



# Academic Catalog and Student Handbook

March 2021 to December 2021

**Grace Communion Seminary**  
**3120 Whitehall Park Drive**  
**Charlotte, NC 28273**  
**1-980-495-3978**  
**1-800-851-2611**

**[www.gcs.edu](http://www.gcs.edu)**

**For general inquiries, email**  
**[registrar@gcs.edu](mailto:registrar@gcs.edu)**



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## I. Introduction to the Seminary

### A. Message from the President

Grace Communion Seminary is committed to Paul's vision of "equipping the saints for the work of ministry" in order to "build up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). With this goal in mind, we strive to serve laypersons, pastors and those seeking to discern their calling, providing them quality educational opportunities in the areas of biblical studies, theology and ministry.

The challenges of Christian ministry are great. But when people of faith work together to seek understanding of God's revelation in Jesus Christ according to Scripture in a disciplined and sustained way that our courses provide, we have seen evidence of God's faithfulness to grow and mature his people and enable them to share more fully, peacefully and joyfully in Christ's continuing ministry. Whether through our selection of master's level courses or in one of our master's degree programs, all are designed to nurture our faith, hope and love for God through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

This Christ-centered and Trinitarian foundation undergirds and strengthens all our endeavors to live and share the gospel in our churches and surrounding communities. It binds together head and heart, understanding and worship, love for God and love for neighbor. May our Triune God lead you as you consider becoming a part of GCS.

*Gary W. Deddo, Ph.D.*

### B. GCS Purpose and Plan

#### 1. Mission statement

*"Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry."* We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

## 2. Purpose

Grace Communion Seminary serves the needs of pastors and others engaged in Christian service who want to grow deeper in relationship with our Triune God and to be able to more effectively serve in the Incarnational life of the church in Jesus Christ.

**Grace** is the essence of our lives. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ reveals God to us, grants us life in him, leads us in forgiving and being forgiven, and gives us salvation. Our Triune God and his grace and love through Jesus Christ is the center of our theology.

**Communion** defines the relationship we have with God, Jesus, and one another. The communion of the Holy Spirit binds us with Jesus who is the head of the church, enlivens God's love in our hearts, and unites us as followers of Jesus Christ. We live in inseparable unity in Christ in the perpetual effects of his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost.

**Seminary** describes the scope of our educational goal. We are committed to enabling pastoral ministry in the universal church that effectively shares the love of the Father with the world. We teach from a perspective of Incarnational Trinitarian theology. (See pages 10-11 for details.)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14, ASV).

## 3. Educational philosophy

GCS provides holistic Christian education for laity and ministry to develop biblical and theological understanding for pastoral leadership by means of directed readings, online lectures, written assignments, practical application experiences, and interaction with colleagues and professors.

As fundamental to the accomplishment of these purposes, we need to be

dedicated to the search for and dissemination of truth. We therefore believe that the students, faculty, staff, administrators, and board members should be committed to and supported in their pursuit of knowledge and truth.

#### **4. Goals**

Our institutional goals express our intent to educate pastors and other Christian leaders in graduate-level programs centered in Incarnational Trinitarian faith:

- a) Serve graduate-level educational needs of pastors and others engaged in Christian ministry who seek to grow deeper in relationship with our Triune God and to be able to serve more effectively in the Incarnational life of the church in Jesus Christ.
- b) Provide formal programs of instruction and other learning opportunities that foster intellectual curiosity; facilitate the work of the Spirit in transforming the student; help the student be sensitive to the lead of the Spirit to the moral and social needs of the family, the church, and the surrounding society; and cultivate in them a willingness to respond as God leads them to address the global needs of humanity.
- c) Provide seminary education that conveys the Trinitarian nature of God in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.
- d) Provide courses and programs that meet traditional academic standards, but are designed to suit the needs of pastors who can study only on a part-time basis, and also allow fulltime students to progress at a traditional pace.

#### **5. Educational objectives**

Our institutional objectives further describe the scope of our distance education programs:



- a) Provide quality distance education programs for graduate students in biblical, theological, historical, ministerial, and pastoral studies that are centered in Incarnational Trinitarian theology.
- b) Provide credentialed faculty members who have experience in teaching and in ministry-related areas.
- c) Provide adequate administrative staff to facilitate direction and coordination of student services, faculty development, financial accountability, and technological support.
- d) Provide structured graduate-level programs in a semester-long format that is readily accessible to clergy and others engaged in Christian ministry. These courses are offered in a flexible manner through technologically sound, cost-effective educational systems.
- e) Provide holistic Christian education through online courses by means of directed readings, online lectures, written assignments, practical application experiences, examinations, and interaction with peers and professors.
- f) Provide a curriculum that enables students to meet personal goals in higher education, from taking courses of their choice in Master's Level Courses, to a master's degree program.
- g) Provide courses that give students a good foundation in biblical studies, theology, church history, and Christian ministry, suitable for pastoral work or for further study.
- h) Provide effective interactions between students and faculty.

## **6. Student learning outcomes**

Through maintaining the educational objectives in our curriculum, students are intended to gain competence in the following learning outcomes:

- a) Explain the revelation of the Bible in its historical and cultural

setting as it relates to God, Jesus Christ, and salvation, and its application for faithful living today.

- b) Reason from a sound theological basis as new covenant Christians centered in Incarnational Trinitarian faith.
- c) Model the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in congregations.
- d) Conduct the work of pastoral ministry in witness to and representation of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- e) Integrate biblical exegesis with sound theological exposition that informs personal spiritual growth and that directs effective ministry in Jesus Christ.

## 7. Doctrinal foundation

The *Statement of Beliefs* of Grace Communion International provides the doctrinal foundation for GCS.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a summary of what we believe:

- There is one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God the Father made all things through the Son, sent the Son for our salvation, and gives us the Holy Spirit.
- The Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, and is the perfect revelation of the Father and the perfect representative of humanity. He suffered and died on the cross for all human sin, was raised bodily on the third day, and ascended to heaven. Standing in for all humanity before the Father, Jesus Christ provides the perfect human response to God. Since he died for all, all died in him, and all will be

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<sup>1</sup> For the full *Statement of Beliefs*, go to <https://www.gci.org/articles/the-gci-statement-of-beliefs/>.

made alive in him.

- The Holy Spirit brings sinners to repentance and faith, assures believers of their forgiveness and acceptance as God's dearly loved children, and works in them to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ.
- The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God that testifies to Jesus Christ. The Bible is fully authoritative for all matters of faith and salvation.
- Salvation comes only by God's grace and not by works, and it is experienced through faith in Jesus Christ. Christians respond to the joy of salvation when they gather in regular fellowship and live godly lives in Jesus Christ.
- We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.

**Basic tenets of Incarnational Trinitarian theology:**

We believe that theology should be rooted in the Bible, especially the New Testament. We see a reliable theology articulated by Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzus, and more recently, Karl Barth, Thomas F. Torrance, and many others. Our teachings include:

- The Triune God created all people through the Son of God, who also is known as the Word of God.
- We were created so that we could participate in the love relationship enjoyed by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- We are enabled and qualified to participate in this relationship of love through Jesus Christ.
- The Son became human, the man Jesus Christ, taking on our human nature.
- He did this to reconcile all humanity to God through his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension.
- The crucified, resurrected and glorified Jesus is the representative and the substitute for all humanity.

- As Savior and Lord of all humanity, Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father, and he draws all people to himself by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- In Christ, humanity is loved and accepted by the Father.
- Jesus Christ paid for all our sins—past, present and future—and there is no longer any debt to pay.
- The Father has in Christ forgiven all our sins, and he eagerly desires that we receive his forgiveness.
- We can enjoy his love only as we believe/trust that he loves us. We can enjoy his forgiveness only when we believe/trust he has forgiven us.
- When we respond to the Spirit by turning to God, believing the good news and picking up our cross and following Jesus, the Spirit leads us into the transformed life of the kingdom of God.

## **C. Institutional Authorization**

### **1. Legal authority**

Grace Communion Seminary is an educational institution affiliated with Grace Communion International (GCI), a member of the National Association of Evangelicals. We are committed to the development of the whole person to serve in the ministry of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Grace Communion Seminary is a business name of Ambassador College, a California non-profit religious corporation with federal 501(c)(3) status, which commenced operations in 1947 in Pasadena, California, as a church-related liberal-arts college.

As a non-profit religious organization teaching our own doctrines, and not offering any non-religious degrees, GCS is authorized by the state of California to function as an educational institution exempt from California Education Code, Title 3, Division 10, Part 59, Chapter 8, which regulates private postsecondary institutions.

Our main office is in North Carolina. Degree programs of study offered by Grace Communion Seminary have been declared exempt from the requirements for licensure, under provisions of North Carolina General

Statutes Section (G.S.) 116–15 (d) for exemption from licensure with respect to religious education. Exemption from licensure is not based upon assessment of program quality under established licensing standards.

## 2. History

Over the years, Ambassador College operated campuses in California, Texas, and England. All those campuses are closed and our work is now done online. This enables us to serve students without removing them from their current areas of ministry.

In 2003 Ambassador College began offering courses online in biblical studies, theology, and Christian ministry, with an undergraduate program and a graduate program. In 2005, the undergraduate and graduate programs were separated.

- The undergraduate program uses the name Ambassador College of Christian Ministry. It is administered by the GCI affiliate in Australia at [www.ambascol.org](http://www.ambascol.org). It is not accredited. The graduate program was administered from Glendora, CA.
- The graduate program is now doing business as Grace Communion Seminary, administered from Charlotte, NC. It is accredited.
- There is no formal connection between ACCM and Grace Communion Seminary; they have different boards and officers. Courses taken through ACCM are not accepted for credit at GCS.

Grace Communion Seminary limits its educational programs to graduate-level distance-education courses in Bible, theology, church history, and ministry. All programs are administered online, and are open to academically qualified people who want to expand their education and ministry based in an incarnational, Trinitarian theology.

## 3. Accreditation



Grace Communion Seminary is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> The address of DEAC is 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 808, Washington, D.C. 20036. Their telephone number is 202-234-5100. The website: [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org).

Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized accrediting agency. The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).<sup>3</sup>

As with most institutions of higher learning, the transferability of credits earned at Grace Communion Seminary is at the discretion of the institution to which the student seeks to transfer. If a student wants to transfer credits to another institution, or wants to use a GCS degree to meet admission requirements of another institution, the student is advised to confirm in advance with that other institution that the GCS credits or degree will be acceptable. The acceptance of credits and degrees is entirely the prerogative of the receiving institution and acceptance cannot be guaranteed.

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<sup>3</sup> CHEA's website is [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org); recognized institutions are listed at [http://www.chea.org/userfiles/Recognition/CHEA\\_USDE\\_AllAccred.pdf](http://www.chea.org/userfiles/Recognition/CHEA_USDE_AllAccred.pdf).

## D. Administration

### 1. Board of Directors

- a) Joseph Tkach, Chairman of the Board of GCS and Chairman of the Board of Grace Communion International; Doctor of Ministry from Azusa Pacific Seminary
- b) Randy Bloom, retired district superintendent for Grace Communion International, Adjunct Professor in Christian ministry at Grace Communion Seminary, M.Div. from Liberty University
- c) Gary W. Deddo, President and Professor of Theology at Grace Communion Seminary; Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Aberdeen
- d) Rebecca Deuel, co-pastor of a GCI church in Wisconsin. Master of Pastoral Studies from Grace Communion Seminary
- e) Ted Johnston, retired district superintendent for Grace Communion International, Adjunct Professor in Christian ministry at Grace Communion Seminary, M.A. in Liberal Studies: Psychology, Regis University; M.A. in Christian Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- f) Michael Morrison, Dean of Faculty and Professor of New Testament at Grace Communion Seminary; Ph.D. from Fuller Theological Seminary
- g) Secretary: Georgia McKinnon, GCS Registrar. Master of Arts in Teaching, University of South Carolina

### Advisors to the Board

Mathew H. Morgan, Chief Financial Officer, GCI and GCS; Master of Business Administration from University of Phoenix.

Robert Meade, Treasurer, Accounting Manager for Grace Communion International.

### 2. Administration

- a) Chief Executive Officer: Gary W. Deddo, Ph.D. in Theology from University of Aberdeen. He can be contacted at [president@gcs.edu](mailto:president@gcs.edu).

Dr. Deddo teaches theology courses.

- b) Chief Academic Officer: Michael Morrison, Dean of Faculty; Ph.D. in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. He teaches courses in Bible and Christian ministry. He can be contacted at [dean@gcs.edu](mailto:dean@gcs.edu).
- c) Liaison Officer: Lance McKinnon, Master of Theological Studies from Grace Communion Seminary. [lance.mckinnon@gcs.edu](mailto:lance.mckinnon@gcs.edu)
- d) Registrar – Georgia McKinnon. Master of Arts in Teaching, University of South Carolina. [registrar@gcs.edu](mailto:registrar@gcs.edu)

### 3. Faculty

#### Full-time faculty

name	degrees	area of teaching specialization
Michael Morrison	Ph.D. in New Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary	New Testament; Chair of the Department of Biblical Studies

#### Part-time faculty

name	degrees	area of teaching specialization
Randy Bloom	M.Div., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary	Christian Ministry
Jeff Broadnax	Master of Science in Counselor Education, Western Connecticut State University; MPS, Grace Communion Seminary	assistant in Christian Ministry
Gary Deddo	Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, University of Aberdeen	Theology; Chair of the Department of Theology and Church History
Russell Duke	Ph.D. in Practical Theology, Union Institute and University	Theology and Ministry; Chair of the Department of Christian Ministry
Neil Earle	M.A. in History, University of Toronto; M.A. in Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary	Church History



Tim Finlay	Ph.D. in Old Testament, Claremont Graduate School	Old Testament
Larry Hinkle	D.Min. in Formational Counseling, Ashland Theological Seminary	Christian Ministry
Ted Johnston	M.A. in Liberal Studies: Psychology, Regis University; M.A. in Christian Studies, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	Christian Ministry
Dan Rogers	Ph.D. in Religious Studies, Union Institute and University	Acts and Homiletics
Greg Williams	Doctor of Ministry, Drew University	Christian Ministry

#### **4. Advisory Council**

Our advisory council meets annually and is comprised of members of the Board, administration, faculty, and other educators. The council includes Elmer Colyer, Gerrit Scot Dawson, Gary Deddo, Georgia McKinnon, Michael Morrison, and Geordie Ziegler.

#### **E. Contact Information**

Mailing address: Grace Communion Seminary  
3120 Whitehall Park Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28273

Phone numbers:

1-980-495-3978

Fax 1-844-350-3419

Computer support: 1-980-495-3979

Website: [www.gcs.edu](http://www.gcs.edu)

Email: [registrar@gcs.edu](mailto:registrar@gcs.edu)

## F. Calendar

### 1. Hours of operation and holidays

GCS offices are normally open 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Thursday. GCS offices are closed during the following holidays: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Week, and the final two weeks of December through New Year's Day.

### 2. Availability of administrators and faculty

The Registrar is generally available each day the office is open. Electronic messages are the best way to correspond with the instructors. Contact information is given within each course. Since most instructors are part-time, they do not necessarily check their messages every day. If an instructor does not respond to a message within two days, or it is an urgent matter, please email the GCS office at [registrar@gcs.edu](mailto:registrar@gcs.edu), or phone us.

### 3. Academic calendar

GCS has three 13-week semesters each year. In each semester, there are lectures for ten weeks (posted each Monday, unless Monday is a holiday in the U.S.), two more weeks for completing final papers and projects, and one week for final papers to be graded and returned. Most semesters also have a holiday week during the semester. The dates for the next three semesters are:

	<b>Summer 2021</b>	<b>Fall 2021</b>	<b>Spring 2022</b>
Academic advising and registration	April 26 – May 6	Aug. 23 – Sept. 2	January 3 - 13
Lecture dates	May 10 – July 12	Sept. 7 – Nov. 8	Jan. 18 – March 21
Holiday week	July 21-25	Nov. 22–28	--

Final papers due	Aug. 8	Dec. 5	April 11
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For assignment schedules and faculty hours, see the course syllabi.

#### 4. Course scheduling

Short syllabi listing the required textbooks are updated on our website at least four weeks before each course begins. Students can see the assigned readings, order the books, and begin reading ahead of time.<sup>4</sup> International students may need to pay for expedited shipping, or buy electronic books, so their books arrive on time.

Lectures are posted each Monday, by 9 a.m. Eastern time, and students may access them any time after they are posted. (If we forget to post them, phone or email us.) In some weeks, students are required to participate in online discussions. There is no specific time that all students must be online – students post their comments any time between Monday and Thursday, for example, and respond to other students between Friday and Sunday. Because these online discussions involve interactions with other students, they must be done on the week assigned; there is usually no way to “make up” the interaction at a later date.

Most classes have something due each week. If students need an extension in order to complete final projects or papers, we will sometimes be able to arrange this, *if requested in advance*. There is a fee for an extension, because it involves additional work for the instructor and support personnel.

#### G. Study options and degree programs

GCS offers three degrees: Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS), Master of Theological Studies (MTS), and Master of Divinity (MDiv). The first two

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<sup>4</sup> If fewer than five students sign up for a course, that course may be cancelled, or it may continue, depending on the discretion of the instructor.

degrees require at least 14 courses, or 42 semester units of credit, with a minimum GPA of 2.7 out of 4. The MDiv degree requires a minimum of 72 units, or 25 courses, with a minimum GPA of 3.0.

All students begin in a category that is not a degree, but involves credits that may be used toward a degree.

### **1. Non-degree study: Master's Level Courses**

All GCS students are initially enrolled in Master's Level Continuing Education. This permits students to take courses according to their own interest and need. All courses will automatically transfer into a GCS degree program, if the student reaches that point, and the courses are less than 10 years old.

Some students simply want to increase their ministry skills and understanding; this is a lifelong need of all who serve in the church. GCS wants to help in this by providing guidance, structure, training, and verification of these educational achievements. If you begin your studies with a specific interest, such as youth ministry or one section of the Bible, you are welcome to take whatever course interests you most.

In this non-degree category, we provide graduate-level courses in biblical, theological, and ministry studies according to the students' interests and needs, as students wish to improve their pastoral skills or fulfill personal interests.

1. Students will be able to choose topics that have historically been foundational to pastoral and theological education, and in each course, will receive lectures from a qualified instructor, relevant readings in published textbooks, and discussions that help the student articulate ideas and learn from other students. The specific competencies attained will vary depending on the course. Student learning outcomes are described in each course syllabus.
2. Students will receive courses that are academically sound, comparable to courses taken at other graduate theological schools, and useful for pastors and interested lay persons.
3. Students may go at their own pace, up to three classes per semester, or a slower pace.

4. Students will receive graduate credit that may be applied toward a master's degree program, if the student wishes to eventually matriculate into a degree program. The courses are academically identical regardless of the whether the student intends to eventually get a degree.

**a. Certificate of Theological Studies**

After a student has taken any Bible course, any theology course, and two additional courses from any discipline, and maintained a grade point average of at least 2.5, we will mail the student a Certificate of Theological Studies. This acknowledges that a student has achieved a significant milestone in our educational programs. There is no formal enrollment or application for this award.

**b. Diploma in Christian Ministry, general studies track**

The diploma awards require seven courses. In the general studies track, students have many options:

- Any theology course
- Any church history course
- Any Bible course
- Any two Christian ministry courses
- Two more courses from anywhere in our curriculum

There must be at least 21 units, with a GPA of at least 2.5. Six units may come from credit transferred from another accredited institution, or through documented prior learning.

The Diploma is not a degree, but an academic achievement award, recognizing that the student has achieved another noteworthy milestone in ministry training. There is no formal enrollment for this diploma. When the required courses are completed, the diploma will be mailed to the student.

**c. Diploma in Christian Ministry, with focus on discipleship, worship, or missional living**

These academic achievement awards are designed for lay leaders within Grace Communion International, although students of any

denomination are welcome to take this group of courses. They are focused on Christian ministry courses. The requirements are:

1. Either BI501 Biblical Interpretation or BI520 New Testament Survey
2. CM504 Practice of Ministry
3. CM508 Church Planting and Development
4. CM510 Polity of Grace Communion International
5. TH503 The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Last Things
6. Either a second Bible course or a second theology course
7. An elective appropriate to the area of focus
  - a. For the worship focus, either CM506 Trinitarian Youth Ministry or another applicable future elective
  - b. For the discipleship focus, either CM506 Trinitarian Youth Ministry or CM512 Small Group Bible Study Leadership
  - c. For the missional living track, either CM501 Pastoral Leadership or another applicable future elective

There is no formal enrollment for this award. When the required courses are completed, the diploma will be mailed to the student.

## **2. Masters Degrees**

After students have completed seven or more courses with a GPA of 2.7 or better, they have the option of enrolling in one of our master's degree programs.

### **a. Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS)**

Students may enter the MPS program if the following requirements are met:

- a) Must have completed 21 semester units with a GPA of 2.7 or better.
- b) Must have completed at least two courses in Christian ministry.
- c) Students must commit to taking courses at a rate that would allow

them to complete the program within ten years of when they first began taking GCS courses.<sup>5</sup>

If students meet these requirements and wish to be classified as a master's degree student, they will be accepted as a candidate for the MPS degree. (This is also called matriculation.)

The degree requires a total of 14 courses (42 units).<sup>6</sup> Up to 21 units may be transferred from other appropriately accredited schools, and nine units may come from documented experiential learning.<sup>7</sup>

The requirements for the degree are:

- 1) TH501 Nature of God and Jesus Christ, or TH505 Doctrine of the Trinity
- 2) Two additional theology courses
- 3) BI501 Biblical Interpretation
- 4) Two additional courses in Old Testament or New Testament
- 5) One church history course
- 6) CM501 Pastoral Leadership

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<sup>5</sup> For example, if a student took the first GCS course in fall 2016 and completed the seventh course in spring 2021, six of those ten years have already elapsed, and the remaining seven courses must be taken in the next four years. The student would therefore have to increase the number of courses taken per year. In calculating the rate required for completion, the student should take into consideration that the thesis course may take more than one semester.

