



Student Handbook

April 2022 to December 2022

Grace Communion Seminary

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I. 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."¹

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.² 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.)

In your textbooks, underline or highlight important information.³ Put

¹ Melissa Browning, "Reading Basically," pages 15-29 in Eric Barreto, ed., *Reading Theologically* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 27.

² Some classes have audio lectures. Listening while driving is not a good study method. Rather, listen when you can take notes. Later, you can listen while driving as a review.

³ 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,

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.⁴ 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 an Academic Paper,” posted at <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=5854>. 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

but be sure to *study* what you read. E-book readers offer convenience, but also many distractions. In Kindle, you may highlight parts of the text, and in “my notebook,” export all the highlights (up to a percentage set by the publisher) to a different file. Then you can copy and paste a few quotes to your paper. Two short quotes are often better than one long one.

⁴ 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.learn.gcs.edu/mod/resource/view.php?id=5025>.
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 sometimes 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.⁵ 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:

⁵ A “snipping tool” can do a similar thing for a selected area of the screen.

- 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 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. The worldwide database (searchable at www.worldcat.org) includes millions of titles, and many of those can be sent to your local library as an 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!
- 5) Some books can be viewed electronically, either through a local library, or free at archive.org, or for a small fee at scribd.com or biblegateway.com.

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.⁶

We give some simple instructions in our document “How to Format an Academic Paper,” at <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=5854>.

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.

⁶ The fourth edition was published by Zondervan in 2020. 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).

II. 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, or phone our technical support department at 1-980-495-3979. If 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) 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. 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 Registrar (registrar@gcs.edu) with a description of the situation.

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

B. 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.

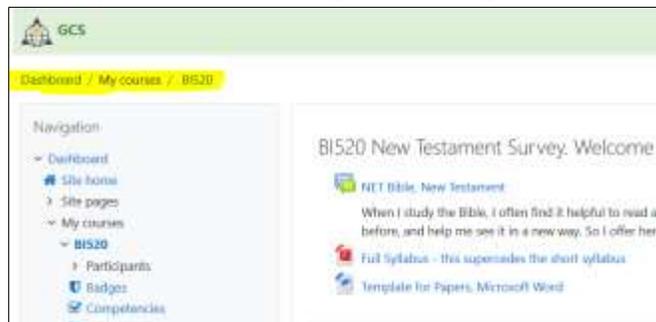
Our website has two sections: one for the general public, and one for students, accessible only by password. There are several ways to get to the student pages – one of the easiest is to bookmark <https://learn.gcs.edu>

On the next page we show a picture of that page, showing where you can type in your user name and password:



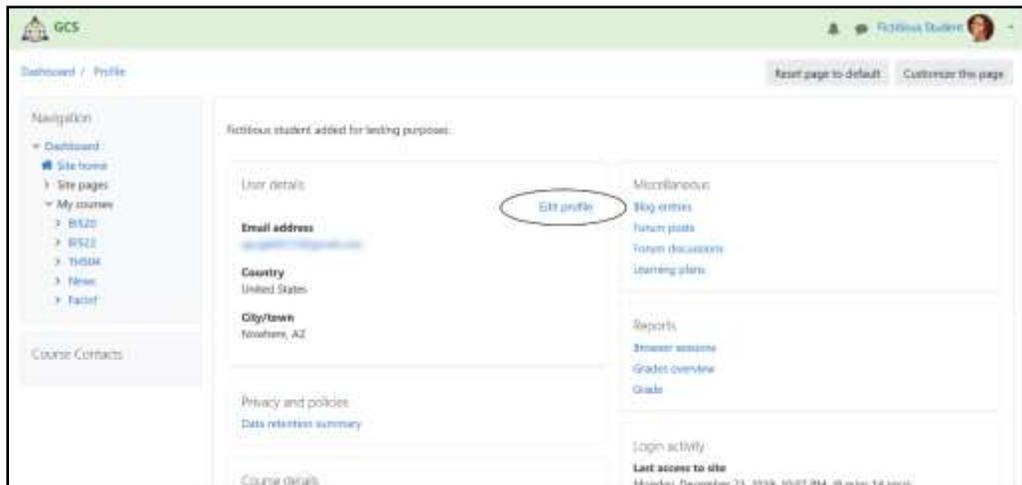
On this page you can see several useful links in the left column, including the *Academic Catalog*, and a few policies that are also in the *Catalog*.

- 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 (sometimes called “a breadcrumb trail”) of where you are on our 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 return to the “learn” home page, click on “Home.”



