay in which he or she tackles an issue of interpretive significance. The essay will be developed in stages.

Step 1: Passage Selection and Bibliography (5%)

Prior to **Sunday, September 25th @ 9:00pm**, each student must choose a passage from the Epistle of James and prepare a bibliography containing at least ten relevant, academic sources (not including biblical commentaries). Since the goal of this step is to gather resources for the final argumentative essay, the passage needs to be one about which the student can make an argument (i.e. there needs to be an issue with respect to which different positions are taken by different readers). The passage need not be of a specific length, but it must not be more than fifteen (15) verses long.

Step 2: Thesis Statement and Argument Outline (5%)

Prior to **Sunday, October 9th @ 9:00pm**, each student must submit a draft thesis statement and a draft outline of the argument they will make in their final essay (see below). There is no specific length or format required for the outline. The outline must invoke explicit evidence and lay out a logical argument regarding the interpretation of the evidence, including some consideration of alternative views and possible counter-evidence. If quotations are included, the citation information should be included in footnotes, and the assignment should conclude with the most up-to-date version of the student's bibliography.

Step 3: Peer Input (5%)

Once each student has submitted a draft thesis statement and outline, their submission will be randomly distributed to a fellow student in the course. This student will then provide some constructive comments on the thesis statement, outline, and bibliography. These comments should address the structure and content of the argument as well as its clarity and plausibility. They should also make specific recommendations for improving the argument. If additional secondary sources would assist the author of the paper, these should be noted as well. Each student must upload his or her comments to A2L before **Sunday, October 16th @ 9:00pm**.

Step 4: Final Essay (35%)

For the major written assignment in this course, each student will write an argumentative essay that is approximately 3,000 words in length and that follows the "McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses." The paper must be grounded in a specific, well-defined passage from the Epistle of James, and it must incorporate the following three elements: (1) a discussion of the original historical context and the manner in which the passage addresses that context; (2) a comparison between the passage's original historical context and related contexts in the 21st-century; and (3) a discussion of the applicability of the passage to a specific 21st-century context. Although all student papers must include these same elements, the proportion of the paper that should be devoted to each element will vary depending upon the student's specialization:

- ❖ Biblical Studies. Students in the Biblical Studies specialization are required to devote the majority of their paper to studying the biblical text and its ancient context. The essay should focus on scholarly debates regarding the original context of the Epistle (incl. date, author, addressees, etc.), the specific background of the selected passage (e.g. persecution, relationship between James and Paul, illness and healing, etc.), as well as the content and meaning of the passage itself (e.g. textual variants, grammar, logical argumentation, theology, etc.). At the conclusion of their paper, biblical studies students should compare the ancient context with contemporary contexts and then briefly propose some (thoughtful!) contemporary applications.
- ❖ Pastoral Studies. Students in the Pastoral Studies specialization are required to devote one half of their paper to the biblical context and text, with the other half being devoted to comparing ancient and modern contexts and discerning the ongoing pastoral relevance of the biblical text. The essay should reflect deeply and responsibly on how the selected passage in the Epistle informs life and ministry today.

The final essay is due on **Sunday, November 27th @ 9:00pm**. For students who are uncertain about what constitutes an effective argumentative essay, a detailed grading rubric will be made available on A2L.

NT 2XJ3 — Preaching James Using Greek

Students in NT 2XJ3 will complete all of the above assignments with the following differences:

- The student must read the Greek text of James before writing each reflection entry. Also, students should reflect upon their ability to read the Greek and upon how reading the Greek has affected their interaction with the text. If a particularly vexing issue arises and the student is unsure what is happening in the Greek, the journal entry can discuss the Greek and how the student has attempted to figure out what it says (i.e. instead of discussing the assigned themes, the student can opt to discuss the Greek).
- The argumentative essay must deal with the Greek text of the Epistle of James.
- Instead of an open letter, the student must submit a script for a sermon. The sermon must be grounded in a passage from the Epistle of James, and it must responsibly engage with the Greek text in a manner suitable for the stated audience. All other details remain the same (i.e. cover page, length, etc.).

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Due Dates	Assignments
Sep 25 @ 9:00pm	Passage Selection and Bibliography
Oct 9 @ 9:00pm	Thesis Statement and Outline (with Revised Bibliography)
Oct 16 @ 9:00pm	Peer Input
Nov 27 @ 9:00pm	Final Essay (3,000 words)

Dec 11 @ 9:00pm	Journal Entries (400 words each = 2,000 words total)
Dec 12 @ 11:59pm	Open Letter to the Church / Sermon (2,000 words)

GRADING SUMMARY

Primary Reading and Reflection	20%
Secondary Reading and Discussion	10%
Open Letter to the Church/Sermon	20%
Passage Selection and Bibliography	5%
Thesis Statement and Outline	5%
Peer Input	5%
<u>Final Essay</u>	<u>35%</u>
Total	100%

TEXTBOOKS

All students are required to possess an English translation of the New Testament, as well as:

McKnight, Scot. *The Letter of James*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Note: Additional electronic readings will be made available through Avenue to Learn (A2L).

NT 2XJ3 — Preaching James Using Greek

In addition to the above, Greek students are also required to possess the following:

A standard edition of the Greek New Testament, such as the Nestle-Aland (27th or 28th ed.), UBS (4th or 5th ed.).

A suitable Greek–English lexicon (see below).

Students are recommended to possess (or have access to) the following:

Porter, Reed, and O’Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

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

A parsing tool, such as biblewebapp.com, Bibleworks, Logos, or Accordance.

Porter, Stanley E., and Andrew W. Pitts. *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.

Omanson, Roger L. *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON, M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Dates	Seminar Sessions	Assigned Reading
Sep 12	Welcome & Introduction to the Course Some Research Tips Preaching Using Greek (NT 2XJ3 only)	McKnight, Introduction (pp. 1–58) Electronic Readings on A2L
Sep 19	A Brief History of James the Just	
Sep 26	A Brief History of the Epistle of James	
Oct 3	James and Judaism	
Oct 10	Reading Week (No Class)	
Oct 17	James and Jesus	
Oct 24	Is There a Structure to This Text?	
Oct 31	Suffering and Trust (1:2–15)	The Epistle of James McKnight, Commentary (pp. 59–461)
Nov 7	Grace and Law (1:16–2:26)	
Nov 14	Maturity and Integrity (3:1–4:12)	
Nov 21	Essay Writing Tutorial (Professor in San Antonio)	
Nov 28	Wealth and Injustice (4:13–5:12)	
Dec 5	Healing and Community (5:13–20)	
Dec 12	Concluding Reflections (Final Week)	

SUITABLE GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICONS

*Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Danker, Frederick W. *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. [Available @ <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/>] [8th edition available @ <https://archive.org/details/cu31924012909697>]

Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889. [Available @ <https://archive.org/details/intermediategree00lidd>]

*Louw, J.P., and E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989.

Thayer, J.H., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: American Book Company, 1897. [Available @ <https://archive.org/details/04508981.1536.emory.edu>]

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

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>

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

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

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 of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and NIV (2011) are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

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.