BI 502

Introduction to New Testament Greek

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

Spring 2025

Online

John 1:1–13 in Codex Vaticanus (4th cent.)

Instructor information:
Dr. Nicholas A. Elder

E-mail: nelder@dbq.edu
Office: Van Vliet Hall 209

Virtual Office Hours:
Tuesdays and Fridays
10 AM–12:00 PM and by appointment
(Link at top of Moodle Page)

Course Description

This course introduces the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of New Testament Greek. It provides students the linguistic tools and training to read and translate the New Testament in its original language so that they are better equipped to interpret and preach God's Word.

✚ Course Outcomes and Curricular Objectives

**Students who successfully complete this course will:**

1. Demonstrate the skill to accurately type in Greek unicode

2. Translate accurately passages of easy-to-moderate difficulty from the Greek New Testament.

3. Demonstrate the skill to sight translate passages of easy difficulty from the Greek New Testament silently and aloud, with accuracy.

4. Develop a working vocabulary of words occurring 50 or more times in the Greek New Testament.

5. Parse different verbal and nominal forms of Greek words and thus understand the functions of the different Greek moods, voices, tenses, and cases.

### This course supports the following curricular objectives:

- Be formed by, live in, and minister out of scripture and the historical and theological tradition of the church (MDiv)
- Interpret the Christian Scriptures through faithful exegesis and in light of the Christian tradition (MDiv)
- Preach the Word of God with faithfulness and clarity (MDiv)
- Articulate and reflect critically and constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world (MAMD)
- Articulate and interpret key themes from the Christian scriptures in conversation with contemporary and ecclesial contexts (MAM)
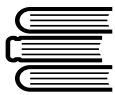
📚 Required "Texts"
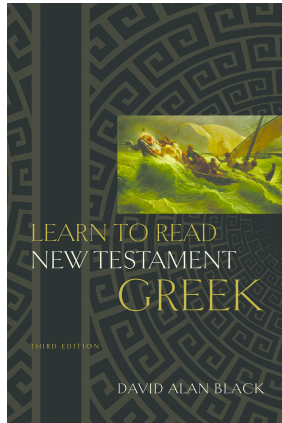
David Alan Black, Learn to Read New Testament Greek, 3rd edition (B&H Academic, 2009) ISBN: 0805444939
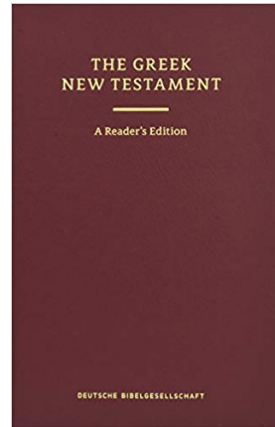
UBS 5th Revised Greek New Testament Reader's Edition (German Bible Society, 2015) ISBN: 1619706180

BrainScape

Dry-Erase Board

For this class I ask that you study vocabulary using BrainScape smart flashcards. BrainScape is a free program that has a web-based and mobile application. The link for our course's content is available here. It might seem odd (and somewhat Draconian) that I require you to study in a specific way, but there are several reasons that I ask you to use this particular tool. First, it uses algorithms and cognitive brain science to maximize your study time. Information you know well shows up less often than information that you do not know well. If you use this tool regularly, you will know Greek vocabulary much better than if you do not. Second, it allows me to create flashcards for you. While there are many benefits to creating your own flashcards, having them created for you takes a cognitive and time load off. It also insures a level of "quality control" over the flashcards. Third, it allows me to track not only each student's learning progress, but the class's progress collectively. If there is an area that the entire class is struggling with, BrainScape makes that clear on the basis of analytics. Fourth, it is a tool that I hope will be helpful for you in other classes, as you can create your own decks with the software.

All said, BrainScape is a free tool that is ultimately meant to support your learning.

I ask that you purchase a small dry-erase board for this class. This will facilitate the study of Greek verb and noun paradigms.

