

University of
Dubuque
Theological
Seminary

Gospel of John BI 645:

Greek Exegesis

Fall 2025

Online

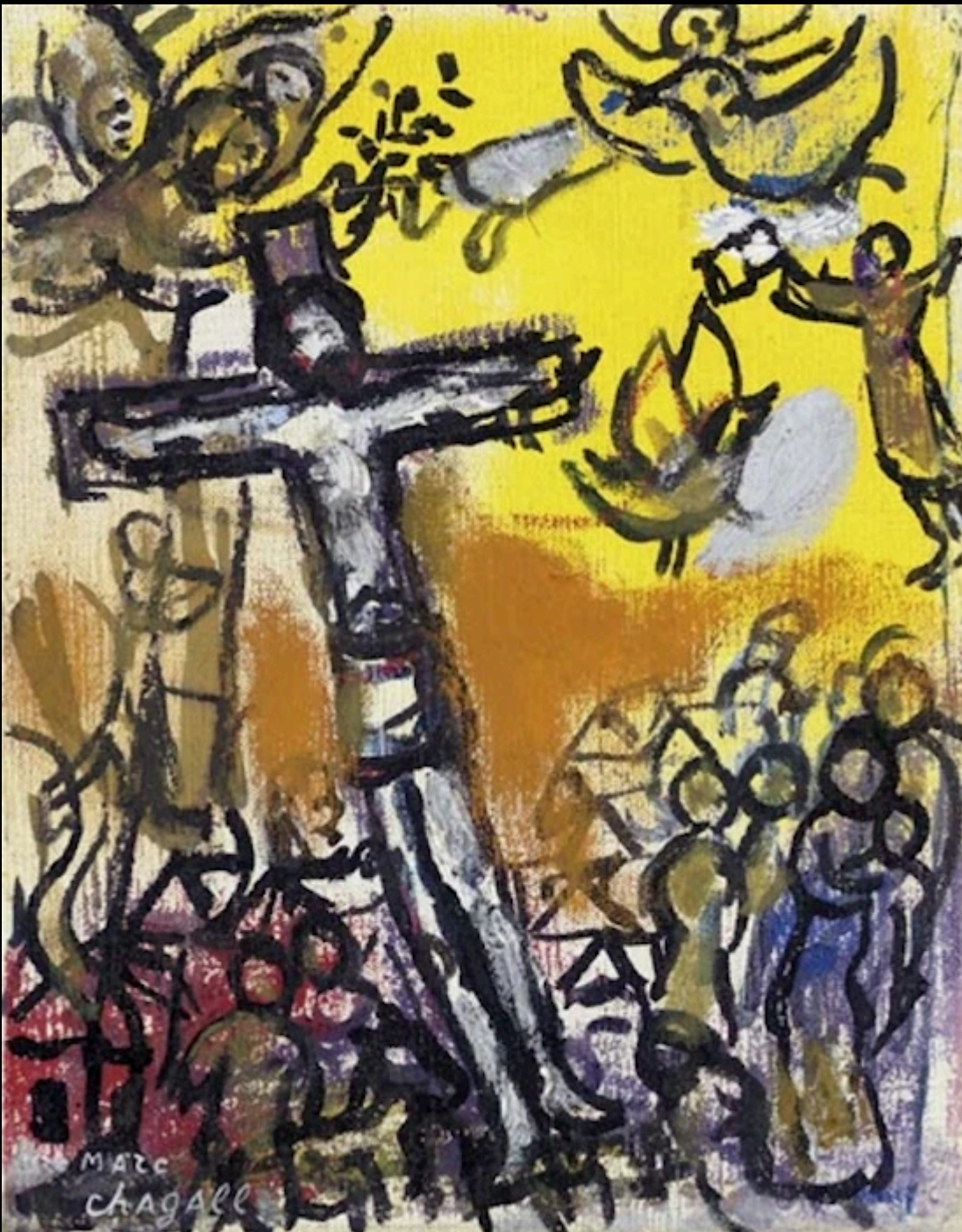


Image: Marc Chagall, *Crucifixion en jaune* (1975–80)

