

## Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

CHTH 6R1020

Winter Term 2025 | Wednesdays 9:00am – 10:50pm | Room TBA

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*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.*

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### I. Faculty Information



**Name:** Dr. James D. Dvorak

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**Office Phone:** 905-525-9140 x24518

**Office hours:**

- By appointment as needed

### 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 (cf. C. Crumly, et. al., *Pedagogies for Student-Centered Learning, Online and On-ground*, Seminarium Elements [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014], 149); 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.*

Of course, this does not mean I avoid listening to and engaging in dialogue with others or that I will not learn from and present the research of others. Rather, the value position it expresses, to which I subscribe, 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. In other words, I believe instruction involves not only the transmission of information about the subject matter but also

models/frameworks for making sense of that information and the critical and creative skills necessary for formulating new hermeneutical/interpretive frameworks as needed. As Robert Harris put it, “Education is not about memorization; it 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, the literature shows that for students to achieve deep learning and to develop mastery, active learning strategies and practices are *vital* (cf., e.g., Ambrose, et. al., [How Learning Works](#), Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series [San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010], 91–152; Weimer, “More Evidence That Active learning Trumps Lecture,” <http://bit.ly/1FtcYHT>). For this reason, 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

The 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 both 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 items in the short list below are the **primary, required** books for this course. 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.

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](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Knowles, Malcolm S., et. al. *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-367-41765-9]

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

Merriam, Sharan B., and Lisa M. Baumgartner. *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2020. [ISBN: 978-1-119-49048-7]

Merriam, Sharan B., and Laura L. Bierema. *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*. Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014. [ISBN: 978-1-118-13057-5]

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 it is required) 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	20%
Writing assignments	25%
Teaching and Learning Technology (TLT) assignments	5%
	<hr/> 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*. You are doctoral students; I will not treat you like primary/secondary school children by using points/grades as a carrot to lure you to come to and participate in class. 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 of their own choosing. Here are the basic parameters:
  - Audience: Thirteen 3<sup>rd</sup> year (junior) and 4<sup>th</sup> 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, 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* – 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.
  - *Online* – Each of you will describe how you will teach your topic in the online, asynchronous environment. You must share your lesson and production plan, and you must produce at least one element of your plan (e.g., some form of presentation or assessment) to illustrate a creative yet 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.
  - 3500-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. For a possible organizing principle for your paper, see Merriam and Bierema, ch. 2, especially the chart on p. 39.
  - 5000-word essay on an aspect of Adult Learning (andragogy) of your choice (must be approved by Dr. D.). The basic requirements of this essay are: (1) it should define adult learning (andragogy) (2) describe how andragogy relates to but is distinct from pedagogy; (3) discuss at least one social or cultural factor that influences the practice of andragogical principles.
  - 1500-word concise Christian worldview and teaching philosophy statement. As an example, see my statements above in this syllabus. More information and discussion to come in class.
- *Teaching and Learning Technology (TLT) assignments (5%)*. Each person in the class will submit (via A2L) the following:
  - A description (can include photos or other multimedia) of a technology that can be used effectively in teaching and learning in either in-person or online context.
  - An example of the technology in use for teaching and learning (or how you might use the technology for teaching and learning); that is, I want you explicitly to tie the technology to a principled teaching and learning strategy (the [TOPR](#) website or similar resource will be useful for you here).
  - Let me give you an example so that you understand what I am looking 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. I also used my web programming background and experience to create my own [alphabet tool](#).

### VIII. Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments Due at class time
<b>Theory</b>			
1	January 8, 2025	Intro to class (syllabus)  What is learning? What is Teaching?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Knowles, et. al., chs. 6–8</li> <li>• Merriam and Bierema, ch. 2</li> <li>• Ott, ch. 1</li> </ul>
2	January 15, 2025	Andragogy (Adult Learning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is andragogy?</li> <li>○ Presumptions and assumptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowles, et. al., chs. 1–5</li> <li>• Merriam and Bierema, chs. 1, 3</li> <li>• Merriam and Baumgartner, chs. 1, 3, 4, 5</li> </ul>
3	January 22, 2025	Andragogy (Adult Learning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Going deeper into the theory</li> <li>○ Complementary theories and models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merriam and Bierema, chs. 4–6</li> <li>• Merriam and Baumgartner, chs. 6–8</li> <li>• Ott, chs. 3–6</li> </ul> <p><b>What is learning? Essay due by end of week</b></p>
4	January 29, 2025	Andragogy (Adult Learning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complementary theories and models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowles, et. al., chs. 12–14</li> <li>• Merriam and Bierema, chs. 7–10</li> <li>• Merriam and Baumgartner, chs. 12–15</li> </ul>
5	February 5, 2025	Andragogy (Adult Learning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complementary theories and models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merriam and Bierema, chs. 11–12</li> <li>• Ott, ch. 2, 7–10</li> </ul> <p><b>Adult learning essay due by end of week</b></p>
<b>Practice</b>			
6	February 12, 2025	Learning and Adjusting to Institutional Culture What’s a syllabus? What goes in a syllabus?	<b>TLT 1 Due</b>
7	February 19, 2025	<b>No class:</b> Reading Week	n/a
8	February 26, 2025	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lovett, et. al., ch. 2–3</li> </ul> <p><b>Christian Worldview and Teaching Philosophy due by end of week</b></p>

9	March 5, 2025	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lovett, et. al., ch. 4–5</li> <li>• Dvorak, “Battling Your Expert Blindspot.” <i>Didaktikos</i> (September 2018) 15-17 [link to full text in <a href="#">Bibliography</a>]</li> </ul> <p><b>TLT 2 Due</b></p> <p><b>Syllabus due (by end of week);</b></p>
10	March 12, 2025	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lovett, et. al., ch. 6</li> </ul> <p><b>In-person lesson plan due (by end of week)</b></p>
11	March 19, 2025	Learning and Teaching Principles that will (hopefully) keep you from “blowing up” your students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lovett, et. al., ch. 7–8</li> </ul> <p><b>TLT 3 Due</b></p> <p><b>Online lesson plan &amp; production plan due (by end of week)</b></p>
12	March 26, 2025	In-person lesson presentations	
13	April 2, 2025	In-person lesson presentations	<b>TLT 4 Due</b>
14	April 9, 2025	In-person lesson presentations	<b>Online lesson delivery due (via A2L) by 5pm</b>

## 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](mailto: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.
- *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.
- *Office visits* – I will maintain office hours two days per week (see section I above), and you are welcome to come by to see me. Please note that office hours are for drop-in visits, and these should be kept to 15–20 minutes maximum. If you need more time to visit, you may make an appointment for a meeting either directly through me (contact me via email) or through Melanie McGlynn. I am willing to meet in person or via Zoom as needed.

### *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.
- Although much of the course content will be made available via A2L, it would still 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, I reserve the right to move the lessons and, where possible, class activities for the week to A2L (asynchronous format). This will help to ensure that we stay on target in the course.

### *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.

**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.

### *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).

### *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 grade reductions.



### *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.

### *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.