Cognitive studies show that physical writing aids memorization. Repeatedly writing Greek paradigms in your study will improve your ability to succeed on quizzes, the class, and ultimately read New Testament Greek.
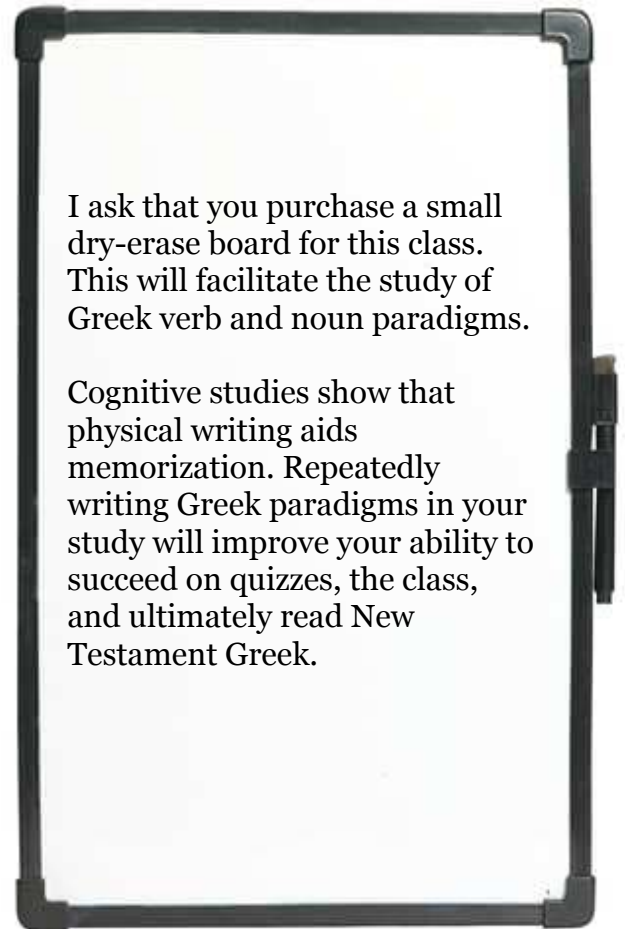
📚 Strongly Recommended Texts

Possessing the following texts will not be necessary to complete the requirements for this course. However, they will be helpful not only for the course, but especially for further study of Greek. Even if you do not intend to take subsequent Greek language courses, you will find these resources to be helpful in your personal study and ministry. They are some of the "essential" Greek resources that might be required in a second-semester or second-year Greek course.
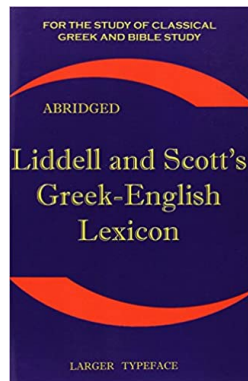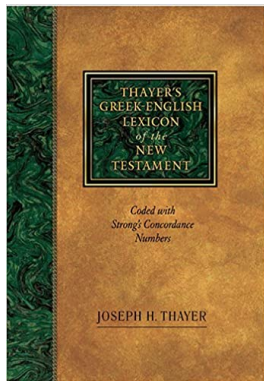
A Short Greek Lexicon

The reader's edition of the Greek New Testament required for this class contains a a dictionary or "lexicon" at the back of it, but it is very abridged. Having a stand-alone lexicon is very helpful for translating. I recommend one of these two:

- *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
  $24 on Amazon
- *Liddell and Scott's Abridged Greek-English Lexicon*
  $28 on Amazon

Kyle Greenwood, *Dictionary of English Grammar for Students of Biblical Languages* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

One of the roadblocks to learning biblical languages is unfamiliarity with English grammatical terms and concepts. This handy little dictionary explains English, Greek, and Hebrew grammatical concepts in an easy-to-understand way.