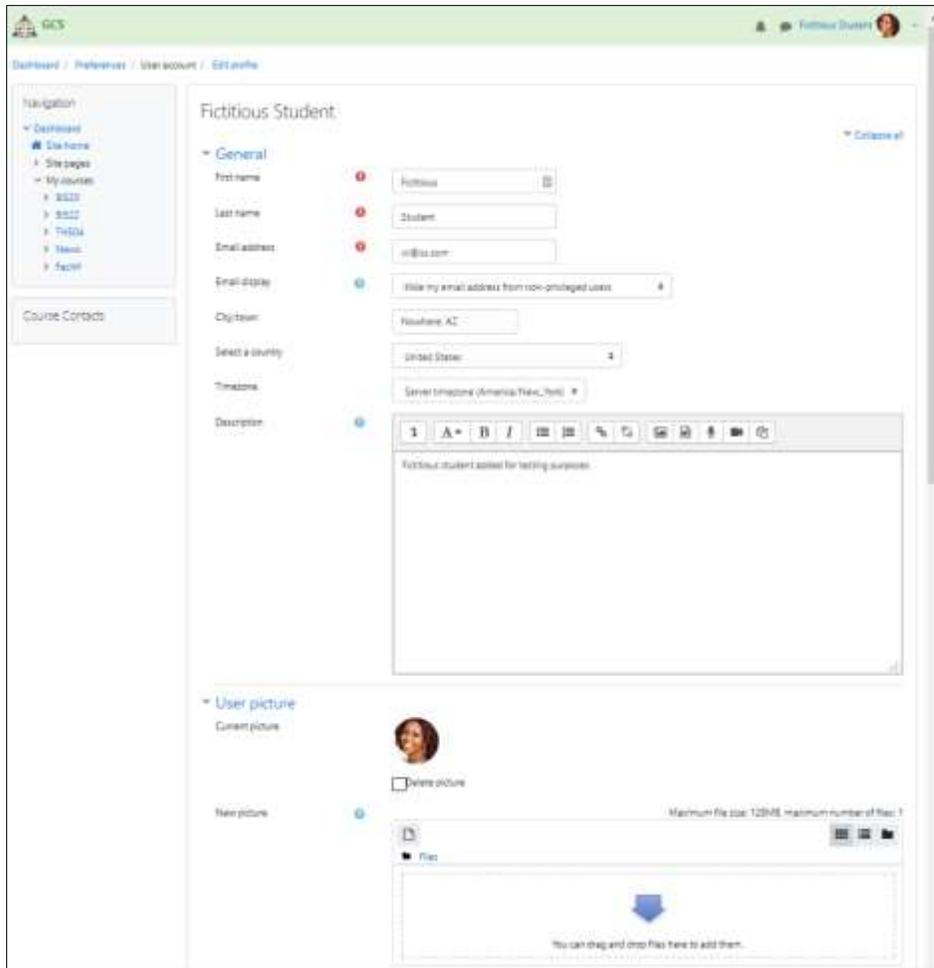
C. Managing your profile

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.

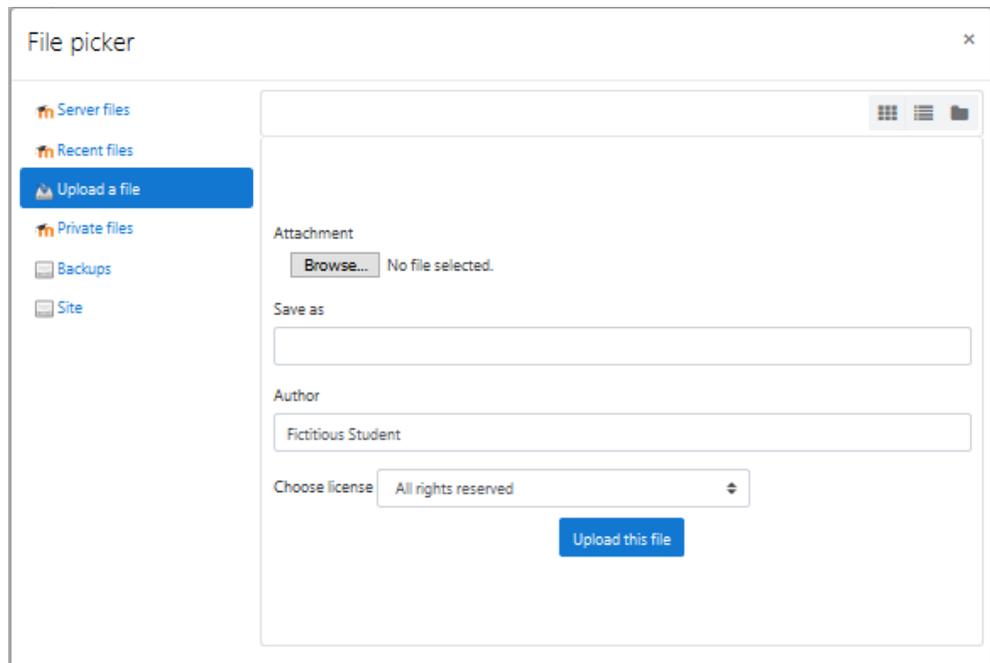
We’d also like a photo, so that we and other students can see who you are. This is not a place for baby photos, or your dog. This is so other students can put a face to the comments they will see on the discussion forums.

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:

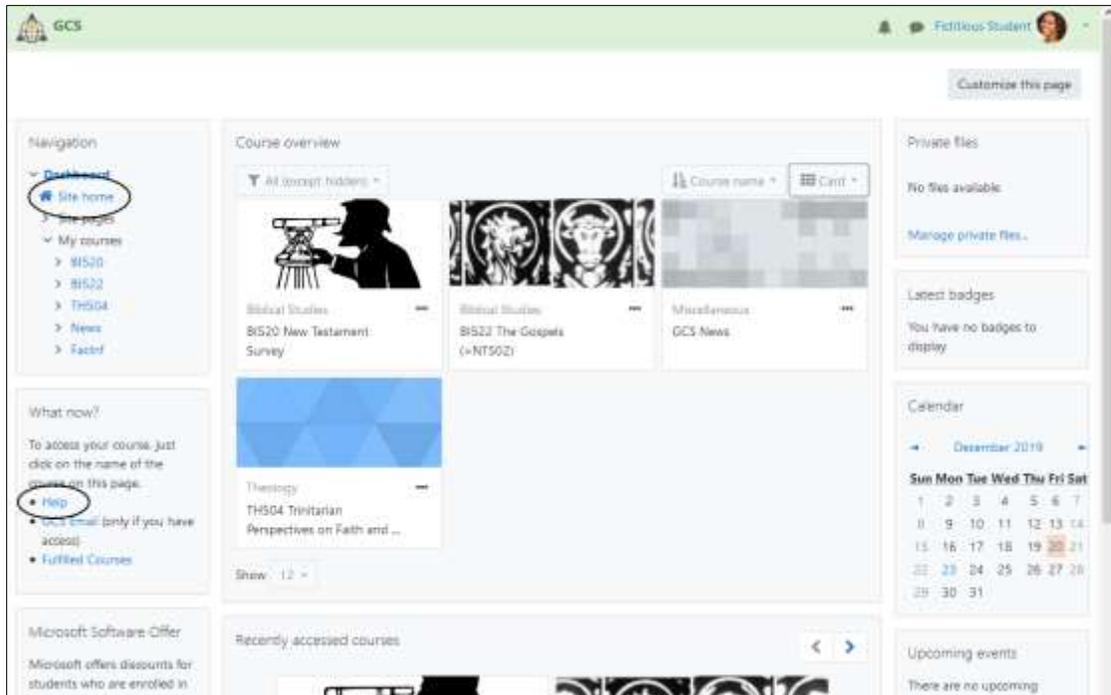
1. In File Explorer,⁷ navigate to the folder that contains the file you want to upload.
2. Click on the file you want to upload *and keep holding the mouse button down*.
3. Using your mouse, “drag” the file to the tab for your browser (Chrome, Safari, Edge, Firefox, etc.) that is in the taskbar at the 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.