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Instructor Information

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Digital Office Hours: TBD



Course Description

The artistic centerpiece for this course is Marc Chagall's 1975–1980 piece, *Crucifixion en jaune* (“Crucifixion in Yellow”). Chagall was an eastern European Jew who lived through the holocaust, and it informed his crucifixion-inspired pieces. Like the Gospel of John, the contrasts in this particular piece are stark: light and dark, hope and sorrow, height and depth. Also like the Fourth Gospel, Chagall's crucifixion art is a site in which Judaism, Christianity, and violence intermingle in complex ways.

This class is a study of the New Testament book of John focusing on the content and theology of the book and in-depth exegesis of key passages in the Greek language. Students will practice and develop various exegetical skillsets related to the interpretation and translation of the New Testament in general and the book of John in particular. By the end of the class, students will be able to analyze and translate passages from the Greek text of John, paying particular attention to its grammatical features, historical context, literary features, and contemporary relevance.

Objectives

Course Objectives

- #1: Compose and elaborate insights into passages from John, examining their historical background, literary features, and contemporary relevance.
- #2: Demonstrate proficiency in advanced Greek grammar, elucidating its significance for the translation and interpretation of John.
- #3: Make use of a variety of Greek translation tools, including grammars, Bible software, lexica, concordances, and commentaries, in service of interpreting and translating passages from John.
- #4: Analyze ancient and modern social contexts in order to explain their influence on the interpretation of the book of John.
- #5: Evaluate contemporary scholarship on John and assess how it is or is not compatible with personal theological frameworks and interpretations of Scripture.

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)*



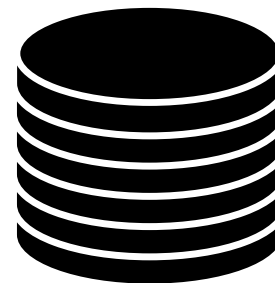
Specifications Grading

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. Each grade item is assessed on a pass-fail basis and contains detailed specifications. If these specifications are met, then the item is passed. If they are not, the work can be revised on the basis of the professor's feedback and resubmitted until the specifications are met and the submission passes.

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.

To earn a specific letter grade, you must complete the minimum number of items in each of the categories. The minimum number you complete in any category will ultimately determine your final grade. For example, if you complete the 25 minor items required for an "A" but only complete 4 major items, which is the requirement for an "B+", then your final grade would be a "B+" not an "A."

Letter Grade	Minor Items	Major Items
	⊖	⊕
A	25	5
A-	23	5
B+	22	4
B	21	4
B-	20	4
C+	19	3
C	18	3
C-	17	3
D+	16	2
D	15	2
D-	14	1
F	0-13	0



Grace Tokens: Every student receives two "grace tokens" that can be used at any time during the course. These "grace tokens" can be redeemed for any of the following with no explanation needed:

- Credit for a minor item that was not completed
- A one-week extension on a major grade item



Grade Items

Options-based Learning

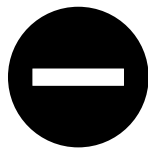
I work under the principle that as humans we do our best work when we choose what work we do. For this reason, there are a variety of options for the various kinds of assignments that you might complete in the class. The number of assignment options goes beyond what is required to receive an “A” in the course. That is, **you do not need to complete or attempt every assignment**. Rather, you choose which assignments and the total number of assignments you wish to complete on the basis of what interests you and what grade you hope to achieve in the class. While you have options about the kinds of grade items you complete in the course, your success will be dependent on completing different kinds of assignments at different points in the semester.

“Minor” Items

There are two different kinds of minor grade items for this class: course community engagement and assignments. Course community engagement comes in the form of residential courses, discussion forums, and Zoom-based “book clubs.”