$19 on Amazon.
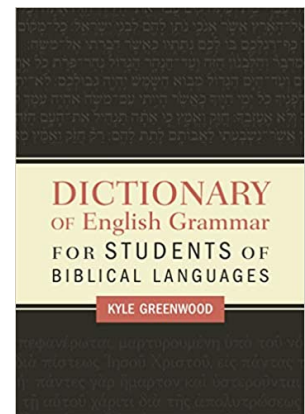
Walter Bauer and Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Commonly referred to as BDAG, this is the best lexicon for New Testament Greek. The price is steep, but serious Greek students will need to own this eventually. It is one to keep an eye out for at used book stores.

$135 on Amazon.
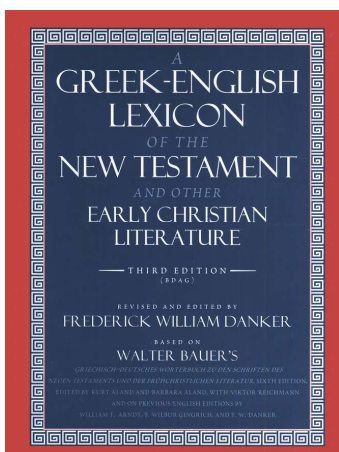
Specifications Grading and Categories

This class uses what is called specifications or "specs" grading. Final grades are **not** determined by the collective score of weighted items. Rather, they are determined by the number of grade items that you successfully complete. The rationale for using this grading system is that it removes much of the subjectivity of grading, restores rigor to academic work, and it is learning-outcome oriented.

There are three different categories of grade items in this class: **quizzes (grammar and vocabulary)**, **homework**, and **exams**.

Quizzes

There is the possibility to complete two quizzes most weeks of the semester. One quiz each week is a grammar/paradigm quiz and one is a vocabulary quiz. Vocabulary quizzes are cumulative, but focus on the material from the previous week. Grammar quizzes are not cumulative; they only cover material from the previous week.

To complete a quiz successfully, you must take it by the Tuesday after a week ends, earn at least an 85% on it, and not utilize any outside resources. Quizzes can be retaken until an 85% is achieved, but the questions are randomized. That is, questions will not necessarily be exactly the same, nor will they be in the same order. Questions answered incorrectly will be indicated, but the answers to those questions will not be given.
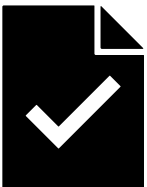
Homework

There is the possibility to complete at least two homework assignments each week of the semester. These will be submitted to a discussion forum and/or a dropbox (depending on the week).

These assignments are based on the exercises at the end each chapter in Black's grammar but have been amended by the professor. Often they require written engagement paired with audio or video engagement.

To complete a homework assignment successfully, you must submit it by the Monday on which the week ends. In addition, you either need to attend a weekly synchronous meeting in which the assignments are discussed or submit a version of it that is self-corrected on the basis of the answer videos provided in Moodle.

Exams

There is the possibility to complete three exams in the course. The first and third exams are "translation exams." These require that you translate several Greek sentences and answer accompanying grammatical questions about them. Both translation exams are open-book, open-note, and untimed. To pass these exams, you must receive an 85% on them. These exams can be retaken until an 85% is achieved and feedback will be offered after each attempt.

The second exam is a cumulative vocabulary exam in the second half of the course. It covers all the vocabulary words covered to that point in the semester. It is closed-book, closed-note, and timed. This exam can be retaken until an 85% is achieved, but the questions are randomized. That is, questions will not necessarily be exactly the same, nor will they be in the same order.

📅 Course Schedule

Greek is difficult and therefore this class is also difficult. Learning any language requires a significant investment of time and mental energy. The good news is that if you put that time and energy into this class you will be able to read the New Testament in the language that it was first written by the end of the semester. Moreover, if you put in the time and energy that the course requires *you can and will succeed*! If you complete the required assignments on time and spend ~30 minutes a day reviewing flashcards, the class is structured so that **you will not fail it.**

That said, you should expect to devote significant time and energy to this class throughout your week. Learning a language happens best in small, daily chunks rather by cramming study sessions into one or two days per week. My policy for the course is that if you attempt every grade item (quizzes, assignments, exams) on time, even if you do not pass every grade item, you will earn a "B" for the class.