All GCS coursework must be completed within ten years. If the student takes longer than that, the student cannot graduate without re-taking or replacing courses that are older than ten years. An academic leave of absence may extend this limitation (see below).

If a student cannot commit to completion within the ten-year framework, the student is welcome to take courses at whatever pace is desired, by remaining in Master's Level Continuing Education. If the student's circumstances change and permit a quicker pace, the student may apply for a master's degree program at a later time.

<sup>6</sup> GCS courses completed in our non-degree programs will be automatically counted toward this degree as long as they were taken ten or fewer years before graduation.

<sup>7</sup> Credit must come from courses relevant to the GCS curriculum, from accredited institutions, and must not be older than eight years prior to enrollment at GCS. See below for details on transfer credits and credit for previous learning based on experience.

- 7) CM504 Practice of Ministry<sup>8</sup>
- 8) Two additional courses in Christian ministry
- 9) Two additional courses in any subject area
- 10) Either CM549 Christian Ministry Thesis or TM501 Theology of Ministry. Either course requires a summative exam as a prerequisite. CM549 is recommended for those who hope to go on to get a MDiv degree.
- 11) The student must inform the Registrar that the MPS degree is desired.<sup>9</sup>
- 12) Grade point average of 2.7 or higher.

*Program Goal:* In the Master of Pastoral Studies degree, we seek to prepare the student for the spiritual responsibilities of the clergy.

*Program Outcomes:*

1. Students who complete the MPS requirements will be able to interpret the biblical text, and will be able to describe the biblical text as a historical document and an inspired and authoritative guide for Christian life and ministry.
  - This objective is verified by the students' ability to write papers in biblical studies courses.
2. Students will be able to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions, and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of the word of God.
  - This objective is verified through student papers in theology courses.

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<sup>8</sup> CM504 is required for all students who begin their studies in 2019 or later. It is highly recommended for those who started their studies earlier.

<sup>9</sup> Some students may qualify for the MPS but do not wish to receive it, because their real goal is the MDiv, and more courses will be required if two degrees are desired.



3. Students will gain a broad perspective on acts of the Holy Spirit in the developing church since the first century.
  - This objective is attained by a church history course and verified with papers and a proctored exam.
4. Students will grow in spiritual maturity and in leadership skills needed in churches and other Christian ministries.
  - This objective is attained and verified by Christian ministry courses.
5. Students will develop pastoral skills such as preaching, counseling, teaching, training, mentoring, and leading in service.
  - This objective is attained by Christian ministry courses; the specific skills learned will depend in part on which courses the students choose to take.
6. Students will be able to evaluate themselves as unique persons building strong relationships within the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.
  - This objective is verified in ministry courses, and especially in the capstone course.

**b. Master of Theological Studies (MTS)**

Students may enter the MTS program if the following requirements are met:

- a) Must have completed 21 semester units of GCS courses with a GPA of 2.7 or better.
- b) Must have completed at least two courses in theology.
- c) Students must be able to take courses at a rate that would allow them to complete the program within ten years of when they

first began taking GCS courses.<sup>10</sup>

If students meet these requirements and wish to be classified as a master's degree student, they can be accepted as a candidate for the MTS degree. (This is also called matriculation.)

The degree requires a total of 14 courses (42 units).<sup>11</sup> Up to 21 units may be transferred from other appropriately accredited schools, and nine units may come from documented experiential learning.<sup>12</sup>

The requirements for the degree are:

- 1) TH501 Nature of God and Jesus Christ
- 2) TH502 Nature of Humanity and Salvation
- 3) TH503 The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Last Things
- 4) Two additional theology courses
- 5) BI501 Biblical Interpretation
- 6) Two additional courses in biblical studies
- 7) Two church history courses<sup>13</sup>
- 8) CM501 Pastoral Leadership
- 9) Two additional courses in any subject area
- 10) TH519 Theological Thesis, which requires a summative exam as a prerequisite and requires a research paper.
- 11) Student must inform the Registrar that the MPS degree is desired. (Some students may wish to pursue the MDiv without

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<sup>10</sup> See footnote 5 for details.

<sup>11</sup> GCS courses completed in our non-degree program will be automatically counted toward this degree as long as they were taken ten or fewer years before graduation. If a student wants to receive *both* the MPS and the MTS, a total of 78 units must be completed, including the specific courses required for each degree.

<sup>12</sup> Credit must come from courses relevant to the GCS curriculum, from appropriately accredited institutions, and must not be older than eight years prior to enrollment at GCS. See below for details on transfer credits and credit for previous learning based on experience.

<sup>13</sup> We currently offer only two courses in church history. However, we do not specify that these two particular courses are requirements for the MTS degree. If the student has transfer credit for another church history course, or if GCS adds an additional course in church history, those courses may also be used to meet the church history requirements of the MTS degree.

first obtaining the MTS, since more courses will be required if two degrees are desired.)

12) Grade point average of 2.7 or higher.

*Program Goal:* In the Master of Theological Studies degree, we seek to help students attain a solid theological foundation for personal reflection, to clarify the underpinnings of work within the church, or to be an entry point for further study in the academy.

*Program Outcomes:*

1. Students who complete the MTS requirements will be able to interpret the biblical text, and will be able to describe the biblical text as a historical document and an inspired and authoritative guide for Christian life and ministry.
  - This objective is verified by the students' ability to write papers in the introductory hermeneutics course, and will be further developed and verified in additional biblical courses.
2. Students will be able to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions, and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of the word of God.
  - This objective is verified through student papers in three required theology courses and additional electives.
3. Students will gain a broad perspective on acts of the Holy Spirit in the developing church since the first century to the modern era.
  - This objective is attained by two church history courses and verified with papers and exams.
4. Students will be able to conduct theological research and develop an argument in favor of a theological position, using generally accepted academic conventions.

- This outcome will be verified by the capstone course.
5. Students will develop the capacity for critical reflection on the implications of incarnational faith for Christian character, ministry, and social responsibility.
- This will be verified in essays and exams, particularly in CM501, CM504, TH503, 515, and 519.

**c. Master of Divinity (MDiv)**

Students who wish to enter the Master of Divinity program must meet the following requirements:

- a) Must have a previous bachelor's or master's degree.
- b) Must have completed 36 semester units (either at GCS or relevant courses at another school) with a GPA of 3.0 or better.
- c) Must have completed at least three courses in Christian ministry and three courses in theology.
- d) Students must inform the Registrar of their desire to obtain the MDiv, and they must plan on taking courses at a rate that will allow them to complete the program within ten years.<sup>14</sup>

The MDiv degree requires at least 72 units.<sup>15</sup> GCS courses completed in our non-degree program will be automatically

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<sup>14</sup> If the student does not have another degree, the ten years begins when the student first takes a GCS course. If the student has a degree from another appropriately accredited school, the ten years begins when the student first takes a GCS course. If the student has the MPS or MTS degree from GCS, the situation is similar to having a degree from another school: a) up to 36 previous semester units may transfer in to the MDiv program, and b) the ten years begins when the student first takes a GCS course after obtaining the MPS or MTS. A student who wishes to have two GCS degrees (e.g., MTS and MDiv) must take at least 78 units.

<sup>15</sup> The MDiv normally entails 25 courses: 22 courses at 3 units each, and 3 courses at 2 units each. The actual number of courses may vary if students have transfer credits, experiential learning, or independent study.

counted toward a master's degree as long as they were taken ten or fewer years before graduation. Up to 36 units may come from a combination of transfer credit or documented previous learning.<sup>16</sup>

**The requirements for the degree are:**

**Biblical studies: 5 courses, 15 units**

- 1) BI501 Biblical Interpretation
- 2) BI522 The Gospels
- 3) BI524 Epistles of Paul
- 4) One Old Testament course
- 5) One additional course in biblical studies

**Church history: 2 courses, 6 units**

- 6) Two church history courses

**Christian ministry: 7 courses, 21 units**

- 7) CM501 Pastoral Leadership
- 8) CM503 Christian Counseling
- 9) CM504 Practice of Ministry
- 10) CM510 Polity of Grace Communion International
- 11) CM511 Homiletics
- 12) Two additional courses in Christian ministry

**Field Education: 3 courses, 6 units**

- 13) FE501, FE502, FE503 Field Education 1, 2 & 3

**Theology: 6 courses, 18 units**

- 14) TH501 Nature of God and Jesus Christ
- 15) TH502 Nature of Humanity and Salvation
- 16) TH503 The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Last Things
- 17) TH515 Theological Ethics
- 18) Two additional theology courses

**Additional**

- 19) One additional course from any subject area

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<sup>16</sup> Credit must come from courses relevant to the GCS curriculum, from accredited institutions, and must not be older than eight years prior to enrollment at GCS. See below for details on transfer credits and credit for previous learning based on experience.

- 20) A research thesis, written for CM549<sup>17</sup>, TH519. This counts as a ministry or theology elective, depending on the topic of the research.
- 21) CM599 Master of Divinity Capstone, which requires a summative exam as a prerequisite.
- 22) All courses must be passed with a grade of C+ or better; the grade point average must be 3.0 or higher.

*Program Goal:* In the Master of Divinity program, we seek to help students attain a solid biblical and theological foundation for personal reflection, to clarify the underpinnings of work within the church or parachurch ministry, to help the student attain skills needed in ministry, and, if the student desires, be an entry point for further study in the academy.

*Program Outcomes:*

1. Students who complete the MDiv requirements will be able to interpret the biblical text, and will be able to describe the biblical text as a historical document and an inspired and authoritative guide for Christian life and ministry.
  - This objective is verified by the students' ability to write papers in the introductory hermeneutics course, and is developed and further verified in additional biblical courses.
2. Students will be able to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions, and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of the word of God.
  - This objective is verified through student papers in three required theology courses and additional electives.
3. Students will have a theological foundation for thinking about contemporary social and ethical issues.

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<sup>17</sup> TM501 option B, taken before 2021, is equivalent to CM549.

- This objective is attained and verified in the course on Theological Ethics.
4. Students will gain a broad perspective on how the Holy Spirit has been working in the church from the first century to the modern era.
    - This objective is attained by two church history courses and verified with papers and exams.
  5. Students will grow in spiritual maturity and in leadership skills needed in the church and related ministries.
    - This objective is attained and verified by Christian ministry courses.
  6. Students will develop pastoral skills such as preaching, counseling, teaching, training, mentoring, and leading in service.
    - This objective is attained by Christian ministry courses.
  7. Students will be able to evaluate themselves as unique persons who discern their calling and build strong relationships that draw on and bear witness to the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.
    - This outcome will be verified by CM501 and other ministry courses.
  8. Students will see themselves as called by God to serve the church (or church related ministries) in which they continually integrate their personal skills, spiritual gifts, and theological academic training. This will help students see the value of education, leading to a lifelong commitment to continuing education even after they graduate.
    - This objective is attained and developed throughout the program, but especially in the capstone course.

## II. Admissions Policies

### A. Location of student

Some U.S. states have regulations that make it financially prohibitive for us to do business in that state. For this reason, we are not currently accepting students in Alabama, Iowa, or Michigan. This may change in the future. If you are from one of those states, please let us know of your interest.

### B. Technological requirements

You must have access to a computer connected to the internet. If you are reading this *Catalog*, you probably already meet the requirements. Dial-up connections will be sufficient for most classes, but a few classes have video materials, which will display better if you have a DSL or cable connection.

You may use any of the common browsers: Chrome, Edge, Firefox, etc.

Most of our course lectures are in PDF format. The PDF pages are designed for full-size computers; tablets may provide an adequate display, but the materials may be difficult to read on smaller devices.

We require that you have a word-processing program, such as Microsoft Word. Other word-processing programs are also suitable, such as the free programs [Google Docs](#), [LibreOffice](#), and [WPS Office](#).

We recommend that you also have a webcam with a microphone, for taking proctored exams. The oral defense of the master's thesis must be done either by webcam or in person. The internet connection must be able to transmit video.

For an orientation of how to navigate the website, see below.



## C. Academic requirements

Pastoral and theological education involves a significant amount of reading and writing, and our program requires extensive use of computers connected to the internet. If any prospective student has difficulty with any of these tasks, the student should contact us regarding the details and concerns they may have.

Applicants must be at least 21 years old.

GCS offers graduate-level courses that may be used for a master's degree. A bachelor's degree<sup>18</sup> is required for entry into the master's degree programs; see exception below. Proof of degree in an official transcript is required.<sup>19</sup> Transcripts from institutions outside of the U.S. and Canada may need to be evaluated by World Educational Services and (if necessary) translated into English. Students must pay the WES fee.<sup>20</sup> Contact us to see if this will be needed for your transcripts.

Applicants must have attained a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (on a 4 point scale), in their highest degree earned. Those with a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0 receive provisional acceptance; they must attain a grade of B or better in each of their first four GCS courses for the student to be granted full acceptance status at GCS. Those with a GPA less than 2.5 may be considered, but are not automatically accepted, even for provisional status. Provisional students may take only one course in their first semester, only one in the second semester, and if

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<sup>18</sup> The degree must come from an institution that is accredited by an agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or the U.S. Department of Education, or a foreign equivalent listed in the *International Handbook of Universities*.

<sup>19</sup> If the student submits an application and there is not enough time for official transcripts to arrive, in some circumstances the student may be admitted on a provisional basis and may register and pay the tuition. No credit will be given if an acceptable transcript is not received before the end of that semester; no refunds will be given.

<sup>20</sup> In October 2016, the WES Course-by-course fee was \$160.

their GPA is then above 3.0, they may take more than one in subsequent semesters.

If English is not the student's native language, and if the student has not earned a bachelor's or higher degree at an accredited institution where English is the language of instruction, then students must have a TOEFL score of at least 550 on the paper-based test, or 80 on the internet-based test. The student must have the test results sent to the GCS Registrar.

Individuals with a high school diploma, extensive ministry experience<sup>21</sup> and some college courses, but without an accredited bachelor's degree, may petition for provisional acceptance. They must submit an essay or other evidence that they are able to do graduate-level work.<sup>22</sup> Students must earn a GPA of at least 3.0 in their first four courses. If the student is accepted, there is no guarantee that they can be accepted into any master's degree program. No more than 10 percent of the students in a master's degree program can be admitted without a bachelor's degree. Students must have either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree to enter the Master of Divinity program.

#### **D. Notification of acceptance**

Students will be notified of acceptance or non-acceptance within two weeks after all application materials are received. After we receive the applicant's transcript(s), letter of recommendation, and all other required documentation, and we accept the student, we send the student an enrollment agreement. The student is to sign this and mail it to the Registrar. The student is not officially enrolled until the

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<sup>21</sup> "Extensive ministry experience" means at least ten years' experience as a senior pastor or in a full-time (either paid or unpaid) ministry position.

<sup>22</sup> One way to demonstrate graduate-level ability is to document that you have successfully completed training programs comparable to graduate-level courses, and write an essay about what you have learned through such programs and experiences. A written essay is important, because all GCS courses require a substantial amount of writing.

signed enrollment agreement is on file in our offices. We will also sign it, and mail it back to the student within one week. If the student is admitted on a provisional basis, that will be noted on the enrollment agreement. See below for our enrollment agreement.

**E. Credit for prior learning, also called experiential learning**

Candidates for the master's degree may be given up to nine units of credit for previous learning, including pastoral experience, correspondence courses, pastoral training programs, seminars in a relevant topic, or self-directed study. The application for credit involves documentation of work done, what was learned, and how it is applied in your ministry. Credit is granted based on the extent of learning, not for length of the experiences. For further details and to apply for this credit, see the document on <https://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23#section-3>. For the fee, see "Fees" section below. We cannot award credit for previous learning if a person does not have a bachelor's degree.

**F. Transfer credit**

If another seminary offers a course we do not offer, or offers it at a more convenient time, you may want to take the course there, and transfer the credits to GCS. Please contact us before you do this, because not all credits will transfer. Graduate courses taken from appropriately accredited institutions will be considered for credit toward the DCM or toward one of the master's degrees. We reserve the right to refuse transfer credits for any reason. Note the following:

1. Credit can be given only for graduate-level courses in which the student has received B or higher, or a "pass" in pass/fail systems.
2. The courses must come from an institution that is accredited by an agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation or the U.S. Department of Education, or an accepted foreign equivalent listed in the *International Handbook of Universities*.

3. We will consider courses that were taken in traditional schools, online schools, military schools, etc., as long as they have the appropriate accreditation.
4. Transcripts from institutions outside of the U.S. and Canada may need to be evaluated by World Educational Services and (if necessary) translated into English. Students must pay the WES fee. Contact us to see if this will be needed for your transcripts.
5. A maximum of 21 semester units may be transferred into a master's degree program.<sup>23</sup>
6. The courses must have been taken within eight years before enrollment at GCS.
7. Courses must be relevant to the GCS curriculum. If the course is not directly comparable to a course offered by GCS, the course may in some cases be accepted as counting for an elective in our program. For example, a graduate-level course in public speaking, coupled with experience in giving sermons, might be accepted as equivalent to Homiletics in our Christian ministry category.
8. Documentation must include 1) an official sealed transcript sent to us directly from the institution in which the course was completed, and 2) a description of the course from the institution's catalog or from the course syllabus. The student will generally need to supply this description.
9. Fill out and send the form for transfer credit<sup>24</sup> to Registrar, Grace Communion Seminary, 3120 Whitehall Park Dr., Charlotte, NC, 28273.

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<sup>23</sup> Since our programs are built around three-unit courses, transfer students may need to supplement the credits to bring them to a multiple of three. This may be done with an independent study class or with credit for previous learning.

<sup>24</sup> See the home page of our website, under the heading "Admissions & Records."

10. We will inform you by e-mail of whether transfer credit has been granted within 30 days. If credit is denied, we will inform you of the reasons. If you wish to appeal this decision, you should send a written explanation to the Dean of Faculty, explaining why you disagree with our reasons. The Dean will discuss the matter with the President, and no further appeal is possible.

## **G. Terms of Admission**

To access our course material, you will need access to the Internet, and you will need to be able to read PDF documents. For final exams in some courses, you may need a camera connected to your computer so that your exams can be proctored. For a master's degree you must satisfactorily complete a thesis.

Our Admission Agreement includes the following:

**Student obligation:** All GCS students are initially enrolled in the Master's Level Courses study option. Students register online for each graduate course and may select any course in keeping with any prerequisites. To receive a Master's degree (usually fourteen courses, each course = 3 credits), you must satisfactorily complete the specific requirements of the program, including the capstone course, paper, and presentation (if required). To access course material, you will find it helpful to have Adobe Acrobat Reader or some other PDF reader (free) which can be downloaded by clicking the link on our student information page, <https://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23>. All course material is copyrighted by GCS and cannot be distributed without prior written permission.

**Institution's obligation:** GCS will provide the course(s) in which you enroll so that you can complete it within a thirteen-week semester. Courses will be placed online in a timely manner to enable you to schedule your available time over the thirteen weeks of the course. All material will be readily accessed online.

**Course Extension:** You will be provided the courses on a trimester basis. A student may request a course extension of three weeks to complete assignments and tests. If students determine they will need a course extension, they must email the instructor and Registrar to request the extension on or before the Monday of the 10th week of the course (which is also the day final lectures are posted). The fee for an extension is \$50. If the extension is granted, all missing course work must be made up in consultation with the instructor within three weeks after the final paper was due, unless otherwise arranged. All course work and exams must be completed prior to registering for a new course.

**Allowable program completion time:** All courses at GCS must be completed within ten years, unless a formal leave of absence is requested by the student and granted by GCS.

**Program cancellation requests:** Students who wish to cancel their registration within five days of signing this enrollment agreement will be due a refund of all tuition paid. **Course cancellation requests** must be conveyed in writing to the registrar, as required by the state in which we are incorporated. This will be sufficient for ensuring any refund owed you. Refunds will be given within thirty days of requests. [See refund policy below.]

**Privacy statement:** Grace Communion Seminary respects your privacy and the privacy and security of the information you provide. Except as required by our accreditation agency, the Seminary does not sell, disseminate, or disclose to entities outside the Seminary the information you provide. The Seminary may use some of the information you provide to analyze trends and create summary statistics for the Seminary and the accreditation organization, and/or any government report as may be required by law.

**Transfer credits:** Acceptance for transfer of GCS academic credits is determined by the receiving institution.

**Fees:** see page 44.

**Refund policy:** see page 41.

**Complaints/grievances:** see page 42.

## **H. Course enrollment agreement**

In the enrollment agreement that students must sign electronically before they can register for a course, we include the following:<sup>25</sup>

**COURSE FEE:** \$660.<sup>26</sup> (Must be paid in full during course registration period.)

**COURSE LOCATION:** Distance Education: [www.gcs.edu](http://www.gcs.edu)

**CREDITS/LESSONS:** 3 Semester Credits/ 10 lectures

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** [varies according to course; it is included on the Course Registration Site and descriptions are linked from <https://www.gcs.edu/academics/list-of-courses/>]

**COURSE REGISTRATION:** Registration begins two weeks prior to each semester start (Spring Semester, approximately first 10 days of January; Summer Semester, approximately first 10 days of May; Fall Semester, approximately first 10 days of September.) For exact dates, see the PDF document “Course Schedule” at <https://www.gcs.edu/course-schedule/>.

**COURSE LESSONS AND MATERIALS:** Course lectures and other online materials are provided on the GCS website on a weekly basis.

**INSTITUTION’S OBLIGATION:** You will be provided this course on a semester basis. Courses will be placed online in a timely manner

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<sup>25</sup> The course enrollment agreement for capstone courses and Field Education is slightly different, since there are no lectures, and the extension fee is different for capstone courses.