D. 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.

⁷ 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.

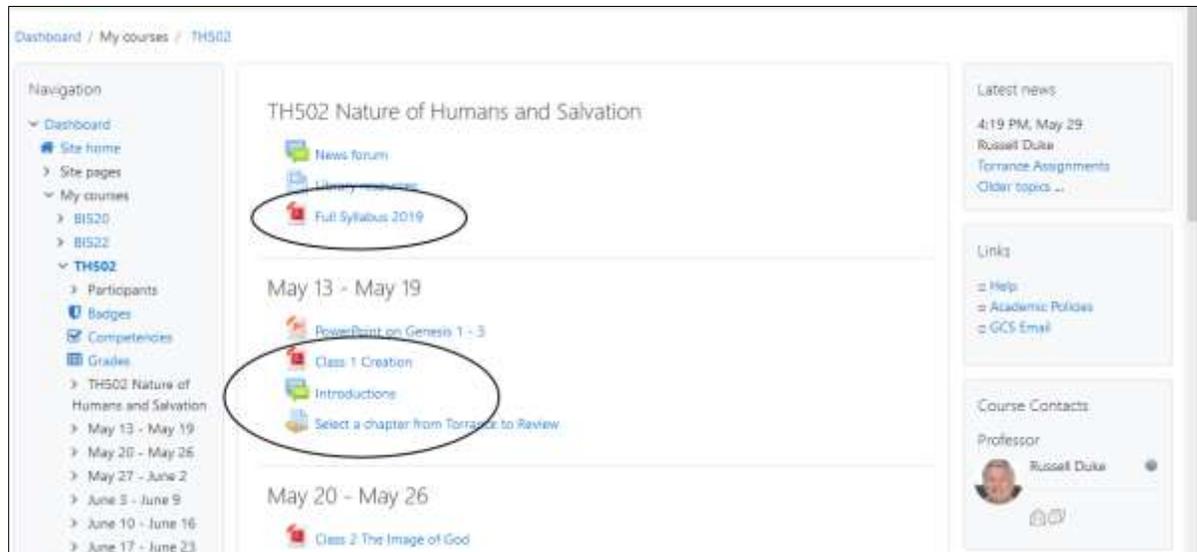


There are several links on this page that you may find useful:

- In the left column, “site home” will take you to the “learn” 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.

E. 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.

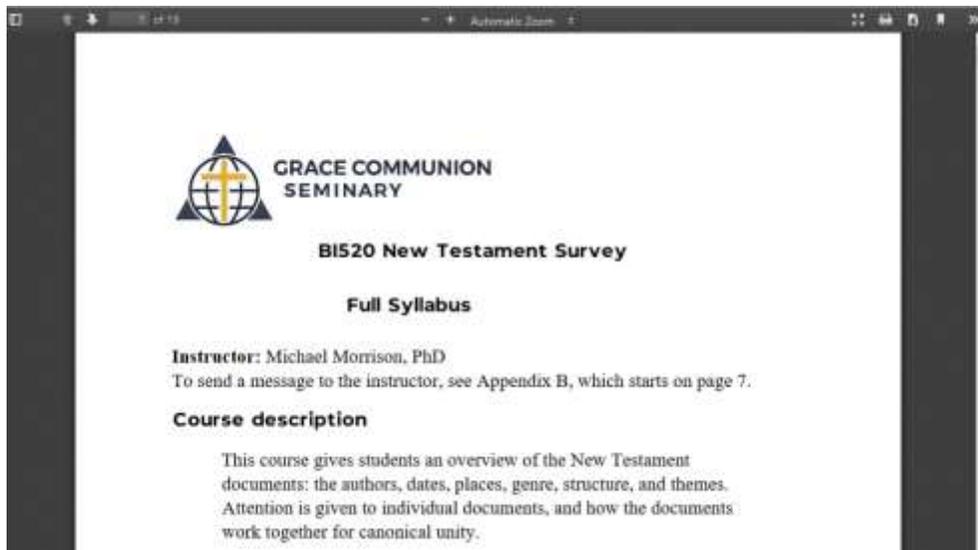
In the center we have circled three types of course content:

- 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 lesson (“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.

F. 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.

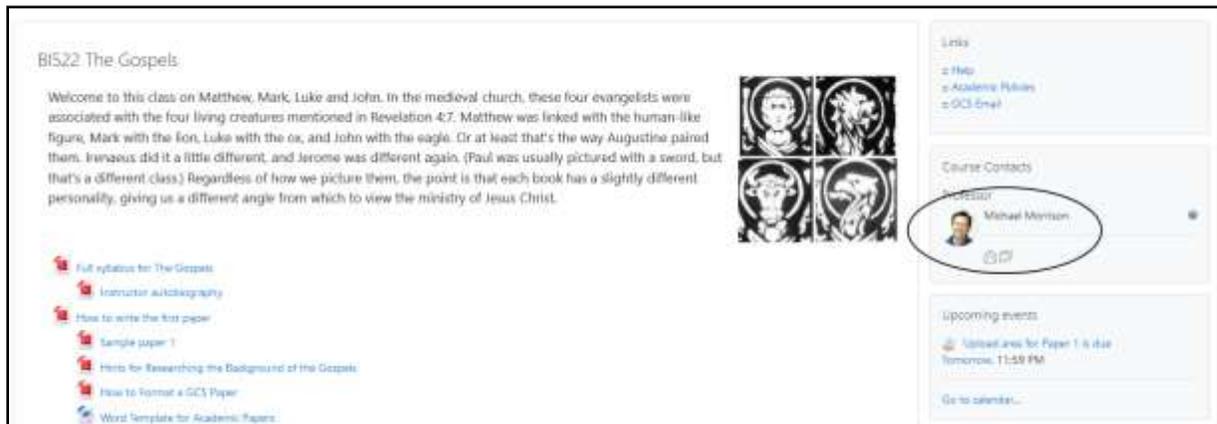


- The icons in the center of the top strip will shrink or enlarge the document.
- One icon gives a full screen view; the F11 key also does this.
- The next icon depicts a printer – this is one way to print the document. (Keyboard shortcut: press Ctrl and p at the same time.)
- To the right of that is 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.