Recommended Weekly Schedule

Monday	Participate in Zoom Meeting or Correct Homework	1.5 hours
	Review Flashcards and Practice Paradigms on Dry-erase Board	30 minutes
	Take Vocabulary and Grammar Quizzes	30 minutes
Tuesday	Read First Chapter and Watch First Lecturette	1 hour
	Review Flashcards and Practice Paradigms on Dry-erase Board	30 minutes
Wednesday	Review Flashcards and Practice Paradigms on Dry-erase Board	30 minutes
	Complete First Homework Assignment	1.5 hours
Thursday	Review Flashcards and Practice Paradigms on Dry-erase Board	30 minutes
	Read Lesson and Watch Lecturette	1 hour
Friday/ Saturday	Review Flashcards and Practice Paradigms on Dry-erase Board	30 minutes
	Complete Second Homework Assignment	1.5 hours
		Total time per week: ~10 hours

📅 Course Schedule

Week One

Lesson 1: Letters and Sounds of Greek
Lesson 2: The Greek Verb System

Week Two

Lesson 3: Present Active Indicative
Lesson 4: Second Declension Nouns

Week Three

Lesson 5: First Declension Nouns
Lesson 6: First and Second Declension Adjectives

Week Four

Lesson 7: Imperfect and Aorist Active Indicative
Lesson 8: Additional Prepositions

Week Five

Lesson 9: Personal Pronouns
Lesson 10: Perfect and Pluperfect Active Indicative
Lesson 11: Demonstrative Pronouns

Week Six

Lesson 12: Present Middle and Passive Indicative
Lessons 13: Perfect Middle and Passive Indicative

Week Seven: Study Days

Week Eight

Lesson 14: Imperfect, Aorist, and Pluperfect Middle Passive Indicative
Lesson 15: Aorist and Future Passive Indicative

Week Nine

Lesson 16: Review of the Indicative Mood

Lesson 17: Third Declension Nouns

Week Ten

Lesson 18: Adjectives, Pronouns, and Numerals of the First and Third Declensions
Lesson 19: Contract and Liquid Verbs

Week Eleven

Lesson 20: Participles

Week Twelve

Lesson 21: Infinitives
Lesson 22: Additional Pronouns

Week Thirteen

Lesson 23: Subjunctive Mood
Lesson 24: Imperative and Optative Moods
Lesson 25: –μι verbs

Week Fourteen: Easter and Research Break

Finals Week

Course Policies, Fine Print, Etc.

Teaching Philosophy

As a student, it can be helpful for your learning to know why your professors teach the way that they do. For this reason I am providing you with my teaching philosophy. If you ever have questions about why content is being taught in a certain way, I encourage you to ask me.

As a theological educator, I aim to foster active learning environments that support and motivate students in their engagement with biblical, historical, and theological content.

This vision depends on three principles that guide my teaching:
  (1) Learning is fundamentally a communal enterprise.
  (2) Learning is an active endeavor.
  (3) Learning requires consistent motivation, assessment, and feedback.

Digital Office Hours

I hold weekly digital student hours. There is a link at the top of our course Moodle page for you to enter these office hours.

These time frames are the most ideal for us to communicate synchronously. If you would like to communicate synchronously (by phone, course chat, or video conference) but these times don't work for your scheduled, send me an e-mail and we can set up a different day and/or time to do so.

It is most ideal to discuss and correct homework during the synchronous meeting with several class members. If, however, those meeting times do not work for you or if you happen to miss them because of a scheduling conflict, an office hours visit in which we discuss the assignment(s) will give you the same credit as attending a synchronous meeting or self-correcting an assignment.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Accessibility is good for everyone, regardless of ability. I deeply desire this course (and all courses) to be accessible to persons of every ability and have attempted to craft it as such. I am **more than happy** to make accommodations, especially for students with disabilities. If you need or desire specific accommodations for the course and its grade items, please let me know. Ideally I would like to set up accommodations in the first week or two of class, but will receive requests throughout the entire semester. Confidentiality of all requests is always maintained. Technically, all accommodations should be officially approved through the Academic Success Center, which is on the 2nd floor of Myers Library (563-589-3262 or ASC@dbq.edu), and I encourage students with disabilities to work through the Academic Success Center, but I am also happy to work out accommodations directly.