<sup>26</sup> This fee, like others, may change in future years.

to enable you to schedule your available time over the thirteen weeks of each course. All material will be provided so that it can be readily accessed online.

**NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY:** Grace Communion Seminary admits students of any race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

**STUDENT’S OBLIGATIONS:** Acquiring required textbooks before the start of the course is the responsibility of the student. No textbooks are sold by GCS; a list of textbooks for each course is found on the GCS website. (Go to <https://www.gcs.edu/academics/list-of-courses/>, click on the course, then “short syllabus.”)

Students are required to meet the posted dates for completion of assignments; when hardships are encountered that may cause delay in completing assignments, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the professor for consideration of an extension. If a course extension is needed, the student must follow the process stated under **COURSE EXTENSION**.

**TERMINATION DATE OF AGREEMENT:** The Course Enrollment Agreement ends 20 weeks after the course start date. Students must request a Course Extension if they wish to extend completion of assignments beyond the 13th week of the course.

**COURSE EXTENSION:** The student may request a course extension of three weeks to complete assignments and tests. If students determine they will need a course extension, they must email the instructor and Registrar to request the extension on or before the Monday of the 10th week of the course (which is also the day final



lectures are posted). Contact the Registrar at 800-851-2611 (registrar@gcs.edu). The fee for an extension is \$55. If the extension is granted, all missing course work must be made up in consultation with the instructor within three weeks after the final paper was due, unless otherwise arranged. All course work and exams must be completed prior to registering for a new course.

**COURSE CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY:** Cancellation requests must be in writing<sup>27</sup>, sent to the Registrar. This will be sufficient for ensuring any refund owed you. Refunds will be given within 30 days of requests.<sup>28</sup>

Refund policy for courses for credit:

1. Students who cancel before the first class will receive a full refund (\$660.00).
2. For students who cancel during the first week, a refund of tuition shall be \$660.00 (100% of the tuition cost).
3. If a student withdraws from a course after the first week, the refund shall be \$528.00 (80% of the tuition cost).
4. If a student withdraws from a course after the second week, the refund shall be \$462.00 (70% of the tuition cost).
5. If a student withdraws from a course after the third week, the refund will be \$396.00 (60% of the tuition cost).
6. If a student withdraws from a course after the fourth week, the refund will be \$330.00 (50% of the tuition cost).
7. If a student withdraws from a course after the fifth week, the refund will be \$264.00 (40% of the tuition cost.)
8. If a student withdraws from a course after the sixth week, the refund will be \$198.00 (30% of the tuition cost.)
9. If a student withdraws from a course after the seventh week, the

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<sup>28</sup> For example: If you paid \$660 tuition and withdrew during the sixth week, the refund would be 40 percent, or \$264.

- refund will be \$132.00 (20% of the tuition cost.)
10. If a student withdraws from a course after the eighth week, the refund will be \$66.00 (10% of the tuition cost.)
  11. There will be no refund after the ninth week. A grade will be assigned based upon course requirements.

Courses may be dropped with the posting of a grade of withdrawal (W) at any time through the ninth week of the semester. See the *GCS Academic Catalog* [i.e., this document; see below] for grading policies regarding course withdrawals. Refunds for audits are at the same weekly percentage as refunds for courses taken for credit.<sup>29</sup>

**TRANSFERABILITY OF CREDITS:** As with all institutions of higher learning, the transferability of credits earned at Grace Communion Seminary is at the complete discretion of an institution to which the student may seek to transfer. If a student wishes to transfer credits to another institution, or wishes to use a GCS degree to meet admission requirements of another institution, the student is advised to confirm in advance with that other institution that the GCS credits or degree will be acceptable.

**COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES:** If a student has a grievance with a specific instructor, whether about student grades or conduct, course content, or serious deviation from the published syllabus, the student should first attempt to resolve the problem with the instructor. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached within two weeks, the student should contact the Dean of Faculty ([dean@gcs.edu](mailto:dean@gcs.edu)) with a full description of the situation. (If the Dean of Faculty is the instructor, then contact the President, ([president@gcs.edu](mailto:president@gcs.edu))). The Dean will consult with the instructor and the President and will notify the student of the decision within 30 days.

If the grievance is about academic disqualification, dismissal,

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<sup>29</sup> Refunds will be given within 30 days after the student has given notice of withdrawal. If special circumstances exist, such as serious health problems or a death in the family, GCS may deem that a larger refund is appropriate.

financial matters or GCS policies, the student should first attempt to resolve the problem with the Registrar (registrar@gcs.edu). If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the student should contact the Dean of Faculty. The Dean will consult with the Registrar and will notify the student of the decision.

Students may appeal financial and academic matters to the North Carolina Post-Secondary Education Complaints, c/o Student Complaints, University of North Carolina General Administration, 910 Raleigh Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2688.<sup>30</sup> Students may also contact our accrediting agency, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, 1101 17th Street NW, Suite 808, Washington, D.C. 20036, phone 202-234-5100, email info@deac.org. website: [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org).

Grace Communion Seminary is registered with Maryland's Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to offer online education to Maryland students. Students from the state of Maryland may also appeal to the Office of the Attorney General or the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Complaints should be directed to: Maryland Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division, 200 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21202. 410-528-8662/888-743-0823 (toll free)

Grace Communion Seminary has received a Letter of Exemption from Certification issued by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to offer church-related programs/courses and grant church-related degrees.

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<sup>30</sup> If students are unable to resolve a complaint through the institution's grievance procedures, they may review the Student Complaint Policy, complete the Student Complaint Form (PDF) located on the State Authorization webpage at <https://www.northcarolina.edu/stateauthorization>, and submit the complaint to studentcomplaint@northcarolina.edu or at the address given above.

### III. Fees and Financial Aid

#### A. Tuition and Fees

1. Application fee: \$50
2. Transcript –

A transcript of your previous education is required, but that fee is set by and paid to the sending institution.

Transcripts that are not in English must be sent to us by way of World Education Services, and WES requires a fee for the evaluation of an international transcript.

If you want GCS to send a transcript to another institution, the fee is \$10 for normal service, \$25 for expedited service within the U.S.A. You are allowed one transcript at no charge.
3. Cost per course taken for credit: Tuition, \$220 per credit hour, \$660 for most courses – must be paid by credit or debit card at the time of registration for the course.<sup>31</sup>
4. Cost of books
  - a. Cost of assigned textbooks ranges from about \$20 to \$100 per course.
  - b. The “average” course requires textbooks costing \$50.
  - c. Students in some nations may need to pay for expedited shipping in order to get textbooks on time.
5. Course extension fee, for three weeks: \$55.
6. Audit cost per course: \$330.
7. Assessment fee for previous learning: \$73 for each unit requested.

This fee is not refundable, even if no credit is awarded.
8. Capstone continuation fee: \$220 (if more than two semesters are needed for the capstone project).
8. Graduation fee – \$150. Attendance is not required, but if you participate in the ceremony, the fee is required.

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<sup>31</sup> Personal checks may be accepted only if submitted two weeks prior to registration. Tuition may increase in the future.

9. Incidental costs that vary from one student to another:
  - a. Costs to remain connected to the internet
  - b. Costs involved in taking proctored exams – either a webcam or paying third-party proctoring fees
  - c. Costs involved in using a library – perhaps interlibrary loan fees, or postage to return books to the GCS library
10. Total costs for the Master’s Degree: At our current tuition charges, the cost of the program would total to about \$9290, plus \$700 to \$750 for books. The cost for the MDiv program would total to about \$15,890, plus \$1000 to \$1200 for books.<sup>32</sup> The cost may be less if the student is able to document previous experiential learning; the total will increase if our tuition increases before the student has completed the program.

For cancellation and refund policies, see page 42.

## **B. Financial aid**

Partial scholarships are available to GCI pastors and to those who are part of the official GCI internship program. For details, ask the Registrar. There are no other discounts. The most likely source of additional financial assistance is the congregation in which the student is currently ministering.

GCS does not participate in federal Title IV programs, and student loans may not be deferred by enrolling in GCS.

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<sup>32</sup> This does not include any costs for computer equipment or internet connections; these costs vary widely and in most cases the student would incur them anyway.

## IV. Academic Policies

### A. Dual registration

A student who wishes to register at another college while in attendance at this institution may do so without formal approval.

### B. Time limits

All courses at GCS must be completed within ten years. Requirements for a degree are based on GCS policies on the date that the student first enrolled, or the current *Catalog*, whichever the student chooses. We keep electronic copies of our older catalogs, but students should download a copy for themselves when they first enroll.

### C. Length of program

Since most of our students are part-time students, it often takes them three years to take the first seven courses, when they can matriculate into a master's degree program. After that, it is usually necessary to take another three years to complete the MPS or MTS, or another six years for the MDiv. Fulltime students can complete the degree in less time. The maximum length of time is ten years (which may be extended if a formal leave of absence was obtained; see page 54 below for a suggested strategy). We recommend that new students take only one course in their first semester. A student must get advance approval to take more than three courses per semester. Students also need advance approval to register for another course if they have not yet completed a course from the previous semester.

### D. Registration deadlines

Students must register before the first week of the course and pay for the tuition and fees with credit or debit card at the time of registration. Students should consult the short syllabus online to order textbooks in advance of the start of the course. GCS does not sell textbooks; they must be obtained from online booksellers or local bookstores.

**E. Auditing courses (access to course materials, with no credit)**

Students auditing a course receive no grades or course credit for the class toward completion of the degree. Instructors sometimes require audit students to read the textbooks and participate in the discussions. Students who are enrolled in a course and wish to change their status to an audit can do so at any time before the final assignment is due. Some tuition may be refunded if this change is made in the first two weeks; see “Tuition and Fees.” Access to lectures and other course materials will be granted throughout the semester. Auditing students should introduce themselves in the first discussion forum; instructors may have additional requirements for those who audit. Auditing students should treat the course materials and discussions as confidential (see Student Code of Conduct, part 6.)

**F. Students with disabilities**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, we will provide reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. If special services are needed, please contact the Dean of Faculty, dean@gcs.edu.

**G. Grading policies**

Grades are the means by which instructors tell students whether they are meeting the goals of the course. If you are not learning what you should, then we do you a disservice if we cause you to think you have mastered the material.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> If you are unable to do a particular task of ministry well, and yet we make you think that you are fully capable of the task, and we thereby encourage you to accept ministry responsibilities that exceed your capabilities, then we have done a disservice to you and to all those affected by that ministry. If you attempt further academic work at another institution because we have overrated your academic abilities, then we have done a disservice to you and to the other academic institution.

We want GCS classes to be helpful in your ministry, but the classes are not a measure of your value in ministry. Grades are merely an academic measurement to give you feedback – they are not a measure of intelligence or spirituality. If you did the best you could in the time that you had available, and got a B, then that is an honorable grade. Just as no believer has every spiritual gift, so also no student is good at every subject. People who are good pastors may not be particularly gifted at academic work (and vice versa!).

A indicates *outstanding* work, with evidence of *remarkable* skill, creativity or energy. We are pleased with the quality of work that GCS students submit, but if we judge everyone as “remarkable” and “outstanding,” our expectations are too low.

B is an honorable grade, showing work and comprehension beyond the minimum, with some evidence of extra effort, achievement or improvement.

C is for students who fulfilled the assignments, but did not do very well in them.

C- = Below expectations, either because some aspect of the assignment has not been fulfilled or because the number of errors interferes with clear communication. A grade of C- may also indicate failure to follow directions, or failure to demonstrate effort and improvement.

D is given for unsatisfactory work, with no credit given.

F is given when the student did not complete the assignments as directed, or because the level of performance is well below an acceptable level for graduate level work.

The final grade is usually calculated based on a 100-point scale. In most courses, letter grades are assigned as follows:



95 - 100 % = A	77 - 79 % = C+
90 - 94 % = A-	74 - 76 % = C
87 - 89 % = B+	70 - 73 % = C-
84 - 86 % = B	60 - 69 % = D
80 - 83 % = B-	00 - 69 % = F

In general, GCS students are capable of doing good academic work, and they rarely get a C if they devote at least 135 hours for the course. If they receive a C, it is usually because (sometimes through no fault of their own) they did not give the course the time that it needed. However, simply putting in the time is no guarantee that you will receive a B or higher – grades are given based on the quality of the work that we receive.

If you have a complaint about a grade, you should first attempt to resolve the problem with the instructor. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the student should contact the Dean of Faculty (if the Dean is the instructor, then contact the President) with a full description of the situation. The Dean will consult with the instructor and the President, and will notify the student of the decision.

## **H. Computing grade point averages**

Grade point averages are used as criteria for continued enrollment at the Seminary and for graduation. The grade point average for a particular period is determined by dividing the total number of semester hours of all courses for which the student received a grade into the total number of grade points. If a student has taken a course more than once, only the higher grade is included in the calculation. The following table shows the grade points allocated, for each semester unit, to each letter grade:

Letter	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
Points	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	0	0

## **I. Computer support and complaint procedures**

If a student has a complaint about technical issues on our website, the

student should first seek help from computer support services, at support@gcs.edu, or by phoning 1-980-495-3979. If the support personnel are unable to help, please contact the Dean of Faculty (dean@gcs.edu) with a description of the situation.

If a student has a complaint about academic matters or administrative issues, see section II.H.

## **J. Student records**

Students may change their own email address on the GCS website,<sup>34</sup> but such changes should also be sent to the Registrar. Students should also notify the Registrar if there is a change in phone number or physical mailing address.

GCS does not issue student ID cards. We can set up a gcs.edu email address if the student needs one.

## **K. Academic freedom**

GCS offers education from a specific theological perspective. Our courses are biblically based, and representative of the tenets of our sponsoring denomination, Grace Communion International. For the *Statement of Beliefs*, go to <https://www.gci.org/articles/the-gci-statement-of-beliefs/>.

In course content where GCI does not have a denominational position, we endeavor to present a balanced evangelical, orthodox view. Instructors may present their own position on areas that are speculative, on which GCI has not taken a position.

Students may exercise academic freedom in critical thinking. Therefore, in research papers, discussion forums, etc., students are

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<sup>34</sup> After logging in to the website, click on your name in the extreme upper right corner, select “profile,” then “edit profile.”

permitted to argue in favor of a position different than that promoted by the course. When GCS instructors grade such submissions, they should grade on the quality of the research and analysis, not solely on the specific conclusions that have been reached.

When papers are evaluated by academic criteria, the acceptance of a paper as sufficient for the program does not necessarily imply that the conclusion has been accepted by the instructor, the seminary, or the sponsoring denomination.

If a student believes that the instructor is teaching something false, the student should first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the student and instructor cannot agree, the student may appeal to the Dean of Faculty. The Dean will discuss the matter with the instructor, and respond to the student within 14 days. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, either the Dean or the student may request that the matter be discussed by the Curriculum Committee, which will then make a recommendation to the President. Depending on the meeting schedule of the Curriculum Committee, this may take several months. In any case, the student should realize that we do not have time to write detailed responses to all the theological controversies that exist within Christianity, and even the most detailed of responses would not convince everyone. No further appeal is possible.

## **L. Privacy policy**

U.S. federal law (FERPA) mandates that:

1. Students have a right to see what is in their educational files.
2. Students have the right to challenge information in the file, or to insert a statement into the file if the student believes that the records are inaccurate, misleading or a violation of privacy.
3. Students can, but are not required to, waive the right to see certain items in their educational files, such as letters of recommendation.
4. Grades are confidential. If faculty use student assignments as

samples for future classes, all identifying details must be removed from the document. Grade information may be shared with other GCS faculty and staff for academic purposes.

5. GCS has the right to release basic facts about the student to anyone who asks:
  - student's name and years in which the student took classes at GCS.
  - whether the student is currently enrolled in a class.
  - whether the student has earned a degree.
6. Additionally, we may release more information about our students to an accreditation agency or government agency so they can contact those students to verify what we are doing. This includes names, addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, and previous educational qualifications. We will not release this information for other purposes.
7. Other than the above-listed information, GCS will not release additional information about the student without signed consent. Transcripts, grades and other personal information will not be released without written permission.
8. If students believe that GCS is not complying with the requirements of the federal law, they may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education.

#### **M. Transcript requests & grades**

Student records are confidential, so we cannot process a transcript request unless we receive a signed request and the appropriate payment. We cannot send a transcript if you have any outstanding obligations to the Seminary, such as library fines. Send all requests to the Registrar and include instructions on where the transcript should be mailed. We will retain your academic records permanently. You are allowed one transcript at no charge for your own records.

You can obtain your GCS Program Course Fulfillments (your

grades/progress report) by logging into your GCI account (online.gci.org). Once you are logged in, locate the “Education” tab at the top of the screen. If you click on it, it will take you to the GCS website — but don’t click. Just position the cursor over “Education” and a dropdown menu will appear. Click on “My GCS Program Course Fulfillments.” Your Course Fulfillments form will then appear, and you can print and/or download the form for your records.

## V. Academic Progress

GCS offers several academic milestones. Students may proceed step-by-step from one to another, toward one of the degrees:

1. Master's Level Courses – take courses as desired
2. Certificate of Theological Studies – four courses
3. Diploma of Christian Ministry – seven courses
4. Master of Pastoral Studies – 14 courses
5. Master of Theological Studies – 14 courses
6. Master of Divinity – 25 courses

### A. Maintaining satisfactory progress

Since all coursework for a master's degree must be completed within ten years, and at least 14 courses are required for a degree, students who want to obtain a degree should plan on taking at least two courses per year.<sup>35</sup> We advise that you begin by taking program requirements rather than electives. Since a GPA of 2.7 is required for graduation, you should aim for a grade of B- or better in all your classes.

Most courses require you to log in to the website at least once or twice a week, either to participate in a forum or to submit a written assignment. Failure to do so may hurt your grade; see the respective courses for their policies on forum participation.

### B. Suggested sequence

Most courses do not have formal prerequisites. However, your educational experience may be more enjoyable if you follow the steps given below:

1. Begin with the foundational courses (they are required, if you are seeking a master's degree):

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<sup>35</sup> This can be reduced if the student has transfer credit or credit for previous learning.

- BI501 Biblical Interpretation – to establish Bible study skills.
  - CM501 Pastoral Leadership – to understand your strengths and weaknesses for service in the church.
  - TH501 Nature of God and Jesus Christ – to learn theological terms and basic concepts on God’s nature.
2. Take courses depending on your interests and our schedule of courses. Aim to fulfill the requirements of the Certificate first, and then meet the requirements of the Diploma of Christian Ministry.
  3. After you have taken seven courses, decide whether you wish to seek a master’s degree, and which degree you prefer. All courses for the degree must be completed within the ten years previous to your graduation. Calculate how many courses you will need, how much time you will have, and how many courses you will need to take each year. If you can commit to that pace, and have a GPA of 2.7 or higher, then you may apply for one of the master’s degree programs.
    - a. If your primary interest is theology, and you are willing to do a research thesis, you might wish to seek the Master of Theological Studies degree (14 courses).
    - b. If your primary interest is pastoral work, you may wish to seek the Master of Pastoral Studies degree (14 courses).
    - c. If you are interested in professional pastoral work, pastoral supervision, or further studies in chaplaincy or doctoral work, you might wish to pursue the Master of Divinity degree (25 courses). The MDiv is a considerable commitment. Since all work must be done within ten years, you would need to take about three courses each year, for ten years. Or if you study full-time, taking nine courses each year, you could finish the MDiv in three years.
    - d. We suggest the following strategy: Even if the MDiv is your primary goal, aim to meet most of the requirements of the MPS or MTS first. As you near completion of those requirements, you will be in a better position to estimate whether you will be able to finish the MDiv within ten years. If you don’t think you can, then you can

opt for the 42-unit degree as a good (and possibly transferrable) academic achievement. You may be able to resume your MDiv studies after that.

e. Aiming for the MPS or MTS might also be good if you want the MDiv but are able to take only two courses (6 units) each year. The first degree requires 42 units, so you could finish that in seven years. At that point you could “reset the clock” by getting the first degree, then transfer 36 units of that degree into the MDiv program and have up to ten more years to complete the remaining 42 units. If the requirements of the MDiv have changed, you will need to meet the requirements in effect at the time you resume your studies after the MPT/MTS. You will have taken at least 78 semester units over a span of 16 years or so.

4. You may also request transfer credit, if any, and request credit for relevant experiential learning. See our website for further instructions on those.
5. Choose your next courses to ensure that you will meet the requirements of the degree, including the required number of biblical studies courses, theology courses, church history, and ministry.<sup>36</sup>
6. Before you can register for a capstone course (CM549, TH519 or TM501), you must have earned at least 30 semester units, and you must pass a summative exam. Before you can register for the MDiv capstone, you must have at least 66 units, and pass a summative exam. See the syllabus of CM549, CM599, TM501, or TH519 for what that exam will include and how it will be administered.

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<sup>36</sup> On [online.gci.org](https://online.gci.org), you can see an unofficial transcript of courses you have taken so far. Go to <https://online.gci.org/live/ScriptContent/Index.cfm> and login. Hover the cursor over the Education tab at top. A drop-down menu will appear; click on My GCS program course fulfillments. You may also discuss program requirements with our Registrar.



### **C. Incompletes**

A student will be given an *Incomplete* grade when all the following conditions apply:

- 1) whenever required course work is missing,
- 2) when that missing work would result in the student receiving a lower final grade and
- 3) when the student has formally requested an extension and paid the extension fee.

In all other instances, a regular letter grade is given with the missing work counted as “zero” or “fail.” If the extension is granted, all missing course work must be made up in consultation with the instructor *within three weeks after the final paper was due*, unless otherwise arranged. In cases of health or other personal difficulties, a grade of W may also be given.

Students cannot register for more courses if they have an incomplete.

### **D. Withdrawing from courses**

Courses may be dropped any time prior to the due date of the final examination or paper. These requests should be conveyed in writing to the Registrar and the instructor(s). (See “Course Enrollment Agreement,” above, for our refund policy.)