There will be separate assignments each week for English Exegesis and Greek Exegesis students. For Greek students, these assignments are related to Greek grammar, translation, and textual criticism. For English exegesis students, they are usually related to the content and interpretation of the biblical text.

While these assignments are labeled “minor,” they are not minor in importance. Learning best occurs in small increments, and these minor items are meant to facilitate this. Moreover, the course community grade items serve as the basis for establishing human relationships, which are also imperative for learning.

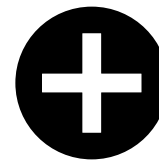


“Major” Items

There are various major grade item options, including exams, reports, exegetical papers, topical assignments, translations, and others. Detailed instructions for these assignments can be found on the course Moodle page.

These major items are intentionally of various types and are meant to engage different learning styles at different points in the semester. I strongly encourage you to complete different types of major assignments.

The due dates for these assignments vary. Some of them cannot be completed until later in the semester, after certain material and concepts have been learned. Others can be completed at any point in the semester. Moreover, some of these assignments have hard deadlines, while others can be completed up until the end of the semester. Please refer to the course Moodle page for deadline information on these assignments.



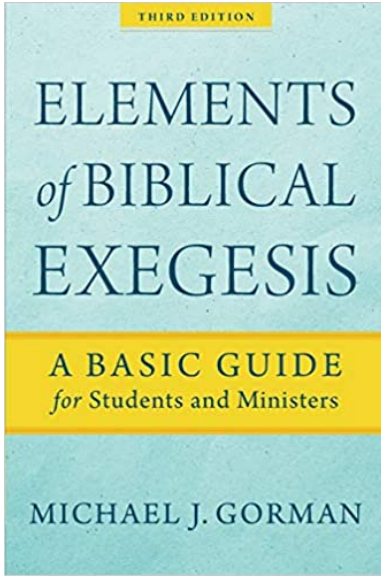
Final Exegetical Paper

All students have the option to write a final exegetical paper. Successful completion of this paper counts for three major grade items. Thus it is technically a sub-category of the “major grade items” category.

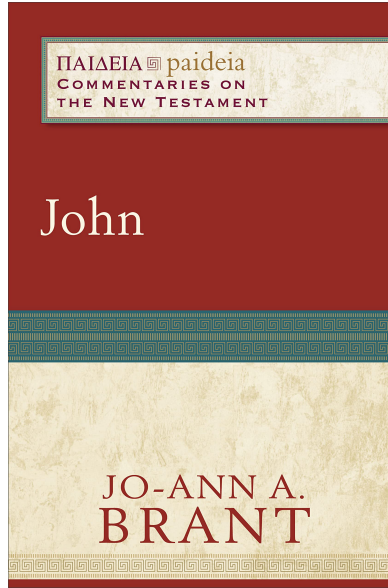
The exegetical paper represents the culmination of the student’s learning in the course and thus requires them to consider the passage’s historical and cultural contexts, its literary context, its contemporary relevance, and to consult several articles and commentaries on the passage.



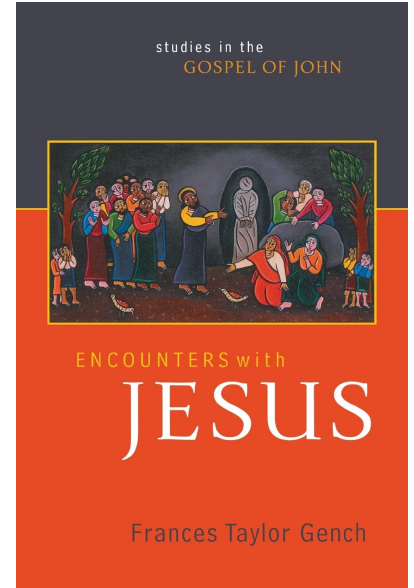
Required Texts



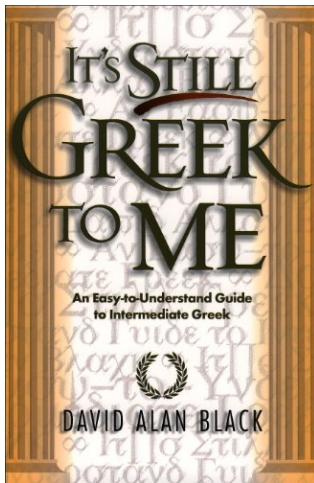
Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis (3rd ed.)*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (2020). ISBN: 1540960315 \$24 on Amazon.



