It is not so very important for a person to learn facts. For that he does not really need a college. He can learn them from books. The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks. (Albert Einstein, 1921, in response to Thomas Edison’s opinion that a college education is useless)

The growing precision of our understanding should enhance, and not diminish our sense of wonder. (Alfred Brendel)

In much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase in sorrow. (Ecclesiastes 1.18)

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. (William Butler Yeats)

You must unlearn what you have learned. (Yoda, Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back)

The unexamined life is not worth living. (Socrates [Plato, Apology, 38a])

EN ΟΙΔΑ ΟΤΙ ΟΥΔΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ. (= Ὑπ' ὅδα ὅτι οὐδὲν ὄδα. — Socrates)

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ. (= Γνῶθι σεαυτόν. — Temple of Apollo at Delphi)

Welcome to Religion 153: The Gospel of John. This course is a general introduction to and an exploration of the Gospel According to John. If you do the required work, by the end of the semester you will be able to:

- read carefully and critically through the Gospel According to John
- identify and explain the main contents of John, e.g., major themes and issues
- identify and explain the significance of John for Western culture, for the world, and for us
- identify and explain issues involved in comparing John with other canonical and non-canonical Gospels
- explain the meaning(s) of Johannine passages in their historical contexts (e.g., cultural, geographical, literary, political contexts) as well as in relation to other areas of knowledge and to contemporary thought
- define terms relevant to understanding Johannine texts as well as to understanding the study of John
- identify and explain methodological issues involved in the interpretation of John
- demonstrate exegetical skills using modern methods of interpretation, especially historical-critical and literary approaches
- demonstrate an appreciation of Johannine texts that is both critical and creative

Achieving these goals will require hard work on your part, which will bring many challenging, enlightening, exciting, frustrating, and rewarding experiences.

Caveat

This course is designed so that anyone, religious or not, who does the required work can attain the goals mentioned above. This course is not designed to persuade you to a particular faith or religious point of view. Nor is it intended to build up or disparage existing faith, although an informed understanding of the Gospel According to John can lead to a deeper appreciation of Judaism and Christianity. Students who consider themselves to be followers of any religion, or of no religion at all, are welcome on this semester journey to become better acquainted with the Gospel According to John, to learn to appreciate it better, and to become informed and responsible interpreters of it.

Requirements and evaluation for the course

- evaluation
For my criteria for evaluation go to my Evaluation page and read the information carefully.

- If you have any questions about any assignment, ask in class or make an appointment to see me.
- If you have any questions about any evaluation or how you are doing in the course, make an appointment to see me.
- If you miss an assignment or exam, call or make an appointment to discuss any makeup work.

Due dates for submitting assignments are on D2L (click on the “Dropbox”).

**assigned readings**

Assigned readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned—use your best judgment to divide the readings evenly for each week. You must come to class with at least 2 written questions or comments in response to the readings (see Participation).

The primary focus throughout the course will be on the Johannine texts and on cultivating the ability to ask informed questions about all the assigned readings based on the knowledge you gain along the way; the demonstration of your ability to formulate questions will affect the evaluation of your semester grade. Keeping notes on the readings is highly recommended. I would encourage you to use this form for the reading assignments (also on D2L).

Not all assigned readings may be covered in class or on exams, but they are assigned for your edification in achieving the goals of the course. The more you refer to them in class and in your work, the better your mastery of the readings will be. Your use of them in class discussion and in your work will affect the evaluation of your semester grade.

Occasionally I may assign additional readings, but these will ordinarily be short.

**presentation**

You will give a 5-minute presentation of your reflection on the assigned texts consisting of:

- the main ideas or arguments of the reading assignments (see the schedule below for the texts to be presented)
- your critique or response to it (including references to previous readings)—this should be the focus and main portion of the presentation
  - Include critical questions, challenges, discoveries, insights, etc. that relate to something in recent history or news.
  - Avoid mere summaries or paraphrases of the assigned reading(s).

You are expected to have read the text(s) thoroughly and be able to share the penetrating questions or issues you dealt with in your reading, preparation, and further research. You do not have to understand everything before class, but you should demonstrate that you prepared and that you can discern and are familiar with the major issues in the text(s). Remember that questions are more valuable than answers.

All students are expected to do the preparatory work described above, not just the presenter.