If a student drops a course before the tenth lecture is scheduled to be posted online, a refund will be made and a grade of W will be assigned whether or not the student is passing.

If the withdrawal is initiated after materials have been posted for the tenth week of the semester, a mark of W for Withdrawal will be assigned if the instructor informs the Registrar that the student had a passing grade at the date of the official withdrawal. A mark of F will be assigned if 1) the student is failing at the time of withdrawal and 2) the student withdraws after the tenth lecture is posted.

**E. Examination and course re-takes**

In general, we do not allow students take an examination again. We *do* allow students to take a course again (if they pay the tuition again), and only the highest grade is then counted in the GPA.

**F. Academic leave of absence**

If health or other unforeseen circumstances make it impossible for you to continue your GCS studies for six months or more, please contact the Registrar for a leave of absence. There is no charge for this, and it will extend the length of time you have to complete your degree.

The granting of a leave of absence indicates a continuing relationship with the Seminary and allows students to resume studies at a specific time without reapplying for admission to the Seminary. A leave of absence generally does not exceed four semesters in length. GCS courses taken more than ten years previous will not be counted toward degree requirements unless a formal leave of absence was requested.

**G. Inactive students**

If a student in Master's Level Courses has not taken a course in the past two years, or a student admitted to a master's degree program has not taken a course in one year, the student will be considered "inactive." A student may re-activate their status by contacting the Registrar and registering for a course.

**H. Academic probation**

Although a GPA of at least 2.7 is required for the degree (3.0 for the MDiv), students are not put on academic probation unless their GPA falls below 2.5. Academic probation serves as a warning that a student is in danger of academic disqualification. A student who has not achieved both a term and cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (C) or

higher at the close of a semester will be placed on academic probation. The student will be notified of this probationary status. The student may take only one class per semester, or two, with permission from the Dean.

### **I. Academic disqualification**

A student becomes academically disqualified and may not continue enrollment under any of the following conditions:

- 1) A student fails in six or more hours of course work in any given year.
- 2) A student on academic probation fails to achieve both a term and cumulative grade point average of 2.0 (C) or higher.

The student will be notified within one week of any disqualification. The President and Dean may waive academic disqualification if individual circumstances warrant such action.

### **J. Appeal of disqualification**

A student who becomes disqualified may appeal the disqualification by filing an appeal at the Registrar's Office within two weeks of the date of notification of disqualification.

After the appeal has been considered by the President and Dean, the Registrar will notify the student of the decision. Once this decision has been made, no further appeal is allowed.

Disqualified students are not eligible for readmission until at least three semesters have elapsed. If readmitted, the student will be on academic probation and will be expected to satisfy the requirements for removal from probation by the end of the term.

### **K. Student code of conduct**

GCS students are expected to:

- 1) Do their own work. Presenting another person's work as if it were your own is called plagiarism. Even if it is done accidentally, such as by carelessly failing to acknowledge a source, it is a serious violation of academic integrity. In general, any quote of more than five words in a row should be put within quote marks, and the source noted. The penalty for plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, is a failing grade for the assignment in which it occurs, or on the second offense, failure of the course. If plagiarism occurs a third time, the student will be terminated from the program and not allowed to take any more classes.

For more information about plagiarism, see Purdue University's Online Writing Lab:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/using\\_research/avoiding\\_plagiarism/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/index.html). For tips on avoiding plagiarism, either by paraphrasing or by using quote marks, see [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/using\\_research/avoiding\\_plagiarism/is\\_it\\_plagiarism.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html).

Extensive quoting does not fit the definition of "plagiarism" if the sources are given credit, but it may still be unethical. Quotes should not comprise more than 25 percent of any of your papers. We want to see your thoughts, not how much you can copy. Use quotes when they support your thoughts – do not use them as a substitute for your thinking. Most quotes need some sort of introduction or commentary from you, to indicate why you are including them – as an authoritative definition, for example, or a well-said conclusion to your research, or as a view you are trying to refute.

- 2) Do honest work. Honesty and integrity are foremost in the responsibility of the servant and minister of Jesus Christ. Inventing sources or quotes is a violation of academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty also includes cheating on an exam. You may be copying your own notes, but if notes are not allowed on the exam, then that is dishonest, and cause for failure of the course.

You must assume that you cannot use *any* materials unless you are specifically authorized to do so by your instructor. For example, some instructors permit the use of plain Bibles, those without study notes or chain references. In general, if external materials are permitted, you will need to be familiar with them already—otherwise you will not have enough time to complete the exam.

Helping other students cheat on exams or papers is also forbidden. It is also a violation of academic integrity to assist another student in plagiarism. For example, if you give your paper to another student knowing that they will probably copy it, you are participating in the dishonesty. If you give another student a copy of the exam questions, you are engaging in academic dishonesty.

Submitting the same paper, or substantial portions of a paper, for credit in more than one class is not allowed without advance permission.

- 3) Conduct themselves in a civil manner in online discussions. Students should refrain from name-calling, imputing motives or other *ad hominem* attacks on instructors or other students. Students should not use profanity or offensive terms; the discussion is to be conducted in a manner appropriate to academic discussions. Online discussions should be treated confidentially. The class website, and any email addresses obtained through the class, are not to be used for commercial activity, political activities, or for airing grievances. The topics permitted on discussion forums are at the discretion of the instructors.
- 4) Communicate. If problems arise that make it difficult for the student to participate in the class, it is the student's responsibility to communicate this to the instructor.
- 5) Remain connected. GCS classes are conducted online. We have the responsibility to keep our website functioning; it is the student's responsibility to be able to access our website. If a student's computer breaks down or if an internet connection is lost, it is the

student's responsibility to find another way to connect to the class, or to withdraw from the class. Students should check their email on a regular basis and ensure that email from gcs.edu is allowed through any spam filters. Check your spam folder the first week of each class.

- 6) Respect GCS copyrights and other properties. Students are not to attempt to damage or disrupt any part of the GCS website, nor attempt to enter parts of the website for which they are not authorized. Class materials may not be published in any form, or presented orally, without written permission from the President. Students should not make marks in any book from the GCS library, and should return books on time.

Class lectures, forum discussions, quizzes and exams should not be shared with others. Online discussions are confidential, and what a student writes in a forum should not be publicized in other places, unless permission has been granted in advance by the student. Even so, students should realize that confidences are not always kept, and should not write things that would cause them substantial harm if they were accidentally made more public.

Students should abide by all copyright laws – they are not to post copies of copyrighted materials on our website, for example. Students are allowed by the “fair use” provision of copyright law to make copies for research purposes – not to copy an entire book, but to copy a small part of the book.<sup>37</sup>

- 7) Repeated violations of these policies may lead to failure of a course and, if violations occur again in another course, dismissal from the seminary.

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<sup>37</sup> One rule of thumb (but not the only consideration) is that copying should not affect the commercial market for the book. It may be acceptable to make copies in lieu of using a library, but not to make a copy instead of purchasing the book. Further details on copyright law can be seen at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/using\\_research/strategies\\_for\\_fair\\_use.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/strategies_for_fair_use.html)

## **L. Disciplinary disqualification**

If students have repeated failures in academic honesty, repeated violations of student conduct (see above), or repeated failures of a course, GCS will terminate them as a student, and they will not be allowed to register for any more courses.

If students wish to withdraw from the Seminary, they may send that request in writing to the Registrar. They will no longer be counted as a student, and they will not receive any email information about upcoming courses or registration.

## **M. Holding of records**

Student records may be placed on a hold status because of financial or other obligations to the Seminary. While a student's records are on hold, registration will not be allowed, nor will transcripts of credits be released. Records will be held until the obligation is cleared.

## **N. Graduation**

Students must have a minimum GPA of 2.7 in order to graduate (3.0 for the MDiv). A student cannot graduate if there are any outstanding obligations to the Seminary, such as library fines. In order to graduate, students must complete a thesis *and* inform the Registrar that they want to graduate (in some cases MDiv students might complete a thesis well before they want to graduate). A diploma will be sent to the student when all requirements have been met.

Formal GCS graduation ceremonies will be held in conjunction with GCI denominational conferences, for all students who completed degree requirements since the previous ceremony. Attendance is not required. For those who want to participate, there is a fee to offset the costs of the ceremony. GCS does not give graduation honors or participate in an honor society.

**O. Counseling and Placement Services**

GCS does not offer any career services, job counseling or placement services. We do not promise any ordination, pastoral appointment, or employment. Our program is designed to assist personal and professional development in the roles in which our students are already serving, or those who simply want to learn more about the Bible, theology, and ministry.

**P. Alumni**

GCS allows alumni to audit courses for half price; we also give alumni electronic access to the GCS thesis library.



## VI. Study suggestions

### A. Course study materials

In each course, the materials you need are listed in the course syllabus. The syllabus tells you the textbooks you will need, whether there is an exam or research paper, and what the schedule for the course will probably be.

Most courses give you reading suggestions for each week. If your course does not, create your own schedule, reading perhaps 80-100 pages each week, to ensure that you are keeping pace with the work needed.

A few courses have additional study guides to guide you in studying for the final exam. Some level of anxiety is normal for students taking exams, but please be assured that the exam is designed to document what you know, not to point out your failures.

Most courses require certain textbooks, some online discussions, perhaps a written book review or reaction paper, sometimes a research paper or project. Most classes have either a final exam or a research paper. The specific requirements for each course are listed in the course syllabi. All short syllabi can be accessed from “course descriptions,” which are linked from <https://www.gcs.edu/academics/list-of-courses/>. Different students learn in different ways, but we offer here a few suggestions on how to study for your courses.

### B. Make a study schedule

In order to offer three semester units of credit, each course must involve at least 135 hours of student work, so that means 12 or so hours of reading, research, writing, or website work each week. You will have to be disciplined in your use of time – make yourself a schedule and stick to it. Since there is no specific meeting time, some students find it tempting to put things off – “I can do it later.” If you do this, it does not take long for a large backlog of work to accumulate, and that is discouraging.

It is important to keep on schedule – and even to work ahead, to make allowance for other unforeseen needs. Most of our students are involved in some sort of ministry, and emergencies are common in this line of work. If anyone in the congregation has a crisis, that crisis is shared with the pastor. Pastors thereby have more crises than anyone else, and part of good planning is to make allowance for such possibilities.

For many pastors, Monday is a day to relax after the weekend’s work. We encourage you to relax by reading – go to the website, download and print the lecture posted that week, review the assignments for the upcoming week or two, and get started! Establish a habit of reading at least 10 or so pages each day. You will understand the material better if you spread it out, rather than if you try to read 70 pages in one day.

Pace yourself. Don’t try to do it all in one day. “Very few people are good at reading large amounts at one time, particularly when the reading is dense. For this reason, it is normally better to schedule a little time each day rather than trying to read everything for class in one sitting.”<sup>38</sup>

### C. **Take notes**

In most of our courses, the lectures are an important part of the course. So read the lectures carefully, when you are most alert.<sup>39</sup> Highlight or underline important points. Circle unfamiliar words, and look up the meanings. If the lectures refer to scriptures, look them up. Write comments in the margins. At the end of each section of the lecture, write a paragraph to summarize what it taught you. That will help you review the material in the future. (The final course in each degree program requires a summative exam, so you may want to review the course a few years after you have taken it.)

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<sup>38</sup> Melissa Browning, “Reading Basically,” pages 15-29 in Eric Barreto, ed., *Reading Theologically* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 27.

<sup>39</sup> Some classes have audio lectures. Listening while driving is not an adequate study method. Rather, listen when you can take notes. Later, you can listen while driving as a review.

In your textbooks, underline important information.<sup>40</sup> Put question marks, exclamation marks, or comments in the margin. Those can also help you review – and to find material when you write forum comments or research papers. Have you ever thought, “Where did I read that?” If you have marked your books, you’ll be able to find it much easier.

#### D. **How to format a paper**

GCS classes are offered at the graduate level. We expect that our students submit papers according to the generally accepted customs of American academic work.<sup>41</sup> However, some of our students have not been in college for decades, so may need a few reminders. To help you in that, see “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted at <http://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23>. For additional details, see Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/02>. For specifics on citation style, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/03/>.

#### E. **How to write a book review**

Several of our courses require you to write a book review. The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: 1) to assure us that you read the book, which means that you have probably learned some of its contents, and 2) to get you to interact with the book, which increases the amount you learn and remember.

In general, we do not want a repetition of information about the author and the table of contents of the book. Rather, we want you to show that you have *thought* about the book – to describe some of its helpful points, and to observe any weaknesses. Find some areas in which it offered information

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<sup>40</sup> In some cases, e-books are available for textbooks. Studies have shown that students interact with material, and retain it better, from printed books. You may use e-books if you wish, but be sure to *study* what you read. E-book readers offer convenience, but also many distractions.

<sup>41</sup> Students in other nations are welcome to use A4 size paper if that is what is standard in that nation, and to use British spellings and styles.

that helped you in your ministry, and explain how it is helpful. Find other areas of the book with which you disagree, or perhaps are not convinced.

#### **F. How to write a reaction paper**

Some courses assign reaction papers, or response papers. These are similar to book reviews, but they focus more on your personal reaction or response to what you have read. If your instructor specifies what is desired, then follow those instructions.

#### **G. How to contribute to a discussion forum**

Most GCS classes require participation in an online discussion. This is one of the learning opportunities in any classroom. In a traditional classroom, students ask questions, get responses, talk about how the topic applies to their situations, etc. This interaction with the material helps students learn more than they would from simply reading a textbook, and students learn from what other students are saying.

Online classes, unlike correspondence courses, can give students a similar experience – but they have to be structured a little differently, since our students are not logged in at the same time. We do not have the advantage of a spontaneous discussion, but we have the advantage that our discussions can be a little better researched, and better thought-out. We'll discuss the computer details later. Here we'll comment on how to write a good comment.

A good contribution to an online discussion...

1. is on time – generally by the end of Thursday. That gives other students time to read and interact with your comment.
2. is relevant to the topic.
3. shows not just opinions, not just facts, but opinions or conclusions based on facts. It shows good logic.
4. shows some connection of the discussion with the world outside of the forum – lectures, textbooks, or life experience.
5. shows good grammar, and readers can clearly understand what you are saying.

6. stimulates further discussion, either through questions or with ideas that provoke other students to make comments.

A *discussion* requires that students respond to what other students have posted. A good response...

1. is on time – by the end of Sunday
2. is in the right place (that is, it is posted as a “reply” instead of being posted as a new topic).
3. adds something to the conversation, building on the initial ideas, showing thought, not just a quick reaction.
4. shows connection with the world outside the forum – in lectures, textbooks, experience, other GCS classes, etc.

Comments should not be *long*. Two medium-length comments are better than one long comment. Think of a classroom: students generally do not want to listen to some other student go on and on for five or ten minutes. Research in online classes at other schools shows that long submissions are less likely to be read, and less likely to be commented on. One paragraph of about ten lines is sometimes enough, but topics in some of our courses require lengthier comments.

## H. GCS library

Some of our courses require research outside of the assigned textbooks. These may be commentaries, articles in professional journals, or encyclopedias devoted to theology, ministry, or biblical studies. Students have several options to conduct this research. One option is our library.

1. A catalog of our books is posted in the student resources section of our website, <https://www.gcs.edu/resources/student-resources/>.
2. To request a book, send an email to registrar@gcs.edu.
3. For students in the U.S.A., books will be sent via U.S. Postal Service media mail (book rate). Most books take seven to ten days to arrive.
4. The loan period is four weeks, which includes the initial shipping time. The return postmark should be within four weeks after the initial postmark. If no other student is requesting the book, a book may be renewed for an additional four weeks. Send any request for

renewal to registrar@gcs.edu.

5. Return postage is at the student's expense. U.S. Postal Service Media Mail is usually the most economical. Send the book to Grace Communion Seminary, 3120 Whitehall Park Drive, Charlotte, NC 28273.
6. International shipping and U.S. priority mail can be arranged at the student's expense.
7. Books returned late will be assessed at 25 cents per day.
8. Books that are lost in the mail, either on the initial shipment or on the return, will have to be replaced. Students will be charged for the cost of purchasing a replacement book, plus a \$10 replacement fee. Library fees and fines must be paid before a student can be issued a transcript or diploma. If the book is worth more than \$50, we recommend that it be insured.

## I. **Additional research options**

In the information age, we have a multitude of sources. What we want is usually “out there” somewhere, but we don't know where.

If you live near a theological library, find out if they allow visitors to use their library. Many theological libraries allow pastors to check books out. Even if you can't check out any books, you will probably be allowed to use the library, make photocopies, etc. Browse around the library to see what they have—it might be a good resource for you to use in future GCS classes or in your ministry.

But what can you do if you don't have time to drive to a theological library? What you need may be on the internet. There is an ever-expanding wealth of scholarly materials available on the internet, as well as a lot of rubbish. The internet rarely has the level of research you would need for a doctorate, but it is often sufficient for master's level classes.

We have some instructions that can help you. Go to the student resources page on our website: <http://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23>. That page contains several student resources, one of which is “Research Resources Available Off Campus.” Click on that, and you'll see a document explaining

some of the options. You can print that out if you want, or you can save it to your computer for later reference.

Let's suppose you want to do some internet research on Mark 8. You could do a Google search for "Mark 8:31" and get millions of possibly relevant pages. You can't read millions of pages—you probably don't even want to read five pages of search results to see if they have what you are looking for. Some of these may be good, but many are unsubstantiated opinion, and some are irrelevant.

How can you estimate the quality of these resources? You want authors who have credentials in the field, showing that at least somebody else thinks they know something about the topic. You probably don't want to investigate the qualifications of the authors of 20 pages. Often you can't find anything, because most authors on the internet don't have *any* credentials; they have no verifiable expertise in the subject.

You want resources that are written by people who know something about the topic—resources that are so useful that people are willing to pay for them, that companies are willing to invest some money in making sure that the product is reliable. You need books. Some of those million pages on the internet are high-quality resources written by experts. But it is difficult to find the golden needles hidden in the pile of rubbish. The faster way to search for high-quality resources is to narrow your internet search to books.

You can do good research in a bookstore. You can walk into Barnes & Noble, pull a book off a shelf, sit in a comfortable chair and read a long time, without having to buy anything. In lieu of a photocopier, like a library would have, you can use a digital camera to photograph some of the pages.

On the internet, you can enter the Amazon website, pull a book off the "shelf" and read parts of it, too, without having to buy it. (Not every book has a "look inside" or "search inside" capability, but most recent books do, and you can find many useable resources in this way.) The bookseller hopes that you will like the book so much that you buy it, but you don't have to buy it. You can do research in high-quality books without having to buy them. On the internet, you can read books at Amazon, at Barnes & Noble, on books.google.com, and on some publishers' websites.

Both Amazon and Google books limit the number of pages that you can see in any particular book. So it's a good idea to *save what you see*. However, you can't save or print the page in the normal way. It just prints out blank. But you can use a digital camera, or you can use your computer. Press the button on your keyboard that says "Print Screen" (on a laptop, it may be "prt scr" and might work only when you press the function key at the same time). This does not actually print the screen—rather, it copies it into the computer's memory.<sup>42</sup> Then you can open Word, or a graphics program such as Paint, and press Control-v to paste it into the program, and *then* you can save it to disk or print it from there. This process is not quick, but it *is* something you can do from home.

Another feature of Amazon that can help you research a topic is that Amazon will link you from one book, to other books that people bought at the same time. By following a trail like that, you can accumulate a large list of related books. You can also type your subject into Amazon's search bar, and Amazon will show you what's available on that topic, even books that do not necessarily have that term in the title.

If you find a book that is interesting, you have several options:

- 1) If Amazon lets you view the inside of the book, you can examine the table of contents, and sometimes the text, too, to see if the book meets your needs.
- 2) If you think it will be very helpful, a good addition to your own library, you can buy the book. You can use [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com) to find lower prices elsewhere.
- 3) You might be able to borrow the book from the GCS library (see above).
- 4) Or you can borrow the book from a local public library. Most local libraries participate in an interlibrary loan program, usually through the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). Their database (searchable at [www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org)) includes more than 10 million titles, and millions of those can be sent to your local library as an

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<sup>42</sup> A "snipping tool" can do a similar thing for a selected area of the screen.



interlibrary loan. Worldcat will also inform you if the book is available at a library near you. Some local libraries charge a small fee to help pay for this service, but almost anything published can be obtained in this way. Ask your reference librarian about interlibrary loan services. Plan ahead!

## J. Citing your sources

An important part of academic papers is giving credit to your sources. If you have obtained important facts or quotes from a source, you should give credit to the source. Quotes must be enclosed in quote marks, and the source and page number given. A style manual for term papers will give the details on how this should be done. We recommend *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology*, by Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson.<sup>43</sup>

We give some simple instructions in our document “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted at <https://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23#section-1>.

## K. Assessment

In GCS courses, as in most other seminaries, grades are based largely on written papers and projects. Papers are assessed by the instructors. As with grading of papers in most other disciplines, there is an unavoidable amount of subjectivity in assigning grades to these papers. Grades are based on the experience the instructors have had with papers from many previous student papers at this and other institutions.

Retake policy: Papers may be rewritten and exams may be taken again only with the permission of the instructor. That is an exceptional circumstance that involves extra work by the instructor and falls under the discretion of the instructor.

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<sup>43</sup> The third edition was published by Zondervan in 2014. Another good book is Kate L. Turabian et al., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 9th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

## L. **Verifying student identity**

We know many of our students personally. Nevertheless, to provide objective, third-party assurance of academic integrity and student identity, some of our courses require proctored exams. Proctored final exams are required in the following courses: BI501, CH501, CH502, CM549, TH501, TH505, TH519, TM501, and CM599. Students may have the exam proctored in either of two ways:

### **1. Proctoring by video**

The student may take the exam while being watched on video, and must provide verification of identity with a government-issued form of identification. Students must have a camera connected to the computer, such that the student can be observed by GCS personnel while the exam is being taken. (The webcam and video connection is not needed at other times, but will need to be tested before the exam, to allow time to resolve problems if they arise.)