G. Send a message to your instructor

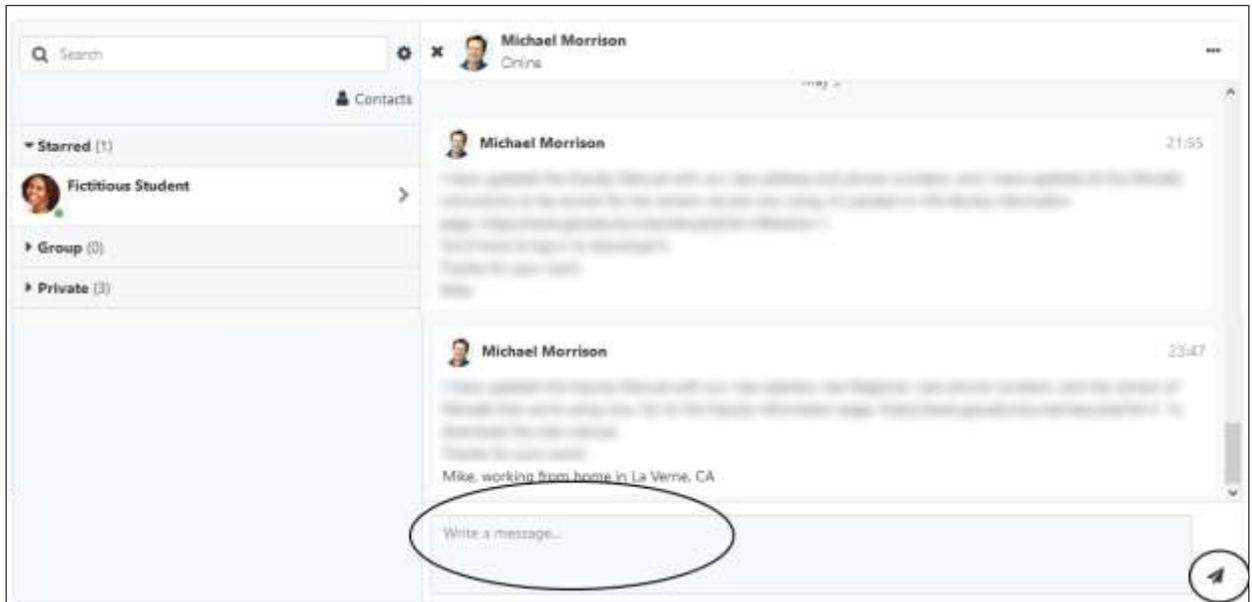
To make it easier to send a message to your instructor, every course home page has a “Course contacts” box on the left or on the right.



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 is an icon under the instructor’s name that depicts two messages. Click on it 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; you can often use an assignment upload area for that.



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 and we'll try to find out if there's a problem.

H. 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.

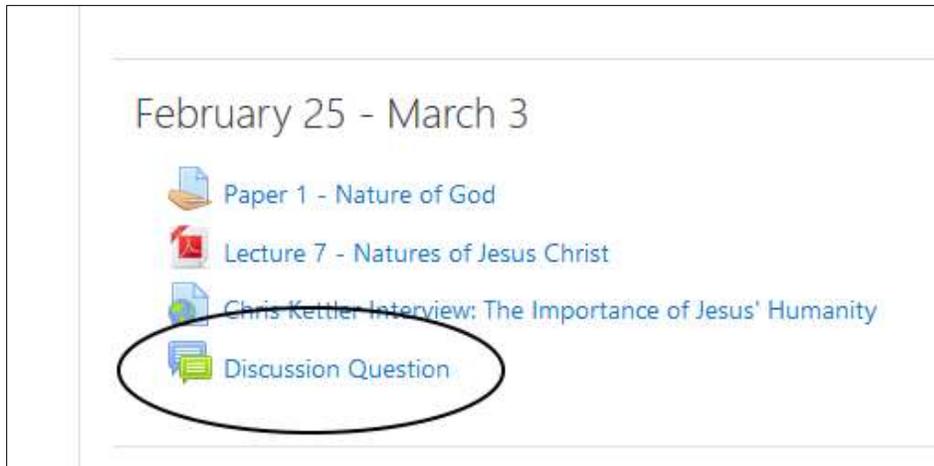
I. Problems with messages

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:

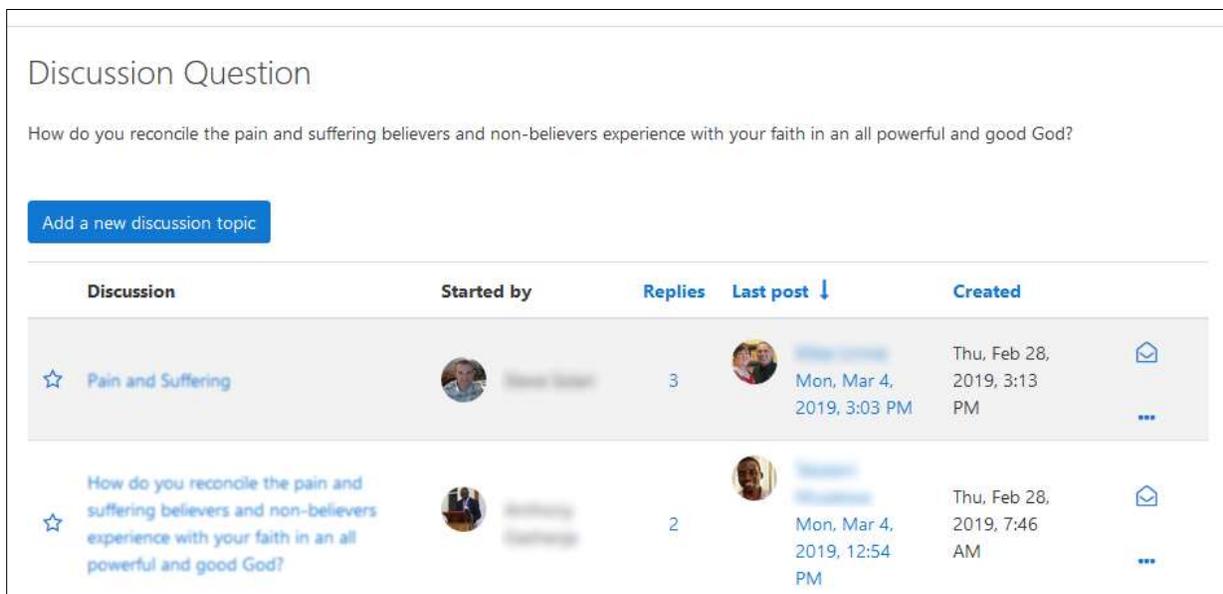
1. **Check your email spam folder**, and in Gmail, the “promotions” folder. Sometimes messages get flagged as spam even if they aren’t. (Your email provider may be able to tell that a computer generated the message.) You may be able to adjust your email settings to prevent GCS mail from being flagged 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.
 - Click your name in the upper right.
 - Click “Preferences.”
 - Click “Message preferences.”
 - Make sure that email is set to “on.”