See my Evaluation page under Presentations for evaluation criteria (do not be concerned about the “Communication Skills” section of the presentation evaluation page). If you wish to use a PowerPoint presentation or any AV equipment, let me know in advance.

**exegesis paper**

You will submit on D2L an exegesis paper on one of the Johannine passages assigned in the schedule below. If you wish to work on a different passage, make an appointment to discuss your passage of choice. In choosing a specific part or theme within the passage of your choice, consult critical commentaries and academic journals, i.e., scholarly books and articles with lots of (foot)notes. For help with exegesis, see my Exegesis guidelines page. You may also find the Tips for writing papers helpful.

Make an appointment as early as you can in the semester to discuss (1) your paper idea and (2) your preliminary bibliography (bring a hard copy). The narrower and more specific your thesis—i.e., the argument you plan to make in your paper—the better. If you wish to improve the quality of your paper, you are strongly encouraged to make further appointments for feedback on your progress.

- The paper should consist of 700–1,000 words.
- Include at least a historical-critical understanding of the text(s) and present possible meanings in it (them).
- If possible (or appropriate) include an analysis of the structure of the text(s).
- The paper should represent original work (i.e., your own thoughts), not a mere digest of other people's opinions. Your own reading and re-reading of the relevant texts, as well as review of other materials, are fundamental to the task. I want to know what you discover in your engagement with the biblical text, whether or not you agree with the assigned readings, commentaries, or opinions presented in class, including mine.
- Focus on honing your ability to argue for your opinions and conclusions by supporting them with evidence from texts (especially primary texts) and other relevant sources.
• Your final bibliography (not just “works cited”) must contain at least 8 sources used in your paper, including at least 4 academic journal articles (articles in newspapers or magazines are acceptable if appropriate for your paper).

• Electronic sources count only if you provide evidence that they are scholarly sources (usually in print).

• Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the Chicago Manual of Style. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor. No bibliography or works cited.

• Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.

**terms**

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for learning significant terms used in our texts or in class (see the “terms” file on D2L). You will be responsible for finding the definitions. Your knowledge of significant terms may constitute a part of a quiz or exam.

**exams**

The midterm exam will cover all the materials in the course we will have covered by the time of the exam (e.g., the reading assignments and terms). The final exam will cover the entire sweep of the course. There may be pop quizzes, the results of which will affect the evaluation of your participation. See my Evaluation page under Quizzes and examinations.

There will be 2 short quizzes. They will cover the materials in the course, including the reading assignments and terms, we will have covered by the time of the quizzes.

In lieu of the final exam you may take an oral exam (30–45 minutes). You must meet with me as soon as possible before March 15 to discuss this option.

In lieu of the final exam (written or oral), you may choose to write a longer exegesis paper (1,000–1,300 words). You must meet with me as soon as possible before March 15 to discuss this option. If you decide to write the longer paper, follow all the applicable directions for the exegesis paper (above).

**grades**

Grades will be determined as fairly as possible. See my Evaluation page under Grades for more information. The final grade for the course will consist of the following:

- final exam / longer exegesis paper — 40%
- midterm exam — 20%
- exegesis paper — 20%
- presentation — 10%
- participation (including pop quizzes) — 10%

Participation is a significant part of this course. See my Evaluation page under Participation for more information and instructions.

**extra credit**

You may earn extra credit any time during the semester.

- Submit a paper consisting of 700–1,000 words relating something from popular culture (e.g., movie, play, TV show, book, any performance) to a Johannine text or theme (consult the instructor).
- The paper should be mostly critique (not mere description or summary).

The instructor reserves the right to make the final determination concerning any extra credit. You can earn a maximum of 5% toward the final grade. You may write more than one, if you wish, but you will not receive more than 5% total in extra credit.

**Required books**

A Bible of your choice.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (NOAB) using the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) will be the common text for class assignments and discussions. N.B.: the table of contents, introductions, essays, tables, glossary, maps, etc. are all very helpful. In all cases, you are encouraged to use (1) other English translations besides the NRSV, e.g., NIV, and (2) Bibles in other languages.

The NRSV and other Bibles in English are available free online (also under “Resources to consider” below or via D2L.


Recommended books (* = highly recommended)


Resources to consider

My Resources page, e.g., esp. The NT Gateway, online Bibles, parallel translations

Course materials on D2L; online resources, e.g., study guides

Bible concordances (also in McGill library)


Keeping in touch

During the semester check your e-mail regularly for messages regarding course matters (e.g., changes in the syllabus). Visit D2L regularly to see updates to the syllabus; see also my home page for other information and resources related to the course. Please feel free to make an appointment any time about any course matters.