- a. You must have a camera connected to your computer. Some computers have a camera and microphone built in. Or you may purchase a small webcam with microphone and connect it to the computer. You may purchase a webcam from many electronic stores. If you allow a few weeks for delivery, you can purchase an inexpensive webcam for less than \$10 from dx.com. Inexpensive cameras sometimes work best because there are fewer adjustments to make – just plug it in, and it will work, if you have a recent version of Windows. A small number of pixels is often better because it takes less bandwidth.
- b. There are various ways to activate a video connection, including the free programs Skype, Zoom.us and Vsee.com. We can work with any of these – just let us know if you have one of them, and if you don't, we can help you set one up.
- c. We need a color copy of a government-issued photo ID, such as a drivers license or passport. (Most students have already submitted that with their application for admission.) With a scanner or a

digital camera, copy the ID and send it to registrar@gcs.edu. Or you may mail a color photocopy to us.

- d. Test the video connection to make sure it is working properly. Do this in advance, so that any problems may be resolved before the actual exam begins.
- e. For the exam, you will make the video connection before you begin the test. The proctor will communicate with you to confirm that the connection is working. Then begin the test. You will keep your webcam and microphone on, but the proctor will turn the camera and microphone off. You will no longer be able to see the proctor, but the proctor will still be able to see and hear you. (The proctor may have other work to do at the same time, and we don't want you to be distracted by what we are doing.) We may record the video transmission to watch at a later time, if necessary. This recording will not be used for anything other than academic verification.
- f. When the exam is over, just talk to the proctor, and hopefully the proctor will be there to turn the camera and microphone back on and confirm with you that the process has been successful. If the proctor has stepped away from the desk and does not respond, just end the connection, and send us a message saying that you are done.
- g. You should alert other people in your home that you are taking a video-proctored exam. This means that they should not interrupt you, and be aware that they are not in visual or verbal privacy.

## **2. Proctoring with a third party**

- a. If students do not wish to be proctored by video, they should inform us that they want to be proctored by a third party. Each student must select a proctor well in advance and verify that the person is willing and able to proctor the exam during the approximate time period in which the exam must be taken.
- b. The proctor may be a librarian, a professional educator (a teacher or administrator from primary, secondary or tertiary schools), or an ordained person.

1. The person cannot be related to the student by marriage or by birth. Second cousins and more distant relationships are permitted, as long as the person meets the other qualifications.
  2. The proctor cannot be under the supervision of the student in any capacity, either on the job or in the church. (However, the proctor may be a supervisor over the student.) Lead pastors cannot be proctored by anyone in their congregations.
- c. One more factor involved in selecting a proctor: The proctor does not have to watch every minute of the test, but should be *able* to see the computer monitor at all times, and can testify that the student did not access unauthorized materials while taking the exam. (This does not apply if the exam is open-book.)
  - d. Once the student has identified a possible proctor, the student should send us the proctor's name, qualification (e.g., teacher or pastor), email address and phone number. The proctor must have an employer-issued email address; accounts at Gmail and Verizon, for example, are not verifiable and therefore not acceptable. We must be able to visit the website that corresponds to the email address of the proctor to verify the identity and validity of the proctor.
  - e. GCS will then contact the proctor to verify that the person meets the qualifications, and is willing to proctor the exam during the time period that the exam should be completed.
  - f. GCS will then notify the student whether the proctoring arrangement is acceptable, and if so, will leave it up to the student to set up a more specific time for the exam. This will most likely be done about a week before the exam. The student must then send the Registrar, the instructor and the proctor an email confirming the appointed time, location, and whether you will use your own computer, or one belonging to the proctor.
  - g. GCS will send further instructions to the proctor.
  - h. The student will take the exam at the appointed time. Our website records the time and the computer's IP address.
  - i. All programs should be closed except for the internet browser and a word-processing program, with only a blank document being open.

(Turn off email notifiers, instant messaging, etc.) Unless the exam instructions allow the student to use other websites, only one window or tab should be open on the browser – the GCS website on which the exam is being taken.

- j. Some proctors charge a fee; that is the student's responsibility.
- k. Even if the proctor knows you personally, you must show a government-issued photo ID, and the proctor must sign a statement that the ID has been shown.

## VII. Using Our Website

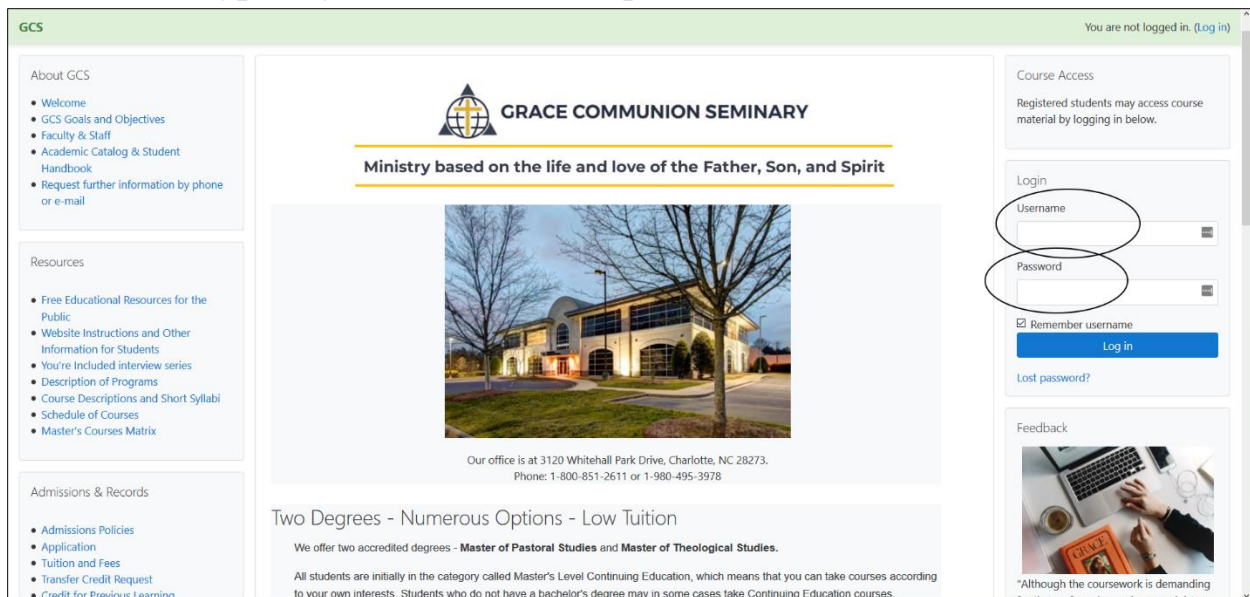
Most students are able to navigate our website without too much difficulty. If you encounter problems, email us at [support@gcs.edu](mailto:support@gcs.edu), or phone our technical support department at 1-980-495-3979. Whenever you send us a message, please let us know which browser you are using, what page you were on, and what you were trying to do.

Our information page ([learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23](http://learn.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23)) has a series of illustrated instructions on how to navigate our site. There are step-by-step explanations of how to use documents, forums, assignments, quizzes, and other features of the site. The same information is given below.

### A. Getting started: logging in

After you are accepted to be a student at Grace Communion Seminary, you will be given a user name and a password. This is the electronic key that enables you to see the course materials.

On the next page is a picture of the GCS home page, showing where you should type in your user name and password:

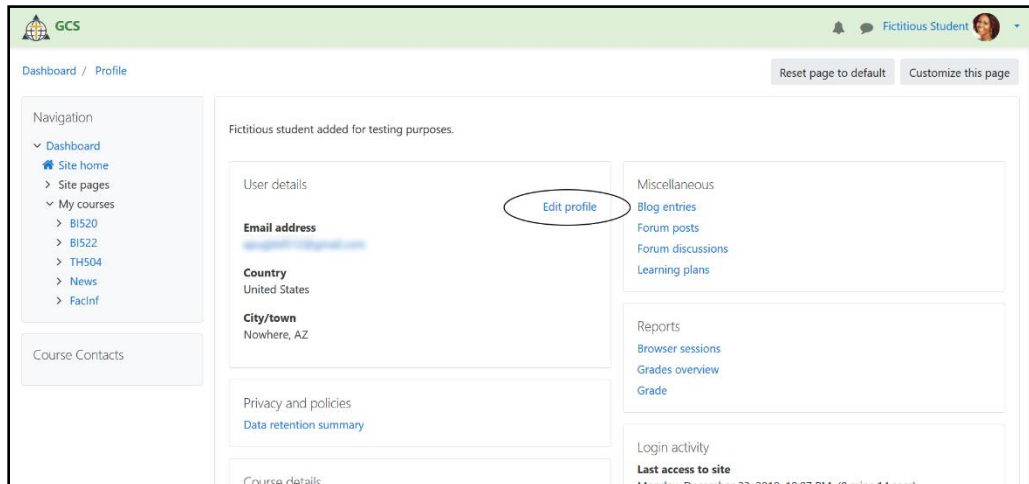
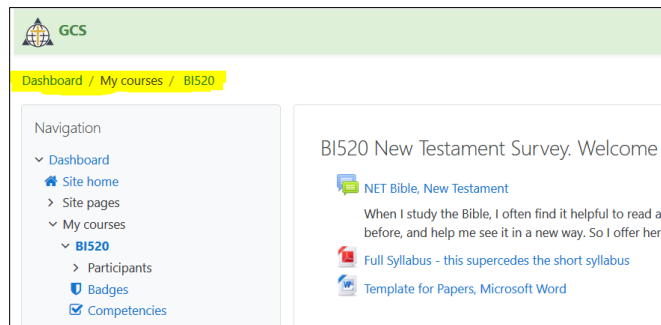


On the home page you can also see several useful links in the left column, including the *Academic Catalog*, and some policies that are in the *Catalog*.

- After you have logged in, you'll be taken to your “dashboard,” which shows which parts of the website you can access. You may also see course announcements, whether you have messages waiting, and upcoming assignments.
- Near the top of most pages, there are some blue and some black words at the top of the left column, starting with “Dashboard” (highlighted in the image at right). These show a pathway of where you are on our web site. You can click on those words to move backwards.
- When you are viewing a page in a course, you may click the course code (for example, BI520) to get back to the course home page.
- If you wish to see the GCS home page, click on “Site home” in the Navigation block.

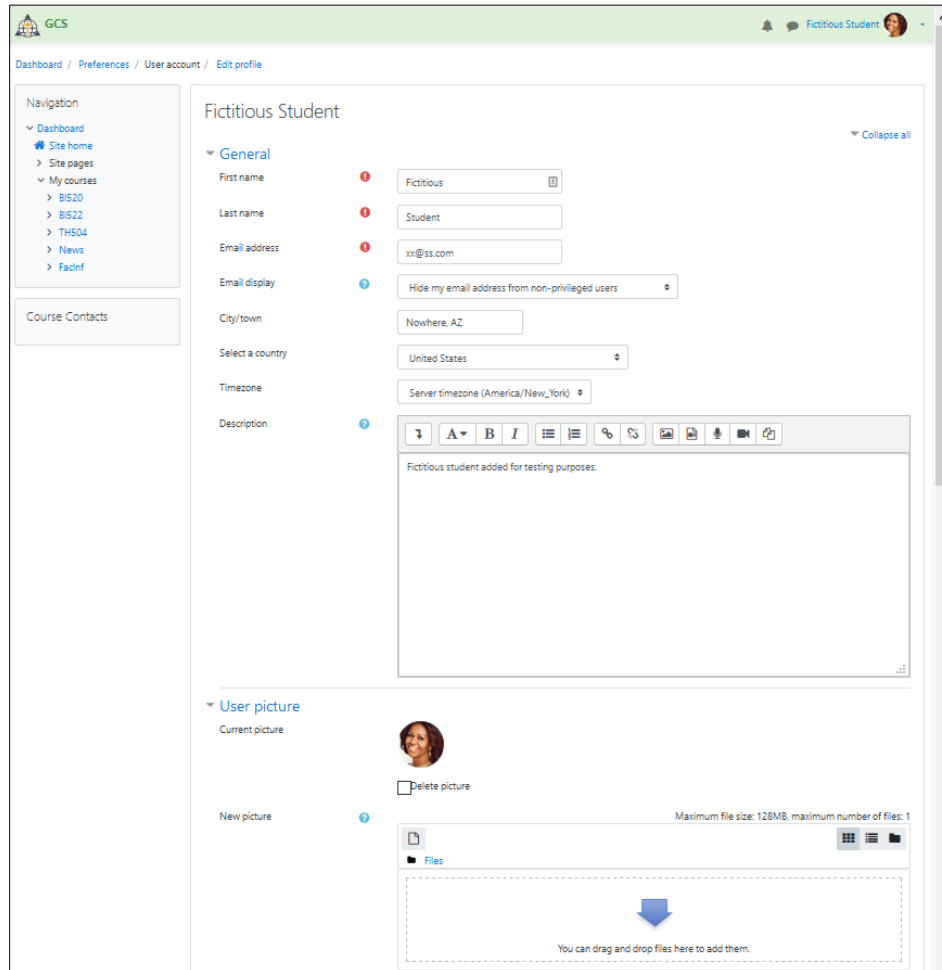
## B. Managing your profile

Please begin by updating your profile. In the upper-right corner of the page, you will see your name. Click on that, and one option will be to see your profile. Click there and you will see a page that tells other people about who you are. It looks like this:



In the center column, under “User details,” click on “edit profile.” (We have circled it in the image above.)

Then you’ll see the top part of the Edit Profile page. To see it all, click on “Expand all” in the upper right corner. We show the expansion below:



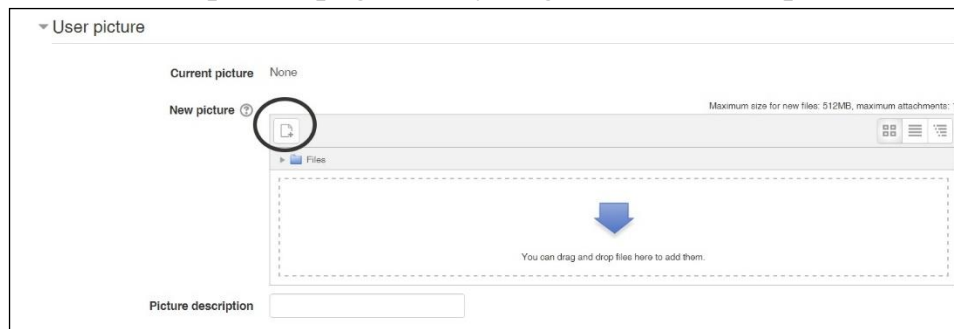
Here you can edit your name and email address. In “Description,” you can tell people a bit about yourself – your family, occupation, ministry, etc.

We’d also like a photo, so that we and other students can see who you are. This is not a place for your baby photos, or your dog. This is so that other students can put a face to the comments they will see on the discussion forums.

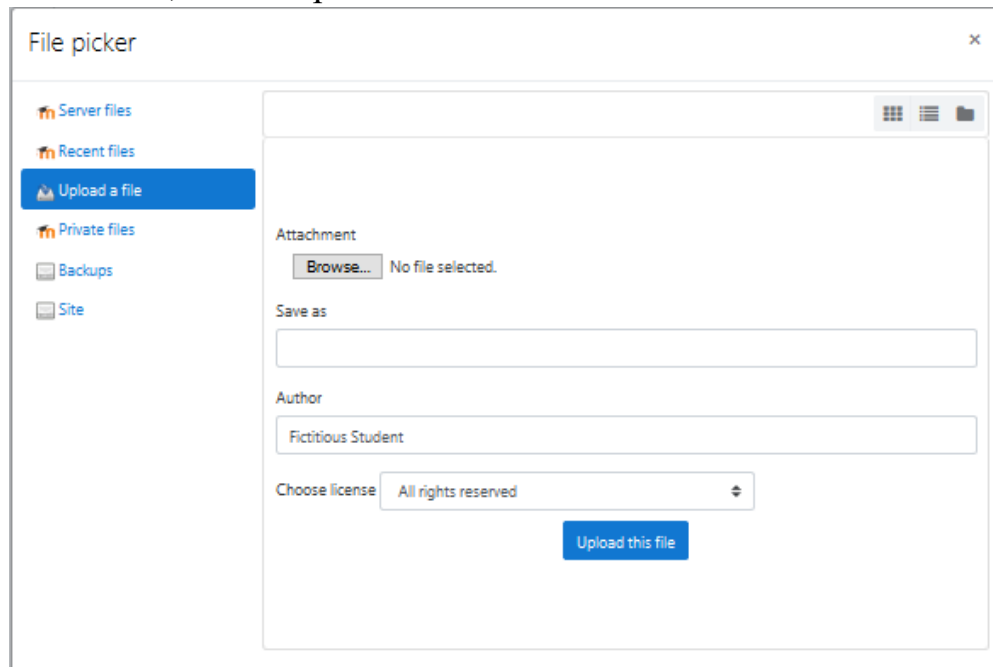


There are two ways to share a photo of yourself. Here's the first method:

1. Go down the profile page until you get to the "User picture" section.



2. Click the "Add" icon in the upper left. (The name of an icon appears if you hold the mouse pointer over it for one or two seconds.)
3. On the left, click "Upload a file."



4. Click "Browse."
5. Navigate through the folder and file structure in your computer until you find the file you want to upload. Then double-click on the file. You can use the "Save as" box to give it a new name, if you want to.
6. Click "upload this file."

The second method of uploading a photo is to use Windows File Explorer to "drag and drop" a digital image into the User Picture box:

1. In File Explorer,<sup>44</sup> navigate to the folder that contains the file you want to upload.
2. Click on the file you want to upload *and keep holding the mouse button down*.
3. “Drag” the file to the tab for your browser (Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari, etc.) that is in the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. Keep the mouse button down.
4. When you position the mouse over the browser icon, the computer will display the browser. Continue holding the mouse button down and drag the file up to the “New Picture” box, where you want the photo to be.
5. Now let go of the mouse button (“drop”) and the file will be uploaded and a thumbnail displayed.

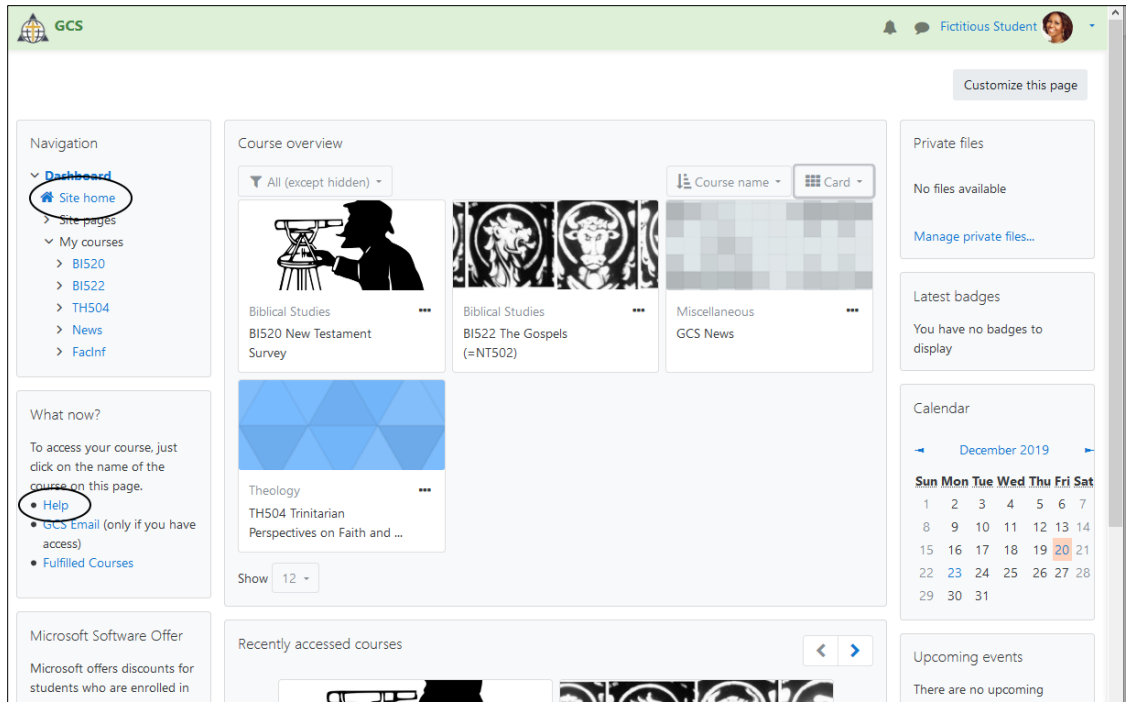
Fill in other fields of the user profile as you wish, and – **very important** – at the bottom of the page, click “Update profile.” Students and teachers will then be able to see a small photo of you whenever you make a comment in the discussion forum, send a message, or upload an assignment. That helps make the website a little less impersonal.

### C. The “Dashboard” page

When you first log in, the website displays your “dashboard.” The center column shows the courses you can access. We show the “card” view; you can change it to a simple list by clicking the small triangle next to the word “card” in the upper right corner.

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<sup>44</sup> In older versions of Windows, this is called Windows Explorer. You may need to click the “start” icon in the lower left corner of the screen, then click on Documents. The icon looks like a manila file folder.