J. 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.”

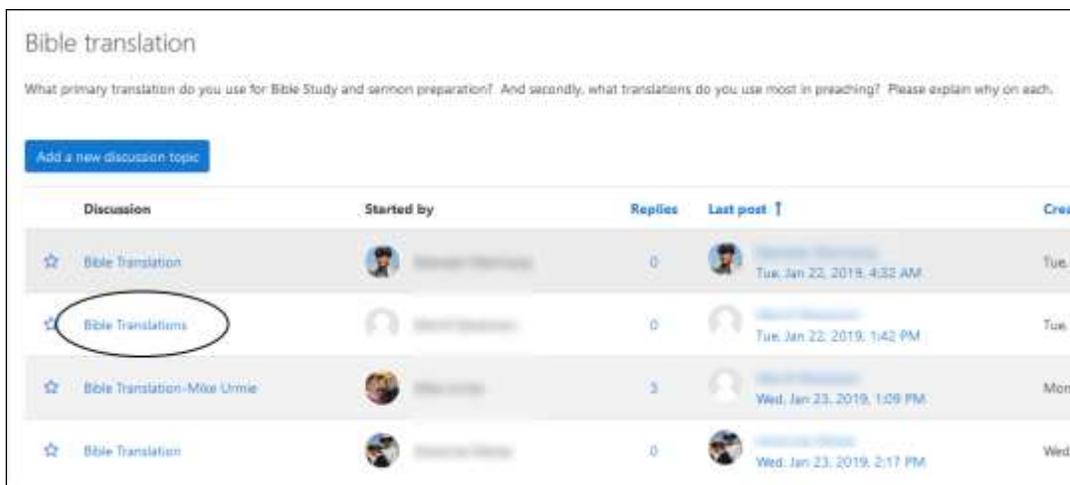
- You can use the gray icons for boldfacing, italicizing, underlining, etc. (You can also use keyboard shortcuts: Ctrl-b, Ctrl-i, Ctrl-u). For more formatting options, click the arrow icon in the upper left.
- If you want to type your comments in Word first (in order to check grammar and spelling, for 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.

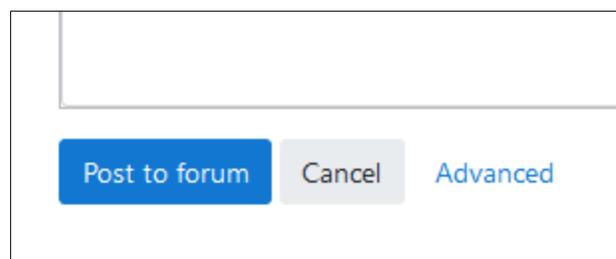
K. Forum: reply to a comment

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:



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):





- 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.**”