Tips from former students

For some practical advice from former students, see the tips page.

One last word . . .

Regardless of how demanding all of this is, I promise to be as fair as possible. I recognize that you will be very busy this semester pursuing various obligations and passions. I understand. I have my passions too, e.g., my family, music, philosophy, nature, mountain biking, fixing things, food. But I am also very passionate about education, both yours and mine—I mean not just the business of acquiring knowledge but more importantly the total development of honorable human beings. I do not require you to share my excitement about all the things we will cover, but I do expect you to do your best to complete the requirements for the course. To help you do that, I will make myself available outside the class time and the office hours. I will be glad to help you when you are struggling with an assignment. Or if you have any questions, concerns, complaints, and even compliments, I will do my best to take the time to listen and offer my response. Keep in mind that I am here to help you learn. Welcome to Religion 153: The Gospel of John.
Week 1  Jan 22

- Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)
  - Westminster College: Mission statement
  - Fisher: Effective Learning
  - University of Chicago: letter to the class of 2020 (2016)
  - R. Brown, Intro: vii–xvii; xxi–xxvi (skim); 1–14
  - R. Brown, John: v–vi; App. 1
  - Translation comparison
  - Remember: bring your written Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation).
- Logos (“the Word”) in English: note all the English definitions; also here (tip: look for the breaks or spaces)
- Copy all relevant Web pages and resources to your hard disk or flash drive, etc. for easy access. Keep the copies updated.
- Memorize the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling). [also: comparison chart; canons; some early NT canons]
- Notes in class

Week 2  Jan 29

**Feb ???: movie night at the Nas’ 7:47 PM-ish**

Feel free to bring DVDs of movies you think your classmates should see. For directions click here.

- John 1.1–18
  - R. Brown, John: 1 (skim “Notes” prudently), App. 2
  - Xmas Quiz

- John 1.19–51
  - R. Brown, John: 2–5
  - Logos (“the Word”) in English: note all the English definitions; also here (tip: look for the breaks or spaces)
  - Reminder: bring your Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation)
  - M. Brown: Rule of Thumb 1–10
  - R. Brown, Responses, Q5–10: Genuine and apocryphal books of the Bible
  - R. Brown, Responses, Q11–14: How to read the Bible
  - Inf Gos Thom
  - Transmission errors
  - The Greeks (interactive site): read about Socrates, Plato, etc.
  - Hazony: “The God of Independent Minds”
  - What we think we know: the (hi)story of the thumb.
  - Myth
  - Blogging the Bible (an interesting viewpoint that might resonate with your life)
  - What we think we know: the (hi)story of the thumb.
Week 3  Feb  5

- **John 2–3**
- **R. Brown, John: 6–12, App. 3**
- R. Brown: *Intro to NT Christology*, 155–61 ("A Brief History of the Development of the Royal Messianic Hope in Israel")
- **Phraseology: KoG & KoH**
- Jesus in the Synoptics & Jn
  > The Diatessaron
  > C. S. Lewis: historical Jesus
  > Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)
>+ Sanders & Davies: *Synoptic Gospels*, 51–119 (skim; n.b. diagrams)
- M. Brown: Rule of Thumb 11–20
>++ R. Brown, *Responses*, Q15–17: Church guidance; Q18–22: Why read the Bible
- Nicene Creed; also here and here and here
- Apostles’ Creed; also here
- coloring scheme for the Synopsis
- some synoptic solutions
- PBS, Frontline: From Jesus to Christ (helpful videos, esp. part 2 & lots of resources)
- Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)

Week 4  Feb 12

- **Quiz 1** (TBD)
- **John 4**
  - **R. Brown, John: 13–16, App. 4**

Week 5  Feb 19

- **John 6.1–34**
  - R. Brown, *Intro*: ch. 6 ("The Author, the Place, and the Date"; cf. R. Brown, *John*: Intro, 6–7I)
  - **R. Brown, John: 20–23**
  - feeding 5K folks (all week):
    - Mk 6.30–44 (cf. 8.1–10; 19–20)
    - Mt 14.13–21 (cf. 15.32–39; 16.9–10)
    - Lk 9.10–17
    - Jn 6.1–15
  - **John 6.35–71**
    - **R. Brown, John: 24–26**
      > John 6 in praise song "I Am the Bread of Life"
      > Myth