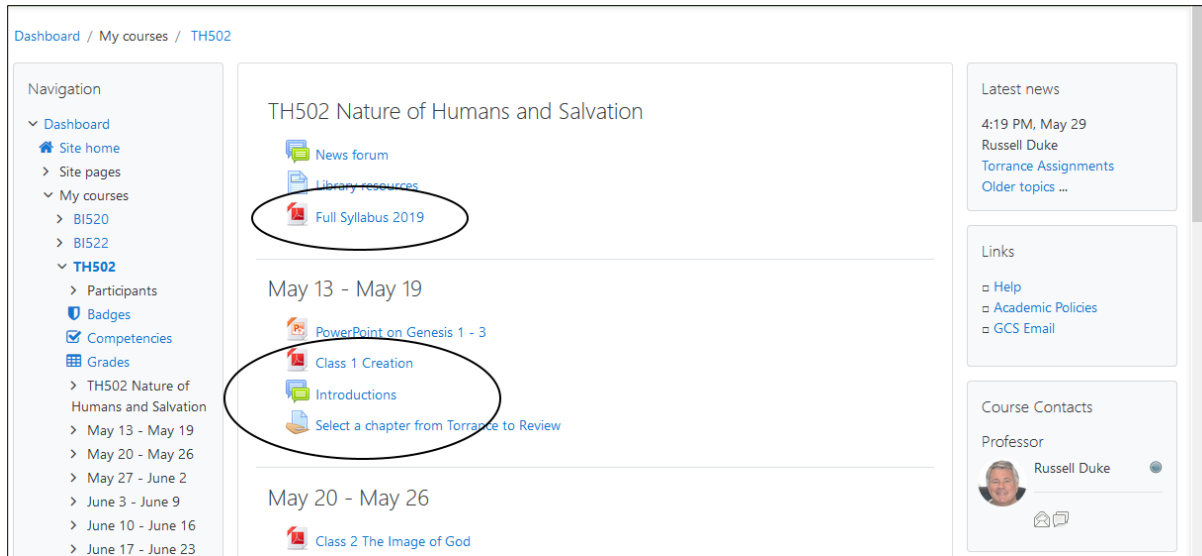


There are several links on this page that you may find useful:

- In the left column, “site home” will take you to the GCS home page. This is the best way to access some introductory documents, such as the schedule for courses.
- The “help” link will take you to the public information section of our site, which includes website instructions. You always have access (even without logging in) to the public information/help section.
- The center column shows you which courses you can access. That is the best way to go to the lectures and forums.
- In the upper right corner is your name. This link will take you to your profile, where you can change your password and other information about yourself. This area also has a “log out” link. If you are using a public computer, you should log yourself out when you are done, so that no one else can see your pages or sabotage your work.
- Just left of your name, you’ll be notified if any messages are waiting for you. Click on the number to go to the message.

**D. A sample course page**

On the dashboard, if you click on the title of the course, you will be taken to the page for that course. Below we show TH502 as an example:



On the left side you can see a navigation panel. Since the course is organized by weeks, this offers a way to jump down to the specific week you want.

In the center we have circled three types of course content:

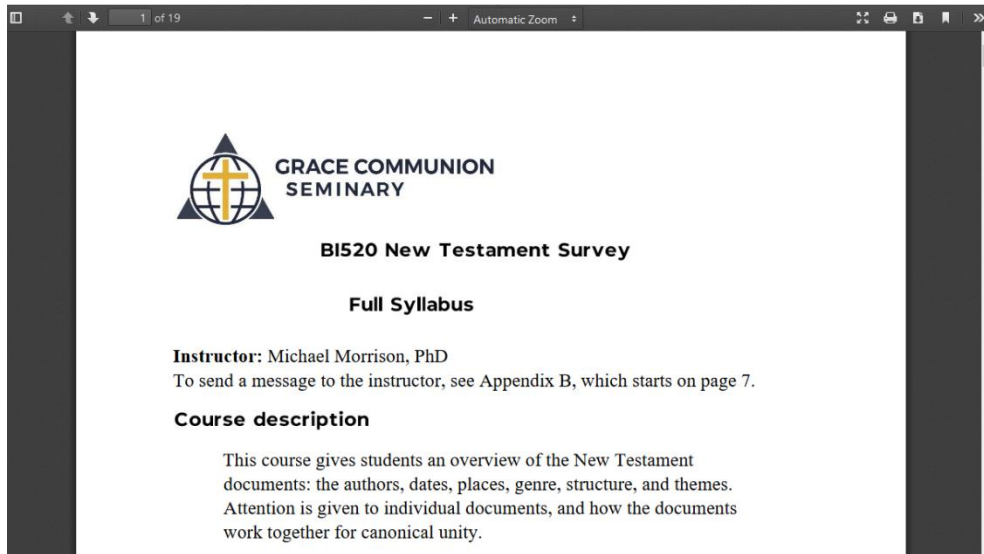
- The mostly red square is an icon for a PDF document. Most lectures are posted as PDF documents. In this case, we have circled the course syllabus, and below that, the first lecture (“class 1”). The syllabus is always important because it tells you what the course is designed to do, what your assignments are, and other details you may need for the course.
- Just below class 1, we circled a blue-green icon that shows two overlapping comment boxes. This is the icon for a *forum* (what some websites call a threaded discussion). This is where students and faculty interact, discussing course content. Since GCS students are spread out in different time zones, we can’t all be online at the same time. We therefore post our comments so others can read them at a later time.
- The circle also includes an icon that depicts a hand holding a paper. This is where you turn in an assignment. We’ll cover the details of that later.

### E. PDF documents: viewing, saving, printing, enlarging

Most of our lectures are posted as PDF documents. If you click on the name of the document, you should be taken to a new page. Sometimes it takes the browser a few seconds to start up the PDF display mechanism.

Below we show a PDF document – in this case it is the syllabus for BI520.

Different browsers will display PDF files a little differently. Note especially the icons in the upper right – *which you may not see unless you move your mouse over that part of the screen*. For our illustration, we have used Firefox; other browsers put the icons in other places.

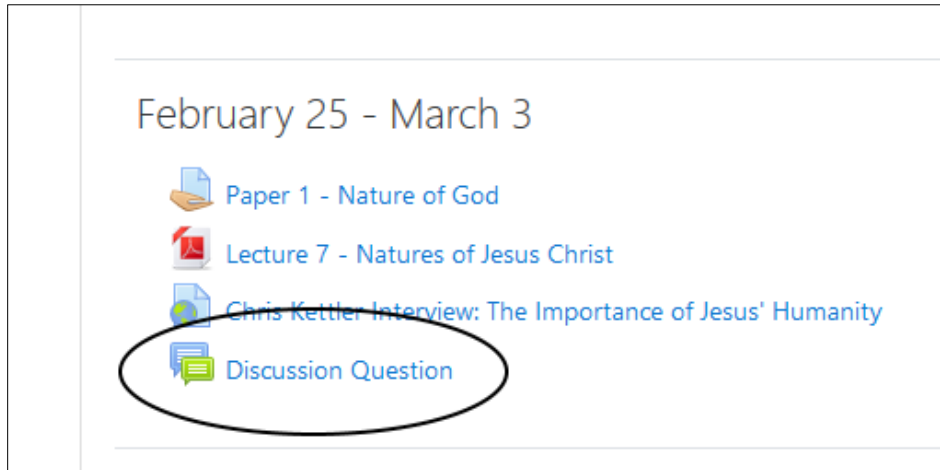


- The icons in the center of the top strip will shrink or enlarge the document.
- One icon gives a full screen view; the F11 key also does this.
- The next icon depicts a printer – this is one way to print the document. (Keyboard shortcut: press Ctrl and p at the same time.)
- To the right of that is a down arrow – this is how you download the document to your own computer. You can then open the document in a PDF reader for more options.
- To go back to the course home page, click the “back” arrow on your browser (upper left), or press Alt and left arrow at the same time.

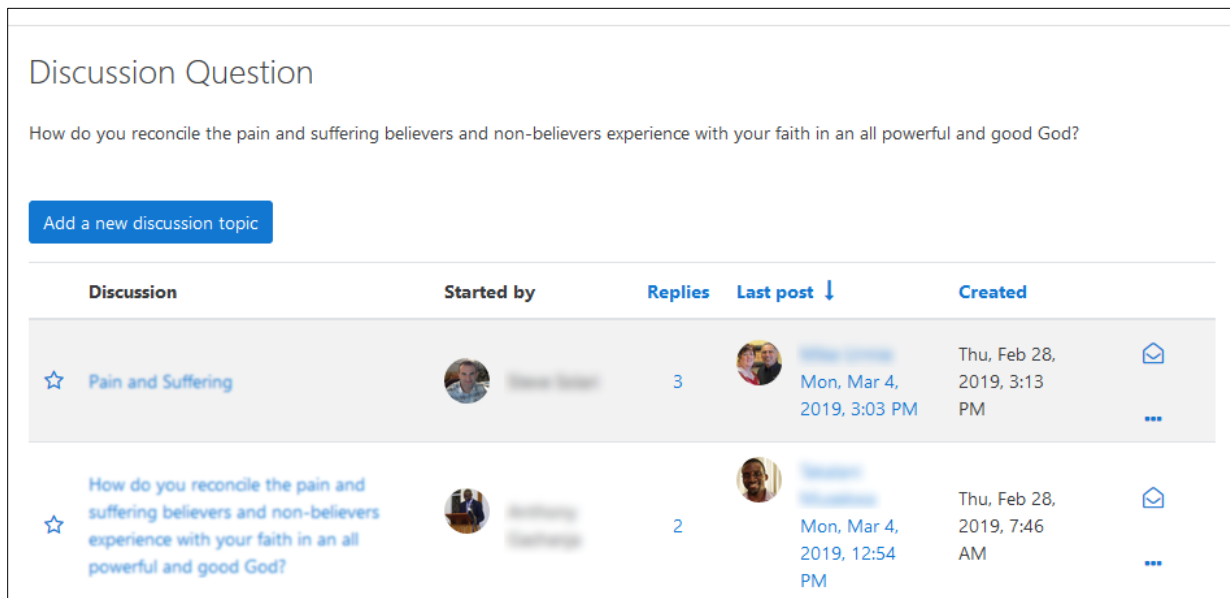
## F. Forum: how to post new comments

Most GCS courses have forums in which students respond to questions given by the instructor, and in which the students interact with one another. Some forums are more complicated than others; we’ll show details for the most complicated. This involves several steps, so this section is a little long. We’ll give a picture of the screen at each step, starting with the main page

for the course.



In the image above, the entry for the forum is circled - with a blue-green icon depicting two balloon comments. After you click on the name of the forum, you may see a page like the one below:



- In some cases, you will see only an initial question, and a link for “reply.” In such cases, the instructor has set the forum up so that everyone discusses the same topic, and you cannot add new topics. All you can do is to click on “reply.” But if you see a page like shown above, you can add new topics, or at least provide your own title, and you can follow the instructions below.
- At the top you can see the initial question, given by the instructor. Below

that, in the left column, under the word “Discussion,” you may see a number of topics that have been added by other students, as shown above (sections have been blurred to protect student privacy).

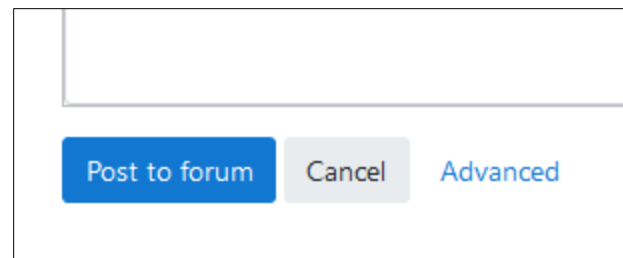
- In the center you can see which student (with a picture, if it’s available) started the discussion on that topic (also called a “thread”).
- In the next column you will see how many responses have been given to the topic.
- In the right-most column you can see who made the most recent comment in that topic and when it was.
- If you click on a student’s name, you can send a private message to that person. We’ll show you how to do that a little later.
- For now, we want to start something new, so we will click on the blue rectangle at the top: “Add a new discussion topic.” After you click, you will see:

- You must describe what your comment is – type a title in the box to the right of the word “Subject.”
- Then type your comment into the box labelled “Message.”
- You can use the gray icons for boldfacing, italicizing, underlining, etc. (You can also use keyboard shortcuts: Ctrl-b, Ctrl-i, Ctrl-u). For more formatting options, click the arrow icon in the upper left.
- If you want to type your comments in Word first (in order to check grammar and spelling, for example), you can do that.

- In Word, highlight what you want to copy. Press Ctrl-a if you want to highlight everything in your document.
- Press Ctrl-c to copy.
- Come back to your browser.
- Click in the message box and press Ctrl-v to paste.
- You can put pictures in your comments, though this is rarely done. Click on the icon in the top row that depicts a mountain and sun. After clicking on “Browse repositories,” you can upload a picture here in the same way that you uploaded one for your profile page.
- You will generally be subscribed to the discussion. That is, you’ll get an email whenever anyone else makes a comment there.
  - When you are in a forum, in the left column is a box named “Administration”; there is a link there, either to subscribe or to unsubscribe. We recommend that you subscribe.
  - If you prefer only one message per day, click on your name in the upper right corner, then click “Preferences.” Then click “Forum preferences.” You can choose between a daily “digest” that has the full text of the comments, or an email that has only the subjects.
- If you want to attach a document, click on “Advanced” underneath the box for the message. A box for attachment will then appear. Click on the “Add...” icon in the upper left (looks like a sheet of paper with one corner folded). The instructions are similar to uploading an assignment, which we will cover shortly. You may need to do this if you are uploading an assignment for other students to read and comment on. Otherwise, it is best to avoid attached documents, because they require additional steps in order for other students to read them.
- The most important part of the page is the button at the bottom: “Post to forum.” If you click on it and nothing happens, perhaps you have forgotten to type in a subject, which is a required field.
- You have 30 minutes to go back and edit your comment; the message will then be emailed to everyone who is subscribed.

### G. Forum: reply to a comment

The forum is a place for student





discussions. “Discussion” means that you are not just posting your own comments — you are also responding to what other students have written. Let’s go back to the forum page:

Bible translation

What primary translation do you use for Bible Study and sermon preparation? And secondly, what translations do you use most in preaching? Please explain why on each.

[Add a new discussion topic](#)

Discussion	Started by	Replies	Last post ↑	Created
<a href="#">Bible Translation</a>		0	Tue, Jan 22, 2019, 4:32 AM	Tue, Ja
<a href="#">Bible Translations</a>		0	Tue, Jan 22, 2019, 1:42 PM	Tue, Ja
<a href="#">Bible Translation-Mike Urmie</a>		3	Wed, Jan 23, 2019, 1:09 PM	Mon,
<a href="#">Bible Translation</a>		0	Wed, Jan 23, 2019, 2:17 PM	Wed, J

Circled above is the name or “subject” of one of the discussion topics. (Several topics have been given similar names – it is helpful to be more descriptive.) If we click on it, we’ll see what others have written (the text is intentionally blurred):

Bible translation

Bible Translation

[Subscribe](#) [Settings](#)

← Bible Translations

Display replies in nested form

**Bible Translation**  
by - Monday, January 21, 2019, 12:43 PM

Greetings all:

...

Permalink [Reply](#)

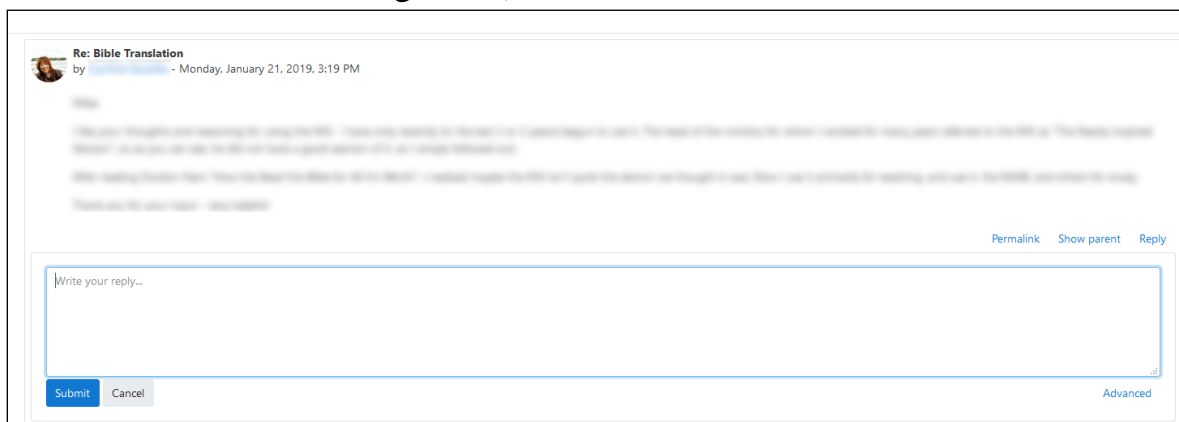
**Re: Bible Translation**  
by - Monday, January 21, 2019, 3:19 PM

...

- In this example, one student has posted a comment, and another has responded to that topic. Notice that the second comment is slightly indented (or nested) to show that it is a response. If a third person responds to the response, it will be indented yet a little more. That’s

because the forum is set at the top center to “Display replies in nested form.” You can change that if you want to.

- Also at the top are navigation links to other threads in this forum: to the left is another thread with subject “Bible translations”; to the right is “a thread with the subject “Bible translation.”
- You will see “edit” and “delete” only for your own comments.
- At the end of the first comment is the word “reply.” Below the first response is also the word “reply.” If you scroll down the page, you’ll see that every comment in the discussion thread has the word “reply.”
  - You need to choose which comment you are replying to. If you are interacting with the original posting, then click on its “reply.”
  - If you are interacting with a later comment, click on the “reply” at the end of that one.
  - That way the website will know where to display your comment, and other people can see where you have entered the conversation, and what you are referring to. (The indents do not display in the email version, so to help email recipients know what is going on, it is helpful to begin your comment by giving some indication of what or who you are responding to – for example, “Jane, I had a question about your comment.”)
- If you click on “reply,” a box will open where you can input your text, while you can still see the text you are replying to, and the other comments that have been made in this thread. (If you want to change the subject heading or attach a document, you’ll need to click on “Advanced” below the message box.)



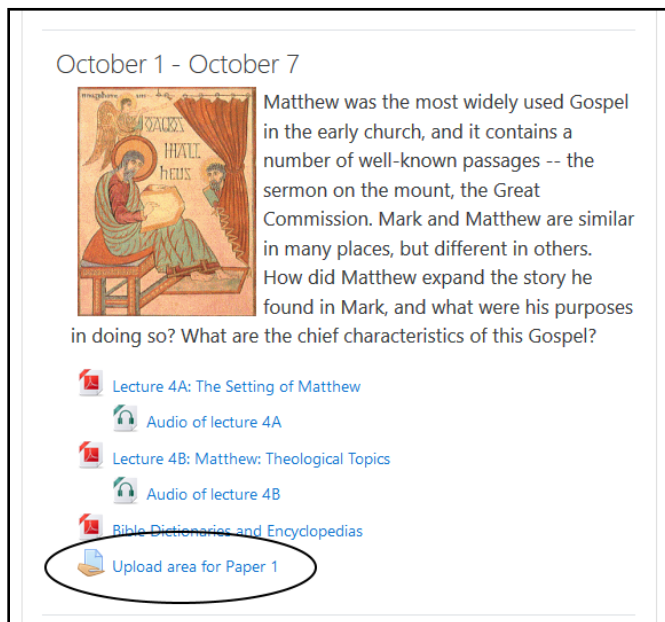
- Type your message into the large box, just as you did to make your initial comment. When you are replying to a comment, it is often helpful to

begin your reply with some context, such as, “Bob, I was intrigued by your comment about...” That way your post makes a little more sense in the email version that is sent to subscribers.


- If you want to attach a document, click on “advanced.”
- Last, scroll to the bottom and click “**submit.**”

## H. Upload a new assignment







Now let’s walk through the steps involved in uploading an assignment, such as a paper you have written. This will take a few steps (the multiple steps are designed for security, so that no one else can see your assignment). Let’s start at the course home page:



October 1 - October 7



Matthew was the most widely used Gospel in the early church, and it contains a number of well-known passages -- the sermon on the mount, the Great Commission. Mark and Matthew are similar in many places, but different in others. How did Matthew expand the story he found in Mark, and what were his purposes in doing so? What are the chief characteristics of this Gospel?

-  [Lecture 4A: The Setting of Matthew](#)
-  [Audio of lecture 4A](#)
-  [Lecture 4B: Matthew: Theological Topics](#)
-  [Audio of lecture 4B](#)
-  [Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias](#)
-  [Upload area for Paper 1](#)

Circled above is the name of the assignment. Click on those words and you will see a page with the assignment name, due date, etc., as shown on the next page:

### Upload area for Paper 1

Paper on the historical and literary settings of the passage. Please remember to put your last name in the document name.

Submission status

<b>Submission status</b>	No attempt
<b>Grading status</b>	Not graded
<b>Due date</b>	Monday, October 8, 2018, 2:55 AM
<b>Time remaining</b>	
<b>Last modified</b>	-



[Add submission](#)  
 You have not made a submission yet.

This page may look slightly different in different assignments and courses, depending on the length of the description given by the instructor. Click on “Add submission” and you’ll see the next page:




### Upload area for Paper 1


Paper on the historical and literary settings of the passage. Please remember to put your last name in the document name.

File submissions Maximum file size: 5MB, maximum number of files: 10

Files



You can drag and drop files here to add them.