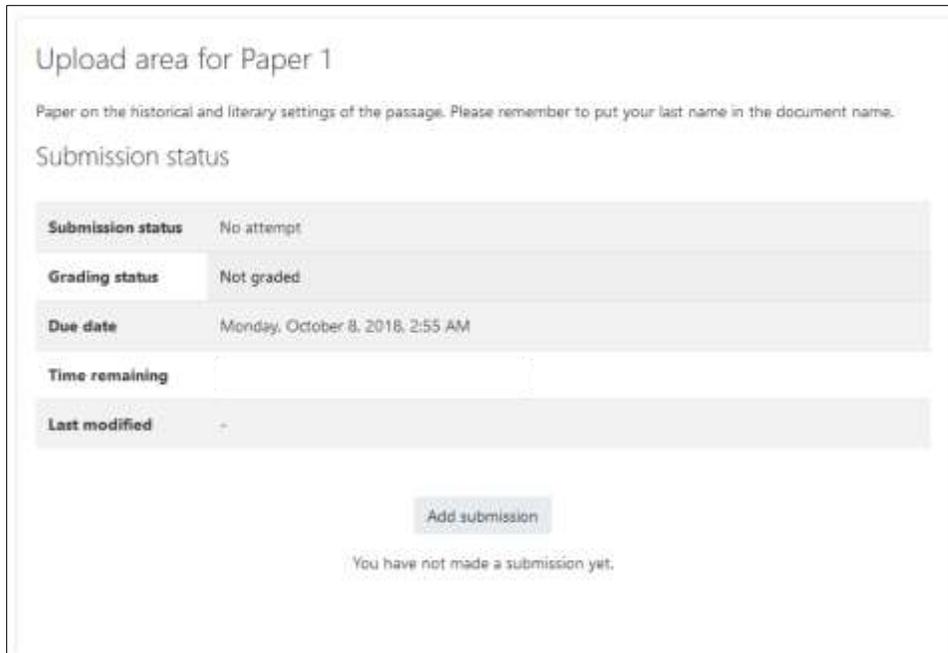
III. Assignments and Grades

L. Upload a new assignment

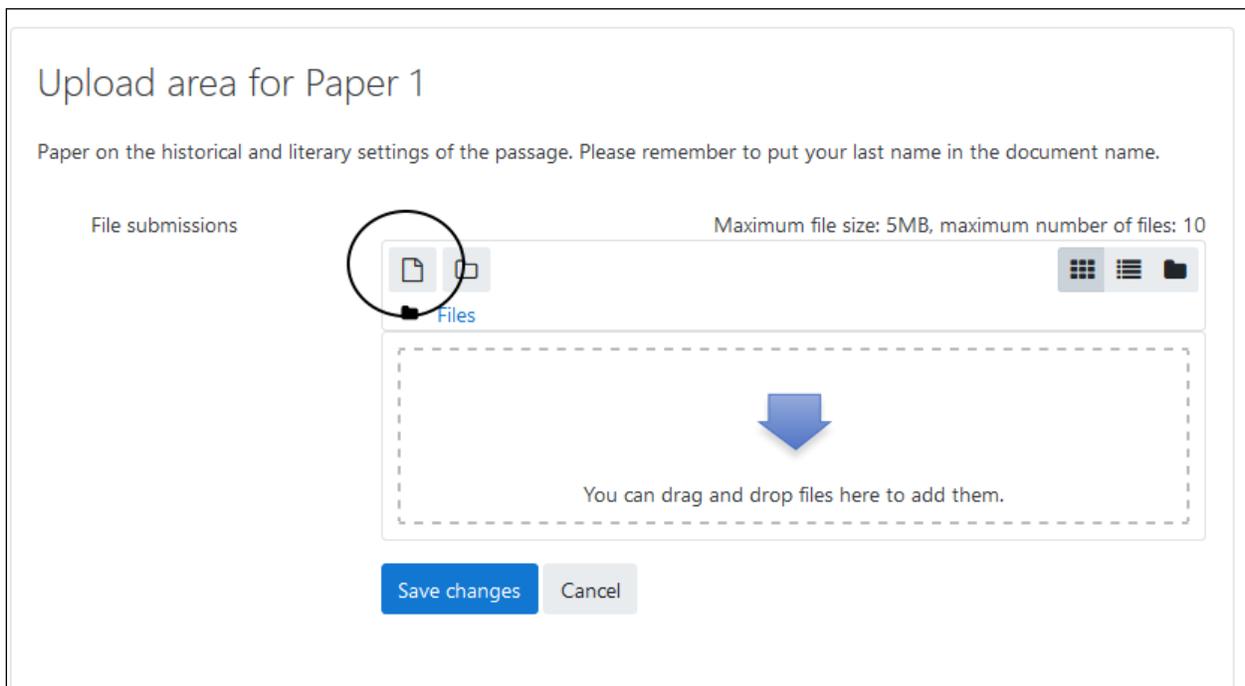
Now let's walk through the steps involved in uploading an assignment, such as a paper you have written. This will take a few steps (the multiple steps are designed for security, so that no one else can see your assignment). Let's start at the course home page:



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:



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:

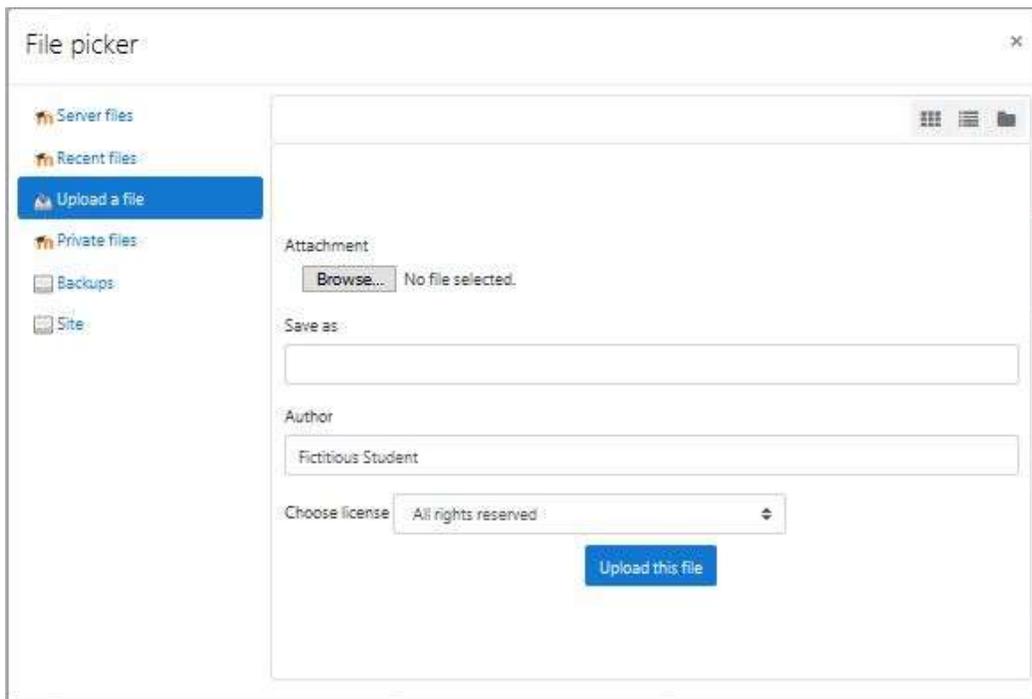


Your first step will be to locate the file in your computer that you want to submit to the course.

- 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:

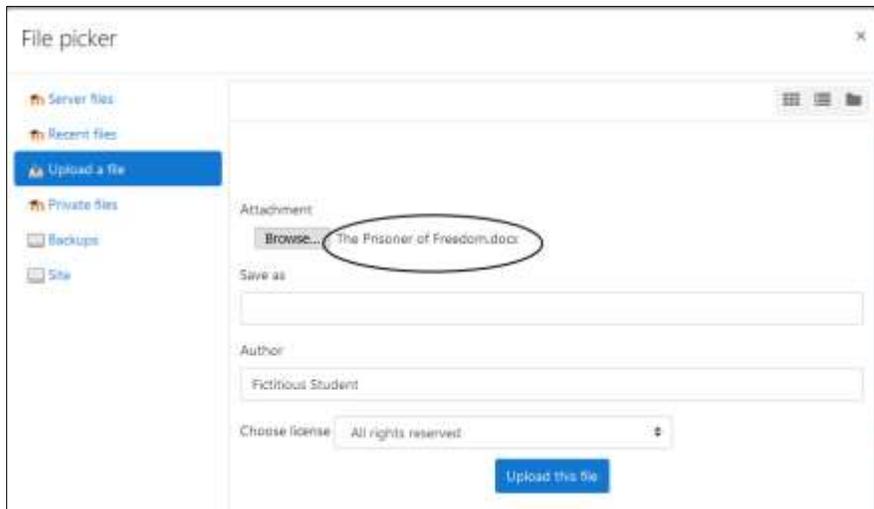


Click on “Browse.” (If you don’t see it, you may need to click on “Upload a file,” on the left.) When you click on Browse, you’ll see a File Explorer dialog box (or something similar on a Mac...). Navigate in your computer until you find the folder where your file is stored. There are three ways to select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

- double-click on the name of the file.
- click on the name of the file, then hit Enter on the keyboard.