Course Policies, Fine Print, Etc.

Please Don't Cheat

All quizzes and one of the three exams for this class are closed book and closed note. For homework assignments, I will ask that you first complete the assignment without reference to the answer materials provided on Moodle and then later self-correct your work.

These policies are not meant to police you. Rather, they are meant to encourage deeper learning, which happens when we attempt to recall information without a crutch. Making a wrong guess on an assessment and later correcting it does more for learning than does immediately looking up the answer if you don't know it.

I have attempted to structure the class and its grade items in such a way that correction is rewarded and mistakes on assessments don't penalize you in an irredeemable way.

At the end of the day, I cannot control what materials you access while completing the various grade items for the class. But I can ask that you trust me and the assessment methods that I have worked hard to create. They are meant to support your learning.

I do not anticipate that we will have any issues of plagiarism or cheating. But should such serious issues arise, they will be handled in accordance with the seminary's policy on plagiarism, which can be found in the UDTS handbook.

Late Work

Getting behind in a language class is detrimental to a student's learning. This is particularly the case in a one-semester course that must move at such a fast pace.

For this reason quizzes and exams will close at the times indicated and set in Moodle and will not be re-opened unless approved by the professor.

Automated Grading Errors

The quizzes and one of the exams in this class are automatically graded in Moodle. Automated grading sometimes results in items being marked wrong that may in fact be correct. **I strongly advise that you double-check all questions that are marked wrong.** If you believe there was an error in the automated **please do not hesitate to contact me about it.** I am more than happy to take a look and change it, if need be.

If you happen to notice that something is marked correct that should have been marked wrong, I'd like to know so that I can fix the grading settings with respect to that question. I will never go back and remove points from a grade item, though. That is: you will be doing me a favor if you call attention to such an issue, and will not be penalized for doing so.
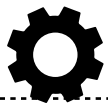
⚙ FAQ

Who are you?

I'm glad you asked. I am Dr. Elder. I am originally from Kansas City, but also consider Denver, Milwaukee, and Dubuque home. I am the Associate Professor of New Testament at UDTS. I did my PhD at Marquette University (Catholic, Jesuit), my MA at the Iliff School of Theology (United Methodist), and my BA at Colorado Christian University (evangelical). I'm married to my better half, Beth, and we have four children: Brooks, Kit James, and Lucy and Nettie (identical twins).

How much time do you expect me to spend on this class?

Per the Department of Education's guidelines for credit hours, you should spend approximately 152 hours total on a three-credit UDTS course. This works out to just over 10 hours per week (including our "reading weeks" and finals week.) I have attempted to set the schedule in such a way that you will usually be doing about 10 hours of work per week on the class. Of course, some weeks will be heavier and some will be lighter.

What are the virtual office hours?

These are times that I specifically set aside for being available for synchronous communication with students. I will be available in the course Zoom during these times. This is not to say that I am not available at other times. But I dedicate these hours to answering e-mails and communicating via other digital media.

How should I contact you if I have a question about class?

The first thing that you should do is consider the type of question that you have. If it is about course content or a particular issue in an assignment then you should post it in the "Questions and Curiosities" forum for the week. That way, if another student has the same question, they will also acquire the answer to it. Also, if another student has an answer to the question, they can offer it. This provides further opportunity to build community within the class. Even if another student answers the question (rightly or wrongly) I will answer your question in that public forum so that others can see the information.

If the question is of a more private or personal nature, you are free to e-mail me at nelder@dbq.edu, or we can talk digitally in another format.

What should I call you?

I prefer to be called Doctor Elder or Professor Elder.

Are the exams difficult?