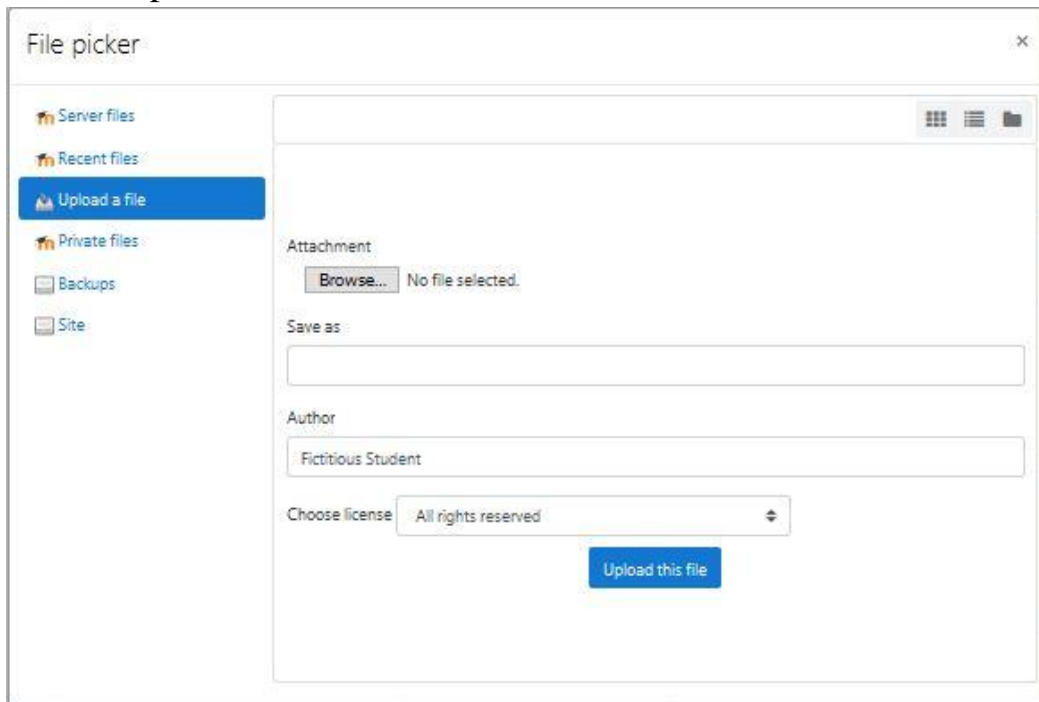
[Save changes](#) [Cancel](#)

Your first step will be to locate the file in your computer that you want to submit to the course.

- You can use “drag and drop” to upload the file. Find the document in Windows File Explorer (a Word “File Open” dialog box also works). Put your mouse over the file, and while holding the left button down, move the mouse (“drag”) to the taskbar (usually at the bottom of the page) to the browser icon. Once your mouse is over that tab, the browser should display. Still holding the left button down, move the mouse up to the drag-and-drop box on the assignment upload area. Then release the mouse button (“drop”).

You can also use the step-by-step method:

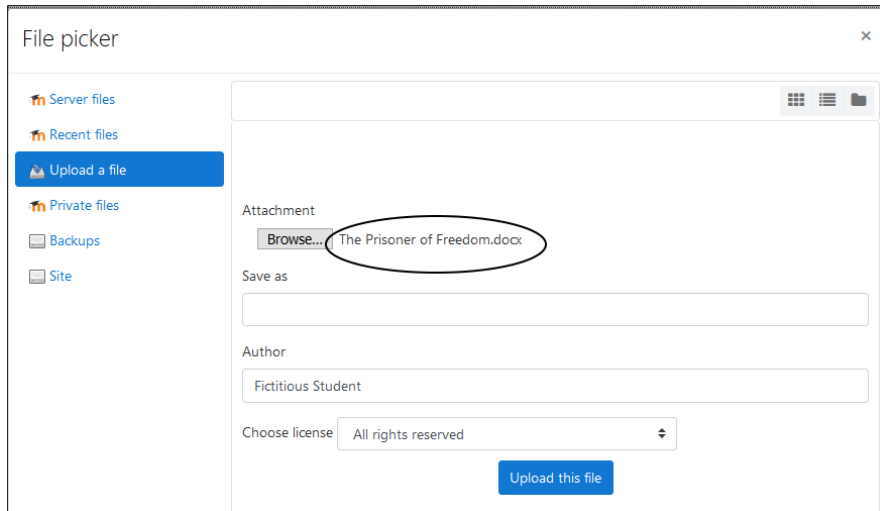
- Click on the “Add” icon (circled above). You will then see the File picker:



Click on “Browse.” (If you don’t see it, you may need to click on “Upload a file,” on the left.) When you click on Browse, you’ll see a File Explorer dialog box (or something similar on a Mac...). Navigate in your computer until you find the folder where your file is stored. There are three ways to select the file:

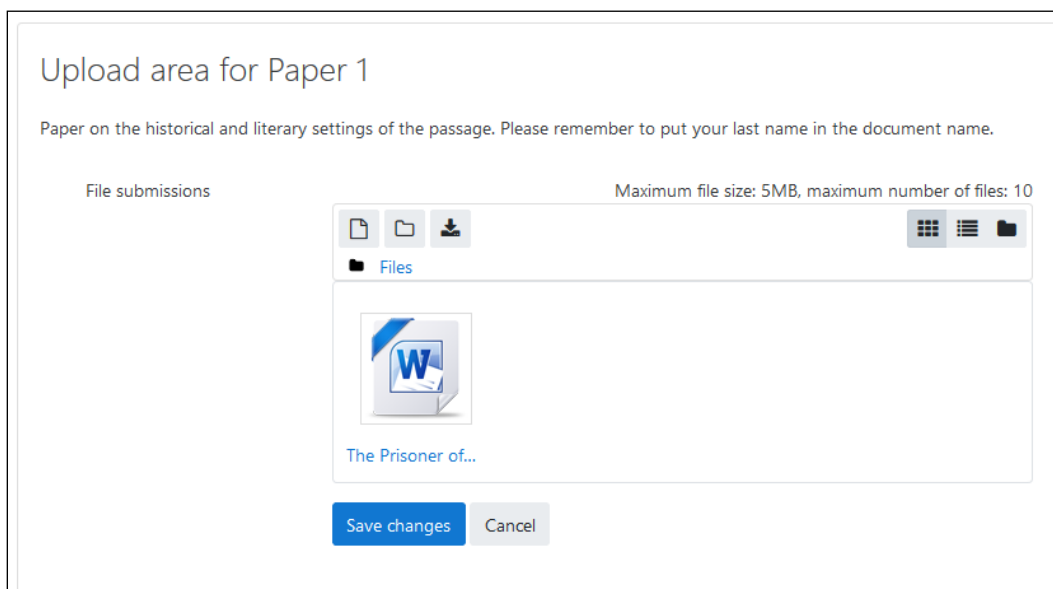
- double-click on the name of the file.
- click on the name of the file, then hit Enter on the keyboard.
- click on the name of the file, then click the “Open” button.

The name of your document is then loaded into the file picker:



You have the option of giving the file a new name, by typing something in the “Save as” box. You should include your last name in the name of the file, to make it easier for the instructor to keep track of whose file is whose.

Click on “Upload this file” and you’ll be back at the GCS assignment page. The name of your file (or part of it) will be displayed in the box. If you want to see the full name of the document, click on the “list” icon in the upper right.



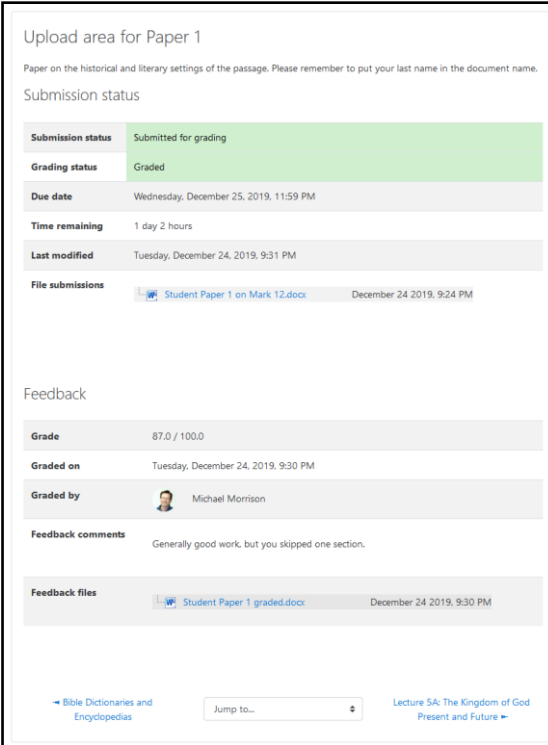
Click on “Save changes” and you are done! The website will display a confirmation page. Be sure that you are submitting the correct file(s). If you didn’t, you can click on the wrong file, Delete it, and start over.

## I. Retrieve a graded assignment

After your instructor has graded your paper (allow one week after the due date), your grade will be posted. In some cases the instructor will type general comments about the paper in a message box. In other cases detailed comments will be inside the document itself. (If you cannot read Word files, or if you cannot see any comments,<sup>45</sup> let the instructor know, so that the comments will be saved in some other format, such as PDF.)

When the paper is uploaded to the course website, you will also be sent an email to let you know that it has been graded. The email will not include any grades or response files, since email is not considered secure. The email will provide a link, which will require you to log in, then take you to the page shown below.

Or you may start at the course home page, and click on the name of the assignment. You will see the confirmation data, just as you did when you submitted the assignment. Below that, you will see the grade, instructor comments, and any file the instructor has uploaded for you to view:



The screenshot displays a user interface for a course assignment. At the top, it says "Upload area for Paper 1" with a note: "Paper on the historical and literary settings of the passage. Please remember to put your last name in the document name." Below this is a "Submission status" section with a table:

Submission status	Submitted for grading
Grading status	Graded
Due date	Wednesday, December 25, 2019, 11:59 PM
Time remaining	1 day 2 hours
Last modified	Tuesday, December 24, 2019, 9:31 PM

Below the table is a "File submissions" section showing one submission: "Student Paper 1 on Mark 12.docx" dated "December 24 2019, 9:24 PM".

The "Feedback" section shows a "Grade" of "87.0 / 100.0", "Graded on" "Tuesday, December 24, 2019, 9:30 PM", and "Graded by" "Michael Morrison" (with a profile picture). The "Feedback comments" section contains the text: "Generally good work, but you skipped one section."

The "Feedback files" section shows one file: "Student Paper 1 graded.docx" dated "December 24 2019, 9:30 PM".

At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with a "Jump to..." search box and links for "Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias" and "Lecture 5A: The Kingdom of God Present and Future".

<sup>45</sup> In "read" view, redline edits will not be seen. Use "Print Layout" view.

To download the file to your own computer, click on the file. Depending on how you have told your computer to handle such documents, a small box may pop up to ask you how to save the file. Navigate in your computer to the folder you want the file to be in, and click “Save.”

#### **J. Make an archive copy of your papers**

An important component of the MDiv Capstone Course is a review and analysis of your previous work at GCS. You will need copies of the major papers you did for many of the courses. We hope that you have stored printed or electronic copies of your papers and the instructors’ comments.

- Even if you do not plan to get the MDiv, it is possible that you’ll change your mind later, so it is best to save your papers now, even before you formally enter the program. Even if you never get the MDiv, it might still be helpful to have an archive copy of your papers.
- Hard disks have been known to fail. Paper files have been known to rot, burn, or disappear. As additional insurance for your papers, we highly recommend that you keep a copy of your final papers on the GCS website.
  - Log in and go to your dashboard.
  - In the right column is a box labelled “Private files.”
  - Click on “Manage private files,” then upload a copy of your papers here (label them by course number), and you will be able to access them in future semesters.
  - If the instructor has included comments or edits in a Word document, that is the version that should be saved. If comments have been made in a text box, they must be copied into a document (perhaps at the end of the original paper, or as a separate document) and then uploaded to “Private files.”


#### **K. Send a message to your instructor**

To make it easier to send a message to your instructor, every course home page has a “Course contacts” in the right-hand column:



BI522 The Gospels

Welcome to this class on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In the medieval church, these four evangelists were associated with the four living creatures mentioned in Revelation 4:7. Matthew was linked with the human-like figure, Mark with the lion, Luke with the ox, and John with the eagle. Or at least that's the way Augustine paired them. Irenaeus did it a little different, and Jerome was different again. (Paul was usually pictured with a sword, but that's a different class.) Regardless of how we picture them, the point is that each book has a slightly different personality, giving us a different angle from which to view the ministry of Jesus Christ.



Full syllabus for The Gospels  
 Instructor autobiography  
 How to write the first paper  
 Sample paper 1  
 Hints for Researching the Background of the Gospels  
 How to Format a GCS Paper  
 Word Template for Academic Papers

Links  
 Help  
 Academic Policies  
 GCS Email

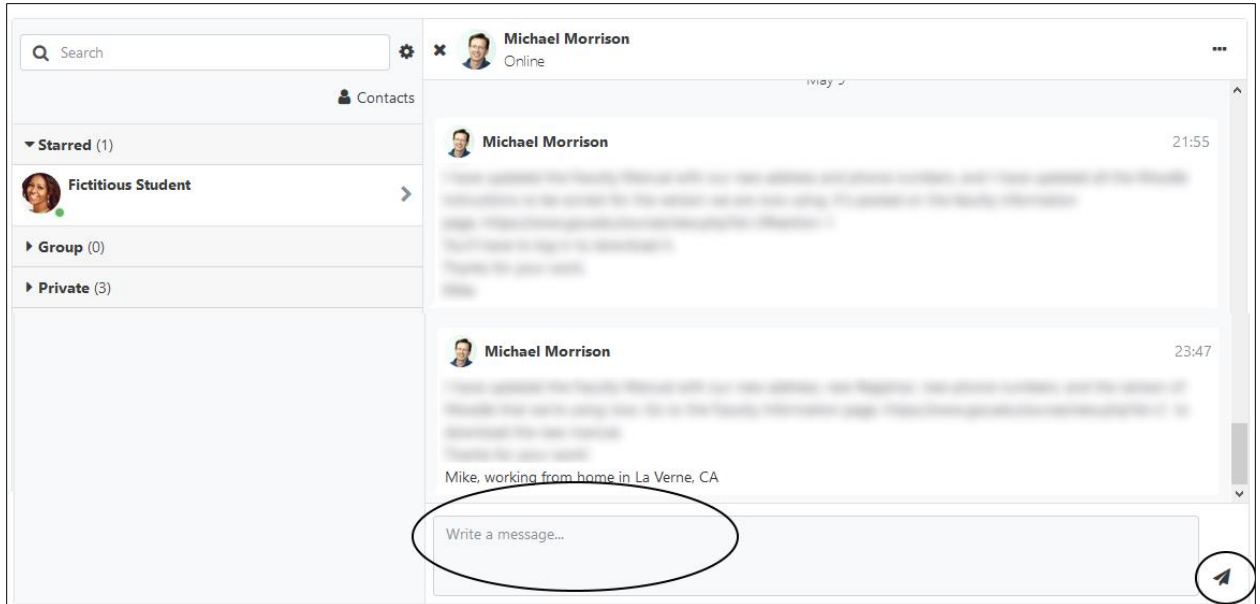
Course Contacts  
 Professor  
 Michael Morrison

Upcoming events  
 Upload area for Paper 1 is due Tomorrow, 11:59 PM  
 Go to calendar...

If you click on the picture, you'll see the instructor's profile, and at the top of that page, you can click on "message" to send a message. There is a quicker way, though:

There are two icons under the instructor's name. The one on the left will send an email to the instructor (if your computer is set up for handling such links). But don't use it – we want all course-related messages to be sent through the website, rather than email, so all course-related materials can be found in one place, and can be archived together.

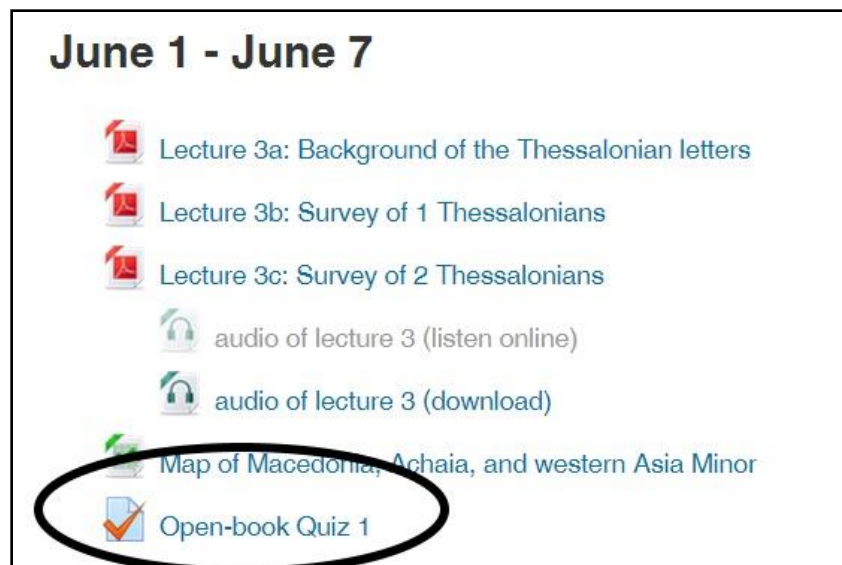
Click the icon on the right (depicting two messages) to be taken to the messaging app (shown on the next page). It will show all the messages you have sent and received from the instructor. Type your message into the small box at the bottom, then click the "paper airplane icon" to send the message. (If you prefer to send by pressing "enter" on the keyboard, you can change your message preferences. Click on your name in the upper right corner, then preferences, then message preferences.)



You cannot attach files. Some of our instructors work only part-time, and may not be able to check their messages every day. If the instructor has not responded within 48 hours, please phone us or email [registrar@gcs.edu](mailto:registrar@gcs.edu) and we'll try to find out if there's a problem.

## L. Taking a quiz

Some of our courses have quizzes – sometimes multiple choice and sometimes short essay questions. Your instructor will tell you whether you can use a Bible, books and/or notes. The icon for a quiz looks like a sheet of paper with a big check mark on it. If we click on the title of the quiz, here's what we'll see:



## Open-book Quiz 1

On each question, if you get a wrong answer the first time, you may try again for partial credit. To do this, you must click "check" after each question (rather than wait until you get to the bottom of the page and clicking "next" or "submit all"). You can then select a different answer for partial credit.

There will be five questions for each week: 2 from the lectures, 2 from Capes, Reeves & Richards, and 1 from Bird.

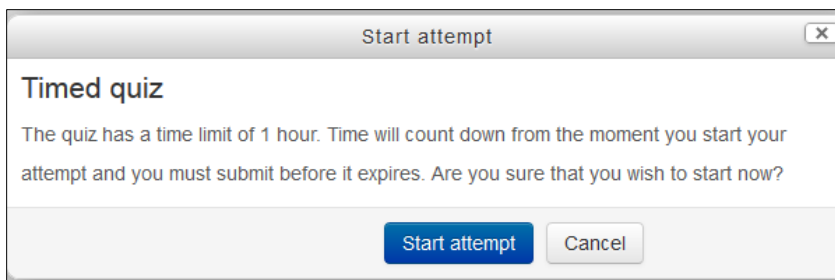
You may take the quiz twice, and the grades will be averaged. The time limit is two hours, but you probably won't need that much.

This quiz is only 1.7 percent of the final grade. "Take no anxious thought for the quiz - just read the assigned textbooks and everything will be OK."

Attempts allowed: 2  
Time limit: 2 hours  
Grading method: Average grade

This introductory page gives instructions about the quiz, and some of the parameters involved, such as how much time you are allowed to take, whether you can take the quiz over again, and if so, how the grade is calculated. You can view this page ahead of time, without actually starting the quiz.

When you click on "Attempt quiz now," you will get a confirmation page to make sure you want to proceed:



After you click "Start attempt," you will see the quiz itself:

**BI521 New Testament Background**

Dashboard ▶ My courses ▶ BI521 ▶ Week 7: June 26 - July 2 ▶ Quiz 2: Judaism, OT quotes, Greco-Roman culture

**QUIZ NAVIGATION**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16  
17 18 19 20

Finish attempt ...  
Time left 2:59:46

**Question 1**  
Not complete  
Points out of 1.0  
Flag question

According to Ferguson, the Temple Scroll

Select one:

- a. claims to give directions to buried treasure, but no one has de
- b. was first found in the storeroom of a Cairo synagogue.
- c. describes the end-time battle between good and evil, centered
- d. describes the temple as it was in Jesus' day.
- e. is the longest of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Check

**Question 2**  
Not complete  
Points out of 1.0  
Flag question

Josephus

Select one:

- a. is remarkably honest, even about his own shortcomings.
- b. acknowledged that Jesus was really the Messiah.
- c. is not an important source of Jewish history.
- d. had no motives other than to report what really happened.
- e. None of the above.

Check

In the upper left corner of the quiz is a navigation panel. This shows at a glance how many questions are in the quiz. The black boxes show which questions are on the page you are on. Unless the instructor has disabled this feature, you can jump back and forth to any question by clicking on its number.

The navigation panel also shows you how much time you have left to take the quiz.

On a multiple-choice quiz, click in the small circle to the left of the correct answer. If you are not sure and would like to come back to the question later, then click on “Flag question.”

To submit each question and to find out how you did, click “Check.” (If “Check” does not appear, your quiz does not allow it.) Depending on how the instructor has set up the quiz, you may be able to try again for partial credit if you selected the wrong answer on the first attempt.

At the end of each page, click “Next.” When you are all done, you’ll see a summary. It will let you know if any questions have been flagged:

**QUIZ NAVIGATION**

1 2 3 4 5 6  
7 8 9 10 11 12  
13 14 15

Finish attempt ...

Start a new preview

## Open-book Quiz 1

### Summary of attempt

Question	Status	Points
1	Correct	1.0
2	Correct	1.0
3	Not complete	
10	Correct	1.0
11	Incorrect	0.0
12	Partially correct	0.5
13	Correct	1.0
14	Correct	1.0
15	Correct	1.0

Return to attempt

Time left **1:28:38**

This attempt must be submitted by Friday, August 28, 2015, 10:44 AM.