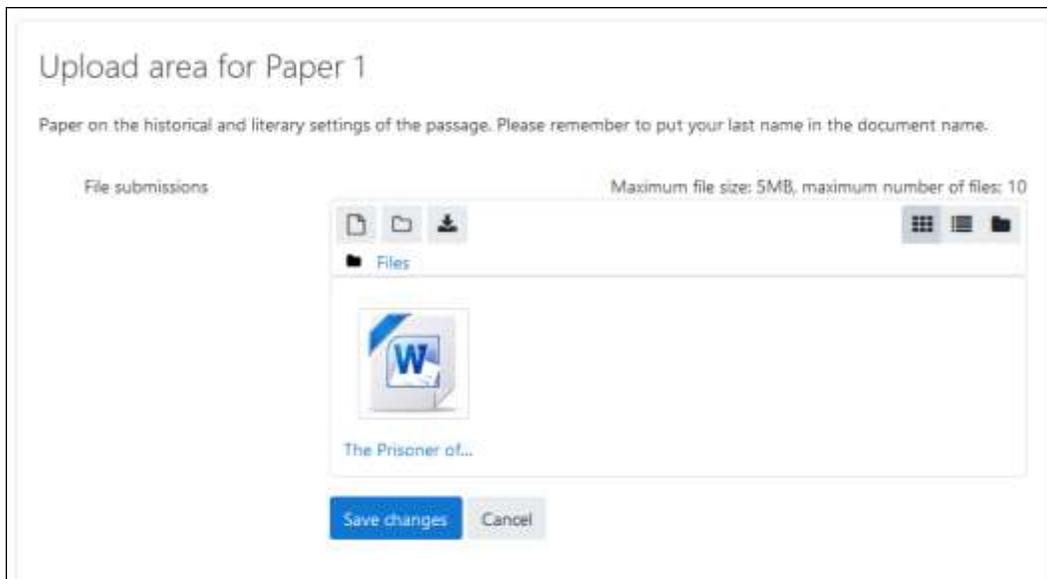
- click on the name of the file, then click the “Open” button.

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

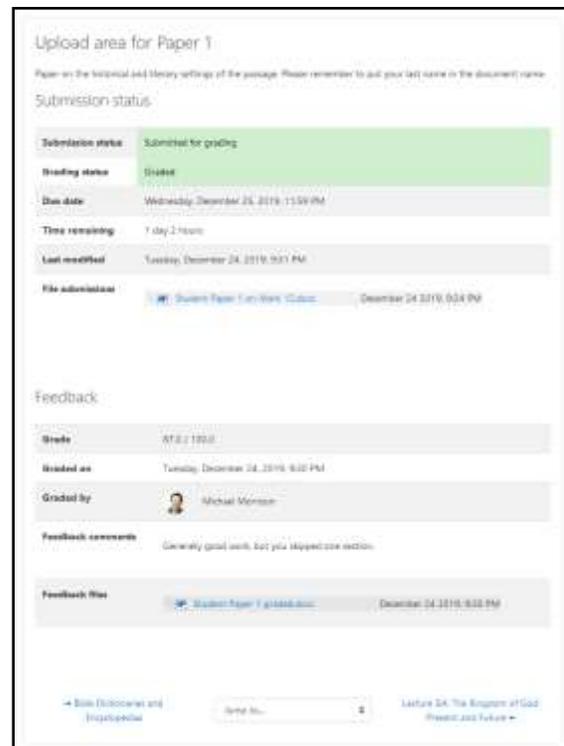
confirmation page. Be sure that you are submitting the correct file(s). If you didn't, you can click on the file, Delete it, and start over.

M. 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,⁸ 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' and includes a note: 'Paper in the historical and library settings of the page. Please remember to add your last name in the document name.' Below this is a 'Submission status' section with a green header. It lists: 'Submission status: Submitted for grading', 'Grading status: Graded', 'Due date: Wednesday, December 23, 2016, 11:59 PM', 'Time remaining: 1 day 2 hours', and 'Last modified: Tuesday, December 24, 2016, 9:57 AM'. A 'File submission' section shows a link to 'Submit Paper 1 (graded.doc)' with a timestamp of 'December 24, 2016, 9:58 PM'. The 'Feedback' section includes: 'Grade: 97.0 / 100.0', 'Graded on: Tuesday, December 24, 2016, 9:58 PM', 'Graded by: Michael Morrison', and 'Feedback comments: Generally good work, but you missed one section.' At the bottom, there is a 'Feedback file' section with a link to 'Submit Paper 1 (graded.doc)' and a timestamp of 'December 24, 2016, 9:58 PM'. Navigation links for 'Bible Dictionary and Encyclopedia' and 'Lecture 24, The Kingdom of God: Present and Future' are visible at the very bottom.

⁸ 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.”

N. Make an archive copy of your papers

An important component of the MDiv Capstone Course is a review and analysis of a portfolio 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 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.”

O. 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

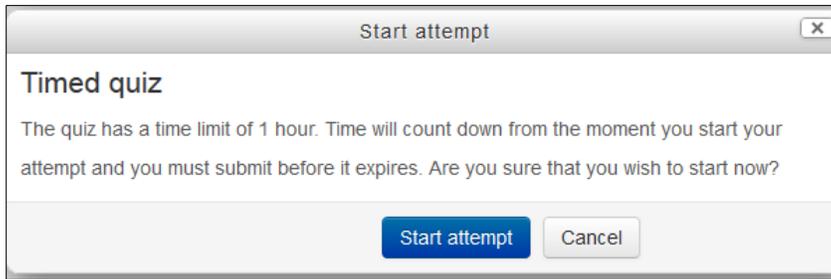
Attempt quiz now

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.