Two of the exams mimic the homework assignments, but are a bit longer. If you are consistently completing the assignments and self-correcting them or attending the synchronous meeting, you should not find these exams too difficult. If, however, you have not kept up with course material, they will likely be difficult for you. They are not the kinds of exams for which you can simply cram. This is also true of the vocabulary exam. If you have been keeping up with the vocabulary for the course, then you will likely find the vocabulary exam is fairly easy and will not take you much time.

How can I best learn Greek?

Learning a language happens best when you engage it on a daily basis. The best way to learn Greek is to spend an hour or two every day on it, rather than trying to compress all of the work for a given week into two or three sessions.

UDTS Technology Requirements and Information
Electronic Communication
Students are expected to check their UDTS email accounts regularly for course updates and university announcements.

Electronic Devices
Students are expected to have or locate their own access to computer equipment and a reliable internet connection.

Online Learning
Moodle is the UDTS learning management system, giving access to course resources and gradebook as well as allowing them to upload assignments. Use Chrome or another compatible browser to navigate to moodle.dbq.edu. Moodle uses the same login credentials as other UDTS technologies. Students are expected to log into Moodle on a regular basis to access course resources such as readings or discussion forums, as well as upload assignments.

Technical Support
If you have any difficulty with accessing any university technologies such as email and Moodle, please contact the Technology HelpDesk at 563-589-3737 or HelpDesk@dbq.edu.

Title IX and Jeanne Clery Act
Title IX: The University of Dubuque is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex; which includes all forms of sexual misconduct. More information may be found here.

Jeanne Clery Act:
The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act requires the distribution of an Annual Security Report and Annual Fire Safety Report to all current faculty, staff, and students and notice of its availability to prospective students, faculty, and staff no later than October 1st of each year. More information may be found here.
University Policies

Academic Dishonesty
The seminary defines plagiarism as the copying or use of work or ideas not the student's own, in any form including AI generated text without acknowledgment. Students shall not represent the work of another as their own or in any way misrepresent their own work, or the work of another. The use of any outside source, whether of idea or of paraphrase, shall be properly acknowledged. Any quotation, even of phrase, shall be marked by quotation marks. Misrepresentation shall be avoided. The Seminary defines cheating as the dishonest use of resources. Cheating on any academic assignment is prohibited. The first offense of plagiarism, once established, will be penalized by an "F" on the assignment. Second offense, once established, will be penalized with an "F" for the course. Third offense, once established, results in the student being eligible for dismissal from the Seminary. The Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Seminary, with the dean, shall adjudicate all claims of cheating and enforce this policy. Appeals of the decision of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee can be directed to the vice president of academic affairs through the director of seminary vocation. The VPAA decision is final.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement
Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify your instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. Confidentiality of all requests will be maintained. All requested accommodations must be approved through the Accessibility Service Coordinator, located within the Academic Success Center, 2nd floor Myers Library. Please contact Accessibility Services Coordinator at ASC@dbq.edu or 563-589-3262.

Co-curricular Disclaimer
Students carry out ministry responsibilities in the church and under the jurisdiction and oversight of their denominational judicatory and/or local congregation. Students engaging in ministry shall receive permission, guidance, and oversight from these sources, including compliance with common requirements such as background checks and authorization to preach or participate in administration of the sacraments.

d. Grievance Procedures: In any disagreement over the interpretation of academic regulations or the existence of extenuating circumstances that might justify special consideration, the student may file a grievance. Grievances may be submitted in writing to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. Academic Resources (required section)

Academic Success Center
The Academic Success Center (ASC) can assist you in developing basic academic skills and can provide tutoring referrals. Please contact your instructor to discuss ASC services that might assist you in achieving course learning outcomes. ASC can be reached at ASC@dbq.edu or 563-589-3262.

Library Support
Charles C. Myers Library staff are available to help you find, access, and use appropriate information for your course. You can reach the library staff in the following ways: by phone 563-589-3649, by email at reference@dbq.edu, or the chat box on the library website. Librarians have also created seminary specific guides to help students navigate library resources effectively. You can find them here: https://libguides.dbq.edu/seminaryresources