Submit all and finish

At the bottom of the page, if you are done, click “Submit all and finish.” You will have to confirm this on a small pop-up window. Then you will see the graded results:

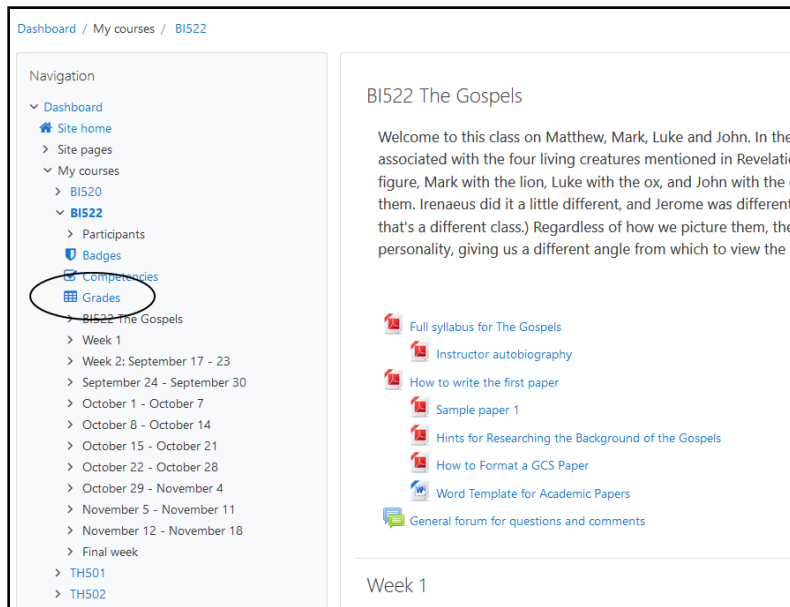
The screenshot displays a quiz interface with the following elements:

- QUIZ NAVIGATION:** A grid of 15 numbered buttons (1-15). Buttons 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are highlighted in pink, indicating incorrect answers. Buttons 6 through 15 are highlighted in green, indicating correct answers.
- Statistics:**
  - Started on: Friday, August 28, 2015, 8:44 AM
  - State: Finished
  - Completed on: Friday, August 28, 2015, 9:22 AM
  - Time taken: 37 mins 43 secs
  - Points: 11.5/15.0
  - Grade: 76.7 out of 100.0
- Question 1:**
  - Correct
  - 1.0 points out of 1.0
  - Options: Flag question, Edit question
- Question Text:** "An important rule for studying a passage in Paul's letters is to..."
- Select one:**
  - a. begin our study by seeing what our favorite theologian wrote about it.
  - b. become fluent in Greek so we are qualified to have our own opinion.
  - c. see first what Jesus had to say about the topic.
  - d. focus our study on one epistle - the one in which the passage occurs. ✓ Right!
  - e. make sure that our interpretation makes sense in the context of Judaism in the school of Gamaliel.
- Check:** A button at the bottom of the question area.

This page tells you how many questions you got right, and your overall score. Pink background designates incorrect answers, and the correct answers are shown (if the instructor allows this) in highlighted rectangles. The website is able to grade multiple choice and true-false answers, but essay questions have to be graded by the instructor. That may take up to a week after the due date.

### M. Seeing your grades

How are you doing so far? It's good to check the website to make sure that we have what we are supposed to have. So go back to the course home page, and look in the left column. In the "Navigation" block, there is a link for "Grades."



The icon for grades is a square depicting a spreadsheet. Click on the word “Grades” and you’ll see how you have done so far. It shows your grades – and no one else’s:



### User report - Fictitious Student

View

Overview report User report

Grade item	Calculated weight	Grade	Range	Percentage	Feedback	Contribution to course total
<b>NT501 New Testament Background</b>						
<b>Exegetical papers - 55% of course total</b>						
Upload area for paper 1: the historical setting	50.00 %	87.00	0-100	87.00 %	good work in most sections, but the section on literary context ignored the connection this passage has with the following passage.	28.15 %
Upload area for paper 2	50.00 %	93.00	0-100	93.00 %		30.09 %
Upload area for paper 3 - due Apr. 12	0.00 % ( Empty )	-	0-100	-		0.00 %
<b>Exegetical papers - 55% of course total total</b> Simple weighted mean of grades.	<b>64.71 %</b>	<b>49.50</b>	<b>0-55</b>	<b>90.00 %</b>		-
<b>Quizzes - 15% of course</b>						
NT01 Quiz 1	33.33 %	12.67	0-15	84.47 %		4.97 %
Quiz 2: Jewish history, literature, and religion	33.33 %	14.50	0-15	96.67 %		5.69 %
Quiz 3: OT Quotes, Application, Theological Interpretation	33.33 %	13.00	0-15	86.67 %		5.10 %
<b>Quizzes - 15% of course total</b> Simple weighted mean of grades.	<b>17.65 %</b>	<b>13.39</b>	<b>0-15</b>	<b>89.27 %</b>		-
<b>Forum discussions - 15% of course total</b>						
Forum week 1	20.00 %	9.50	0-10	95.00 %		3.35 %
Forum week 2	20.00 %	8.50	0-10	85.00 %		3.00 %
Forum week 3	20.00 %	8.30	0-10	83.00 %		2.93 %
Forum week 5	20.00 %	9.50	0-10	95.00 %		3.35 %
Forum week 8	20.00 %	0.00	0-10	0.00 %		0.00 %
Forum week 10	0.00 % ( Empty )	-	0-10	-		0.00 %
<b>Forum discussions - 15% of course total total</b> Simple weighted mean of grades.	<b>17.85 %</b>	<b>10.74</b>	<b>0-15</b>	<b>71.60 %</b>		-
<b>Final Exam - 15% of final grade</b>						
Final exam - must be proctored - due by March 30	0.00 % ( Empty )	-	0-30	-		0.00 %
final exam essay questions	0.00 % ( Empty )	-	0-37	-		0.00 %
<b>Final Exam - 15% of final grade total</b> Simple weighted mean of grades.	<b>( Empty )</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0-15</b>	<b>-</b>		-
<b>Course total</b> Weighted mean of grades.	<b>-</b>	<b>86.62</b>	<b>0-100</b>	<b>86.62 %</b>		-

Every course will have a different grade structure. This one is organized into categories: forums, quizzes, and papers. You can see the overall score on each assignment, a percentage score, and the way it totals when weighted according to the importance of the categories. If the instructor has typed comments into the website, you can also see those. You can also see if any scores are missing – that might be something to ask about.



## N. Asking questions

If the course has a general discussion forum, you can use it to post a new topic. See above for instructions on how to add a topic to a forum. Using the discussion forum makes the question and the answer available to other students, too.

If you need to ask a question privately, or there is no public discussion forum, you can send a message directly to the professor. In the right-hand column of the course page, there's a box named "Course Contacts." There, click the icon on the right (depicting two comment balloons) to send a message to the instructor.

## O. Problems with messages

When the instructor or other students post their comments on the discussion forum, you should receive an email copy. If you sometimes don't get messages sent to your email when other people post to a forum, there are a few things you can do:

1. **Check your email spam folder**, and in Gmail, the "promotions" folder. Sometimes messages get flagged as spam even if they aren't. (Your email provider may be able to tell that a computer generated the message.) You may be able to adjust your email settings to prevent GCS mail from being flagged as spam.
2. Logout when you leave. Messages may not be sent to email when the site thinks you are online. Click Logout at the bottom of the page; that tells the site you are leaving.
3. Change your message settings. The site sends messages only if it detects you are inactive for 10 minutes.
  - o Click your name in the upper right.
  - o Click "Preferences."
  - o Click "Message preferences."
  - o Make sure that email is set to "on."

## VIII. Courses Offered

Almost all of our courses are three-unit courses.<sup>46</sup> For more details on each course, including textbooks, schedule, and assignments, see the short syllabi. They are linked from the “list of courses” page, <https://www.gcs.edu/academics/list-of-courses/>.

Each course is designed to require a student to work between 135 and 150 hours (i.e., about 12 hours each week) for satisfactory attainment of the course outcomes. This includes the time it takes to read the lectures and textbooks, participate in online discussions, research and write papers, and study for and take exams.

A short syllabus is posted for each course, so students can see how the course is structured before they register. However, the required textbooks mentioned in each syllabus are not necessarily the textbooks that will be required the *next* time the course is offered. The short syllabi are updated about two weeks before registration begins, so please wait until then to print the syllabi or to purchase the textbooks. International students may need to order the books further in advance, and should check with the instructor to see if any textbook changes are being considered.

GCS does not sell any of the textbooks – they must be obtained from elsewhere. The website [www.bookfinder.com](http://www.bookfinder.com) may help students locate discount prices for the books.

Following are the courses that we offer, with brief descriptions.

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<sup>46</sup> Exceptions: Independent study courses may vary from one to four units; Field Education courses are 2 units each.

## **A. Biblical Studies**

### **BI501 Biblical Interpretation (Hermeneutics)**

Michael Morrison, PhD

This course surveys various methods of analyzing the biblical text, gives a brief introduction to using biblical Greek, and discusses how to use various forms of analysis in exploring the original meaning and contemporary applications of biblical passages.

### **BI512 Prophets**

Developed by Dr. John McKenna; edited and administered by Tim Finlay, PhD

This course studies the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Canon, the Former and Latter Prophets in order to grasp the foundation and formation of the Kingdom of God. We will seek to apprehend the establishment and development of the Monarchy with Ancient Israel as moved by the renewal of the Biblical Covenant Relationship that we are taught by the Prophets.

### **BI520 New Testament Survey**

Michael Morrison, PhD

This course gives students an overview of the New Testament documents: the authors, dates, places, genre, structure, and themes. Attention is given to individual documents, and how the documents work together for canonical unity.

### **BI521 New Testament Background**

Dr. Michael Morrison

This course explores the cultural background of the New Testament, including Jewish history, literature and religion, and Gentile culture and religion, so that students might interpret the writings in their original context. This course also covers matters that involve the entire New Testament: canonization, textual transmission, and chronology.

## **BI522 The Gospels**

Dr. Michael Morrison

This course examines the four canonical Gospels to see what each of these four portraits of Jesus tells us. Students will explore the literary and theological relationships between the Gospels, and the major themes each one presents. Students will describe how the teachings of Jesus can be used in our very different circumstances today.

## **BI523 Acts of the Apostles**

Developed by Dr. Russell Duke; edited and administered by Dr. Dan Rogers

This course chronicles the characters and events in the book of Acts to study the early development of the Christian church from its Jewish base to the inclusion of all peoples. The lives of the Apostle Peter and Apostle Paul set the background for studies of the General Epistles and Pauline Epistles.

## **BI524 Epistles of Paul**

Dr. Michael Morrison

Students in this course examine the 13 letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament. Students will learn the circumstances in which each letter was written – the problems Paul was attempting to address and the way he responded to them. Lectures will include questions of date and authorship, theological considerations involved in what Paul wrote, and how students can find modern significance in these letters. Prerequisite: BI501 Biblical Interpretation.

## **BI540 Using Biblical Greek Study Tools**

Dr. Michael Morrison

This course uses an inductive approach to learning New Testament Greek, discussing features of Greek as they occur in the letter of 1 John. Bible study websites and programs supply information about declensions and conjugations, so we will focus on how we can use that information to understand how the words work together to convey meaning. We will learn the words used frequently in this letter.

## **B. Church History**

### **CH501 Church History: The First Millennium**

Neil Earle, M.A., M.A.

Church History: The First Millennium is a survey of the events, people, and ideas of Christianity from Jesus' ascension to the Great Schism of 1054. The focus is on mastering the key dates and events of the period as well as introducing the student to the writings, thought and theology of key people from this period.

### **CH502 Church History: The Second Millennium**

Neil Earle, M.A., M.A.

This course surveys the Christian Church from the time of the Crusades (1095) down to today's latest renewal movements. "The Church reformed must always reform itself" is a central theme. It addresses the Western Church at the height of its power, the crisis that triggered the Reformation and the "great ideas" of Luther and Calvin. It examines the Enlightenment, modern Scientism, and pivotal American experience. Culture, theology, and grass-roots spirituality are seen as constantly interacting in this broad overview.

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## **C. Christian Ministry**

### **CM501 Pastoral Leadership**

Russell Duke, PhD

This course develops concepts of knowing oneself and developing plans for growth in relational skills for service in ministry. Practical concepts of personal mission and development of leadership traits, communication and problem-solving skills are examined. This course is a prerequisite for the Pastoral Leadership course and a required course for our master's degrees.

**CM502** is no longer offered – major elements of that course have been incorporated into CM501.

### **CM503 Christian Counseling**

Ted Johnston, M.A., M.A.

This course examines a multi-disciplinary approach to counseling, which draws upon insights from Scripture; Incarnational Trinitarian theology; and psychology regarding God, humanity (including sin, human change and well-being) and Christian ministry. Application of these insights is then made to the practice of short-term, church-based counseling ministries that participate effectively, through the Holy Spirit, in the ongoing counseling ministry of Jesus Christ.

### **CM504 Practice of Ministry**

Ted Johnston

This course applies incarnational Trinitarian theological perspectives to the practice of ministry with an emphasis on pastoral ministry within a local church (with an emphasis on GCI practice). This approach views pastoral ministry as real sharing, through the Spirit, in the ongoing ministry of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ. Though the course focuses primarily on ministries performed by pastors, much of it also applies to the work of ministry leaders and ministry workers.

### **CM505 Women and Men in Leadership**

Michael Morrison, PhD

This course explores the issue of women and men serving together as leaders in the church. Students will survey biblical evidence about women in leadership. Discussion will include differences in the way that women and men tend to think, and challenges that women often face in this role that has historically been dominated by men.

### **CM506 Trinitarian Youth Ministry**

Course developed by Greg Williams and Ted Johnston; administered by Dr.

Williams and Jeff Broadnax, M.A., M.P.S.

This course examines the relationship of theology and youth ministry practice as it has developed in North America. The course explores the centrality of Jesus in all ministry in the relationship that Jesus already has with young people. That relationship is explored in its post-Christian, postmodern cultural context, with an emphasis on the importance of mentoring as a relational/incarnational tool in youth ministry.

### **CM507 Experiencing the Trinity**

Larry Hinkle, D.Min.

This course studies spiritual formation. Participation is required in a three-day retreat that presents students with the opportunity to come to know God more intimately through silence, solitude, meditative prayer, communion, worship, and other spiritually formative activities. This retreat experience is informed by a study of the dynamic of these practices as they relate to Scripture and the call of the Triune God to know him better.

### **CM508 Church Planting and Development**

Randy Bloom, M.Div.

This course explores the practical application of starting new churches centered on God, led by the Spirit, culturally relevant, sharing the gospel and making disciples of Jesus. We will teach principles and practices of pastoral leadership to those who hear a call to plant or re-plant congregations.

### **CM510 Polity of Grace Communion International**

Course developed by Dr. Greg Williams and Dr. J. Michael Feazell; administered by Dr. Williams

This course is designed to help students understand denominational life and polity within Grace Communion International. We give the student an overview of the church's history, its leaders, and its theological journey. The primary objective is to help the student understand the culture and organizational structure and ably function within the denominational system.

## **CM511 Homiletics**

Dan Rogers, PhD

This course surveys various methods of analyzing the biblical text in order to develop an expository sermon. This course involves peer and instructor evaluation of sermon outlines prepared by the student and a sermon given by the student to a congregation, with responses by an ecclesiastical supervisor and the instructor.

**Prerequisite:** BI501 Biblical Interpretation, or New Testament Background prior to 2015.

## **CM512 Small Group Bible Study Leadership**

Gary Deddo, PhD, assisted by Cathy Deddo

This course will train students to lead a small group for church congregations that are centered around Bible studies that contribute to a growing faith, hope and love for Jesus Christ. Students will learn and practice the skills needed to prepare for and lead Bible studies that foster fellowship, spiritual maturity and a vision for service, outreach and mission.

## **CM549 Christian Ministry Thesis**

Professor to be arranged

This course integrates learning from biblical, theological, and ministry studies into a research thesis that explores one aspect of ministry, or an overview of the student's philosophy of ministry. This three-unit course often covers two semesters, and it is conducted as an independent study under the guidance of the professor. **Prerequisite:** Student must have at least 36 units, and must pass a summative exam.

## **CM599 Master of Divinity Capstone Course**

This capstone course integrates previous academic work with ministry experience to reflect and evaluate the student's educational progress towards biblically and theologically informed ministry applied in the student's cultural context. Reflection will also contribute to an evaluation of the student's call and giftedness for ministry in Jesus Christ. Throughout the course students will reflect on personal



goals achieved in the degree program and will analyze their growth in ministry. Students will define and analyze the cultural contexts in which they carry out both personal and professional ministry. **Prerequisites:** At least 66 hours and a thesis must have been completed (CM549, TH519, or TM501 option B).

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## **D. Field Education**

### **FE501 Field Education 1**

Randy Bloom, MDiv

FE501 is 2 credit hours. Students are to reflect on the Incarnational Trinitarian theological foundations of their ministry work and how their ministry work is centered in Christ. The course entails 90 hours of student work per semester on a ministry-related project. The course includes

1. developing and implementing a Ministry Action Plan (MAP) for a project
2. forum discussions
3. project summary/reflection paper, which integrates the student's previous academic studies with the ministry projects they select.

### **FE502 Field Education 2**

Randy Bloom

FE502 is 2 credit hours. Students are to reflect on the incarnational Trinitarian theological foundations of their ministry work and how their ministry work is centered in Christ. This course entails 90 hours of student work on a ministry-related project. Students should select only one ministry project for FE502; the project for FE502 must differ from that for FE501. Prerequisite: FE501. Details are like FE501.

### **FE503 Field Education 3**

Randy Bloom

FE503 has 2 credit hours. Students are to reflect on the incarnational Trinitarian theological foundations of their ministry work and how their ministry work is

centered in Christ. The class entails 90 hours of student work on a ministry-related project. Prerequisites: CM501, CM504, FE501, FE502. The project for FE503 may be a repeat (updated and improved) of a project done for FE501 or FE502. Details are like FE501.

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## **E. Theology**

### **TH501 Nature of God and Jesus Christ**

Dr. Russell Duke

This course studies the nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the two natures of Jesus Christ as human and God against the backdrop of biblical revelation and inspiration from the writing of the texts to the canonization of the New Testament.

### **TH502 Nature of Humanity and Salvation**

Dr. Russell Duke

This course studies the nature of human beings, of evil, and the inherent effects of sin. The work of Christ in salvation history is central. Issues of predestination and the order of salvation are studied. Students will:

### **TH503 The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Last Things**

Dr. Gary Deddo

This course covers the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Christian understanding of the church, and Christian teaching about biblical eschatology.

### **TH505 Doctrine of the Trinity**

Dr. Gary Deddo

This course explores in depth the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, with its biblical foundations in God's revelation, the nature of theology, the foundational historic creeds and controversies, key elements and current obstacles to a fully Christian faith in the Triune God. This course examines vital implications of the

doctrine of the Trinity for ethics, worship, the church and proclamation of the Gospel of the Grace of God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Prerequisite: at least one previous theology course.

### **TH507 Theology of C.S. Lewis**

Dr. Gary Deddo

In this course we will survey C.S. Lewis's primary works and two of his fictional works to see how Lewis understood the central tenets of Christian faith and their inter-relationships. We will consider how Lewis conveyed Christian faith in his context through his fiction and how we might more faithfully communicate the Christian gospel in our day.

### **TH508 Christology of T.F. Torrance**

Dr. Gary Deddo

This course surveys the Christological thought of Thomas F. Torrance with a focus on the person, life and work of Jesus Christ. Consideration will also be given to the topics of the church and eschatology (the last things), as explicated in his two-volume series of edited lectures on Christology originally delivered to students at New College Edinburgh.

### **TH515 Theological Ethics**

Dr. Gary Deddo

This course describes the theological foundation for Christian ethics. We will identify and explore many modern approaches to ethics and see what difference a theological approach makes. We will also give extensive consideration to how pursuing moral faithfulness fits in with a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ and with the church's worship and witness in this present fallen age. A number of contemporary moral issues will be addressed and there will be opportunities for students to look into several of personal interest and relevance to the church. Prerequisite: at least 30 units, including six in Bible, six in theology, and three in ministry.

## **TH519 Theological Thesis (capstone course for the MTS)**

Instructor: to be arranged, based on topic of paper and instructor availability

This course integrates learning from biblical, theological, and ministry studies into a research thesis on a theological topic. This three-unit course normally covers two semesters, and it is conducted as an independent study under the guidance of the professor as the capstone course for the Master of Theological Studies degree.

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### **F. Independent study**

This course allows students to study additional materials and perform additional research relevant to areas of interest, primarily in topics for which GCS does not have a specific course. *This course may carry from one to four units in Biblical Studies, Christian Ministry or Theology.* **Prerequisite:** at least two previous courses in the discipline, with a grade of B or better. The course will be numbered BI509, CM509, or TH509, depending on the discipline.

Students may find this course useful for the following situations:

1. The student wants to study a topic that is not currently covered in a GCS course, or to study in greater depth a topic that is covered only briefly.
2. The student wishes to graduate soon, and needs hours in a specific discipline (theology, biblical studies or ministry), but the student has already taken all the courses being offered in that discipline in a given semester.
3. The student has received transfer credit, or credit for experiential learning, but the student needs one or two units to bring the total to a multiple of three, since our program is designed for courses of three units.
4. The student expects to be too busy during the next few months to be able to handle a three-unit course, but the student is confident of handling one or two units, perhaps by dedicating a few weeks to full-time independent study.

The topic, textbooks, and instructor must be approved in advance. The course requires a *minimum* of 300 pages of reading for each unit of credit. See the short syllabus for more information.

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## **G. Theology of Ministry**

### **TM501 Theology of Ministry (capstone course for the MPS)**

Instructor: to be arranged, based on topic and instructor availability

This course integrates learning from biblical, theological, and ministry studies into a capstone paper that expresses one's theology of ministry in a particular setting.

This three-unit course is conducted as an independent study under the guidance of the professor as the capstone course for the Master of Pastoral Studies degree.

**Prerequisite:** Student must be within six units of completing the Master's program and must pass a summative exam.