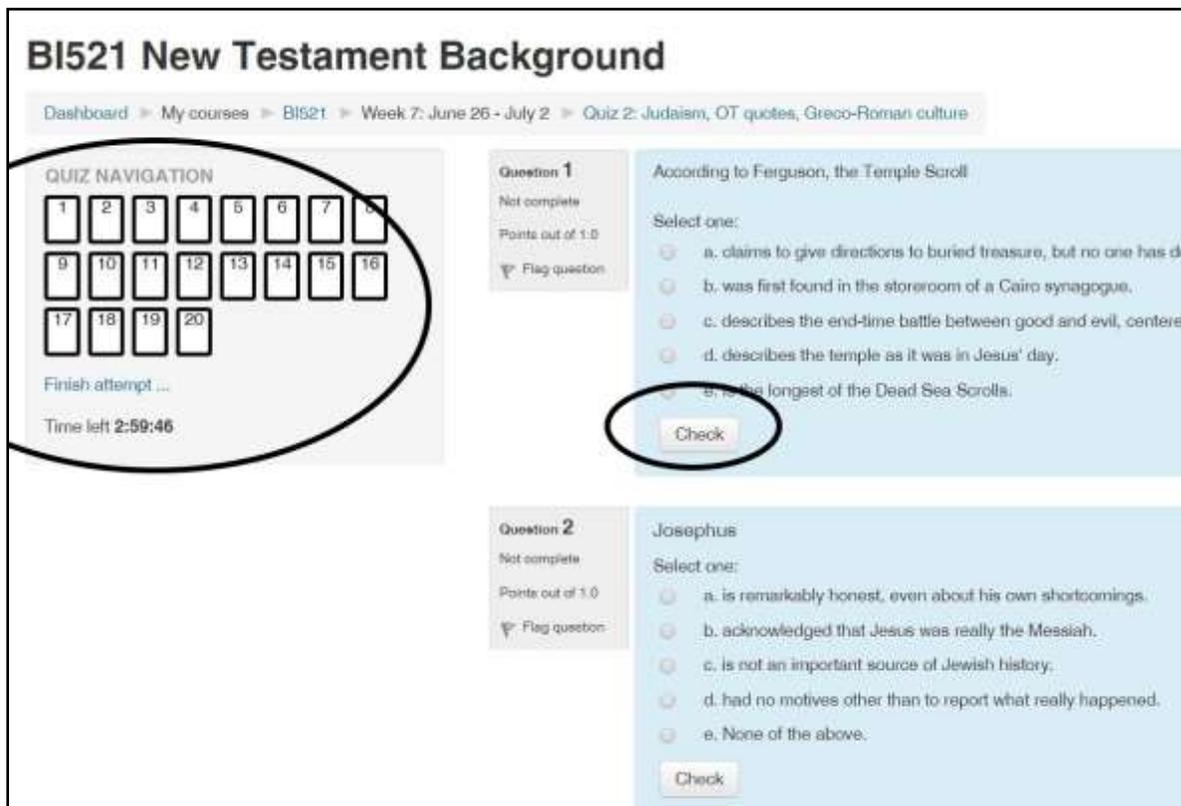
When you click on "Attempt quiz now," you will get a confirmation page to make sure you want to proceed:

June 1 - June 7

-  [Lecture 3a: Background of the Thessalonian letters](#)
-  [Lecture 3b: Survey of 1 Thessalonians](#)
-  [Lecture 3c: Survey of 2 Thessalonians](#)
-  [audio of lecture 3 \(listen online\)](#)
-  [audio of lecture 3 \(download\)](#)
-  [Map of Macedonia, Achaia, and western Asia Minor](#)
-  [Open-book Quiz 1](#)



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



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 1:28:36

This attempt must be submitted by Friday, August 28, 2016, 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:

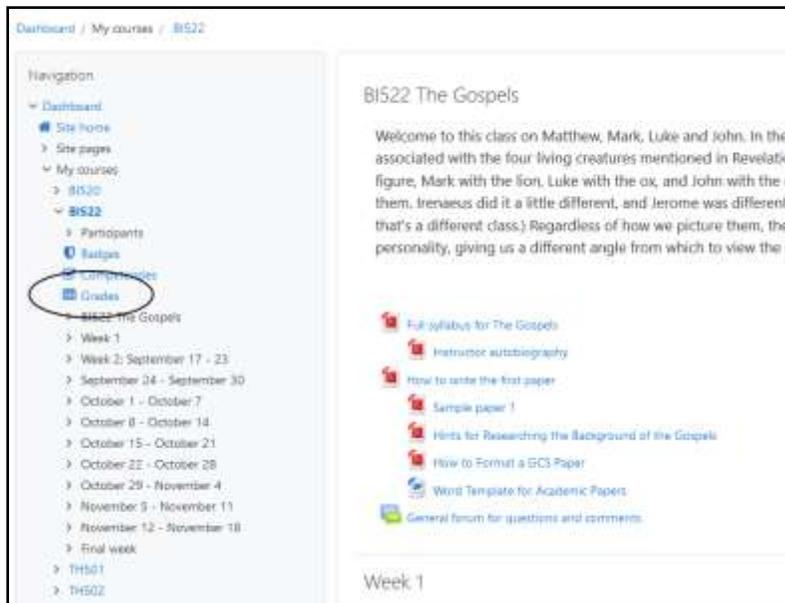
The screenshot displays a quiz interface with the following elements:

- 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.
- Summary:**
 - Started on: Friday, August 28, 2015, 8:44 AM
 - State: Finished
 - Completed on: Friday, August 28, 2015, 9:22 AM
 - Time taken: 37 min 43 sec
 - 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.

P. 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
NT901 New Testament Background						
Exegetical papers - 55% of course total						
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 %		50.08 %
Upload area for paper 3 - due Apr 12	0.00 % (Empty)	-	0-100	-		0.00 %
Exegetical papers - 55% of course total total Simple weighted mean of grades.	64.71 %	48.80	0-85	90.00 %		-
Quizzes - 15% of course						
NT01 Quiz 1	33.33 %	12.67	0-15	84.47 %		4.97 %
Quiz 2: Jewish history, literature, and religion	33.33 %	14.00	0-15	96.67 %		5.69 %
Quiz 3: OT Quotes: Application, Theological Interpretation	33.33 %	13.00	0-15	86.67 %		5.50 %
Quizzes - 15% of course total Simple weighted mean of grades.	17.65 %	13.28	0-15	89.27 %		-
Forum discussions - 15% of course total						
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 %		2.95 %
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 %
Forum discussions - 15% of course total total Simple weighted mean of grades.	17.65 %	10.74	0-15	71.60 %		-
Final Exam - 15% of final grade						
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 %
Final Exam - 15% of final grade total Simple weighted mean of grades.	(Empty)	-	0-15	-		-
Course total Weighted mean of grades.	-	86.82	0-100	86.82 %		-

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.