Week 6  Feb 26

- **John 7.1–52**
  - **R. Brown, John: 27–29**: App. 1–2

- **John 7.53–8.59**
  - R. Brown, *Intro*: ch. 9 ("The Outline of the Gospel"; cf. R. Brown, *John*: Intro, 10); "Editor’s Conclusion"
  - **R. Brown, John: 30–33**
    - "I Saw the Light"
Week 7  Mar 12

- John 9–10
- R. Brown, John: 34–37

- John 11
- R. Brown, John: 38–40

- Q38–44: The Gospels; Q45–51 Jesus' words and deeds

- Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)

- Dylan Thomas “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”

Week 8  Mar 19

Feb 15: midterm exam

- John 12
- R. Brown, John: 41–45
- R. Brown, John: App. 6 (review of chs. 1–12)

- Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)

- John 13.1–30
- R. Brown, John: 46–47

- Q52–53: Jesus' resurrection; Q54–60: Jesus' birth

- Helpful video (very good for review): “From Jesus to Christ,” pt. 3: Jesus in the Gospels

Week 9  Mar 26

- Mar 20: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)
- Mar 22: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)

- John 13.31–38
- R. Brown, John: 48–49

- John 14
- R. Brown, John: 50–52, App. 5
- The End Is Always Near (skim)

- Q61–68: Mary (esp. of interest to Roman Catholics); Q69–76: Jesus' knowledge

- Helpful video: “From Jesus to Christ,” pt. 3: Jesus in the Gospels

Week 10  Apr 3 T

- Mar 27: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)
- Apr 5: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)

- John 15.1–16.4a
- R. Brown, John: 53–54

- John 16.4b–17.8
- R. Brown, John: 55–57

- Q77–78: Foundation of the church; Q79–85: The sacraments

- Easter Quiz (n.b.: take this “quiz” before reading the following)
  - 1 Cor 15.3–10
  - Mk 15.40–16.8
  - Mt 27.55–28.20
  - Lk 23.48–24.53
  - Jn 19.25–21.25
  - Acts 1.1–2.4
  - Gos Pet (n.b. Q10 on “Easter Quiz”)

Week 11  Apr 9

- Apr 10: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)
- Apr 12: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)

- John 17.9–26
- R. Brown, John: 58–59

- John 18.1–27
- R. Brown, John: 60–62

- Q86–88: Early Christians and the Jews; Q89–92: Early Church administration
Week 12  Apr 16

- Quiz to be updated
  - Apr 17: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)
  - Apr 19: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)

- John 18.28–19.16a
- R. Brown, John: 63–64

- Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations & criteria for grading—ask Qs, if any)
- John 19.16b–42

> R. Brown, Responses, Q93–96: Who celebrated the eucharist; Q97–100: Peter and the popes

Week 13  Apr 23

- Apr 24: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)
- Apr 26: presentation: name, name (bolded Bible passage OR R. Brown)

- John 20
- R. Brown, John: 67–70

Week 14  Apr 30

- John 21
- R. Brown, John: 71–73
- The End Is Always Near (skim)

Final thoughts (Or: Anything and everything you wanted to ask Prof. Na but were too afraid or busy to ask)

  - bring your Qs & Cs (esp. on the distinction between biblical theology & dogmatic theology)
  - bring some NT examples that illustrate the issues discussed by Gabler (esp. on the distinction between biblical theology & dogmatic theology)

  - bring your Qs & Cs (esp. on synthetic judgment, analytic judgment, and language game)
  - bring some NT examples that illustrate the issues Meyer discusses (esp. the 3 interpretative patterns and Meyer’s proposal)

- Nicene Creed: also here and here and here
- Apostles’ Creed: also here
- Gos Thom
- See Gos Mk
- Gos Pet
- Inf Gos Thom
- Prot Jas
- C. S. Lewis: historical Jesus
- R. Brown, Responses: Q1–10, 19–27
- See the movie “Fallen” (cf. Tobit)
- O Little Town of Nazareth?
- Xmas Carol Quiz
- Xmas Quiz
- What is this?

Final week  May TBD

Final exam to be updated

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously. (G. K. Chesterton)
Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die. (Anonymous)

N.B. check regularly for updates (15 Jan. 2018)