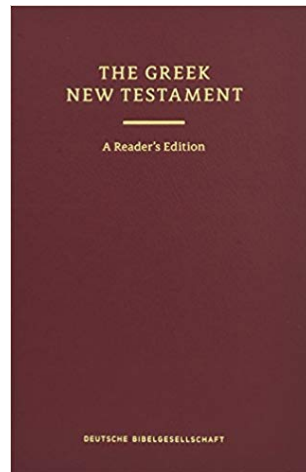
Jo-Ann A. Brant *John (Paideia)*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (2011). ISBN: 080103454X \$24 on Amazon.



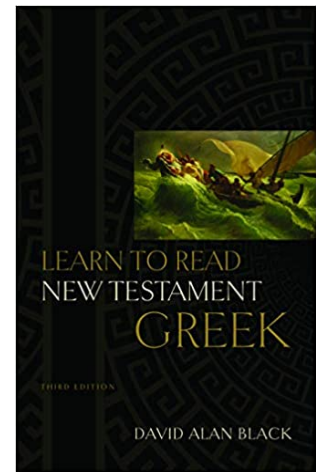
Frances Taylor Gench, *Encounters with Jesus: Studies in the Gospel of John* Louisville: Westminster John Knox (2007). ISBN: 0664230067 \$16 on Amazon.



David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998) ISBN: 0801021812



UBS 5th Revised Greek New Testament Reader's Edition German Bible Society, 2015 ISBN: 1619706180



David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, Nashville: B&H Publishing (2009). ISBN: 0805444939 (May be substituted with another introductory Greek grammar).

Recommended Texts

The following are not strictly necessary to pass or to get an “A” in the class, but will be very helpful in completing the objectives for the course and for any students who will be taking the PCUSA Ordination Exam.

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.

Metzger, Bruce Manning. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition)*. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1994.

This book explains many of the “textual variants” that appear in the Greek New Testament. It is particularly helpful for the “establishing the text” portion of the PCUSA Ordination Exam.

Köstenberger, Andreas J., Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer. *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016.

This is a more expansive Greek grammar than the required grammar for the course. It goes deeper into and gives more explanation to many of the grammatical concepts introduced in Black’s *It’s Still Greek to Me*.

Commentaries (Choose One or More)

Each student will choose at least one of the following commentaries on John. Reading from this commentary will inform their forum posts and classroom contributions. The intention is that several different interpretive perspectives will be brought into the discussion on a given portion of John. Of course students may purchase more than one of these commentaries (and this is recommended for the purpose of future preaching, teaching, and research), but students will only be responsible to read and report on one of these commentaries for the purposes of the course.

Greek Exegesis students **must** choose a commentary from the second list. The commentaries in this list presume knowledge of Greek and attend to issues of translation and grammar to a much greater extent than do the commentaries in the first list. I include the first list for your reference.

English Exegesis Students:

Burge, Gary M. *John: The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2000.

Coloe, Mary L. *John 1–10 and John 11–21*. Vol. 44A and B of *Wisdom Commentary*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2021. (Be sure to acquire both volumes)

Maloney, Francis J. *The Gospel of John*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005.

Smith, D. Moody. *John*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *John: A Commentary*. New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Greek Exegesis Students:

Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Revised Edition. Word Biblical Commentary. Zondervan Academic, 2015.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John I–XIII and The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*. Anchor Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. (Be sure to acquire both volumes)

Funk, Robert W. *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 1-6 and John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7-21*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988. (Be sure to acquire both volumes)

Klink, Edward W. *John*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016.