

Austin Graduate School of Theology

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ELEMENTARY NEW TESTAMENT GREEK

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The Scriptures of the New Testament were composed in the *koinê dialektos*, the development of the Attic dialect “common” (*koinê*) to the Athenians, Macedonians, Thessalians, and other members of the later Delian League. Alexander’s conquests established this dialect as the language of governance and elite commerce in Syria and Egypt, a role the Koinê continued to play when Alexander’s fractious successors in empire yielded to Rome. The conquered peoples who adopted and adapted the language of the Greeks not only used it to conduct business with their superiors and with one another (whence the non-literary papyri) but also read Greek literature and retold their own national sagas in the new tongue, enriching the Koinê in the process (or debasing it, as Attic purists ancient and modern would have it).

Most important in the subsequent history of Western civilization was the saga of the Jews, which was first translated from Hebrew and Aramaic originals to produce the Septuagint (LXX); then interpreted according to the methods of Hellenistic literary criticism originated in the study of Homer and the Greek poets; then re clothed in the Greek literary dress of drama, history, treatise, and oracle; and finally appropriated by the adherents of Jesus called Messiah (Greek *Christos*) for their proclamation that the God of Israel has brought the salvation promised in the Scriptures to Israel and the nations through Jesus. This course introduces the student to the scripturally colored Greek in which the New Testament was written.

BA EDUCATIONAL GOAL SUPPORTED BY THE COURSE: The student will show mastery of the biblical story and familiarity with various genres of biblical literature (law, wisdom, gospel, epistle, etc.) and basic methods and principles of biblical exegesis.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will acquire a basic knowledge of the formation of Greek substantives and verbs and of Greek sentence structure.
2. The student will acquire a Greek vocabulary representative of the Johannine Epistles and the first eighteen verses of the Gospel.
3. The student will become familiar with the aids for exegetical study incorporated in the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, including the use of the apparatus for textual criticism, and with the use of the lexicon as an exegetical resource.
4. Through translation of passages in the Epistles and Gospels the student will gain an increased understanding of the witness of these writings to the Christian faith.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In the main, two things are required of the student: (1) regular attendance at class sessions, where new material can be assimilated, material previously introduced can be reinforced, questions answered, and mistakes corrected; (2) daily study; a good rule of thumb is to review material presented in class and prepare assignments for a minimum of one hour each day, including weekends.

Quizzes will be administered on a regular basis (usually weekly). Each quiz will focus on material specified in advance but may include material learned for previous quizzes (i.e., quizzes are cumulative). A student who notifies the instructor or the AGST receptionist in advance of an absence from class will have opportunity to make up a quiz given on the date of the absence; a quiz missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up. Grading will be based on the quizzes (70%), attendance (10%), homework (10%), and oral translation in class (10%).

The basic text for the the course, which will introduce the student to essential matters of Greek word formation (“accidence,” in grammarian’s jargon), sentence structure (“syntax”), and Greek passages for reading and translation is:

L. William Countryman, *Read it in Greek* (also sold as *The New Testament is in Greek*).

As the course proceeds, the student should become familiar with Countryman’s Table of Contents and the book’s special features: the paradigms of substantive forms (pp. 177–185), verbs (pp. 185–188), and participles (pp. 188–195), principal parts of common irregular verbs (pp. 196–197), and especially the glossary and index (pp. 203–205). This last feature of Countryman’s grammar is useful in locating grammatical explanations needed for the translation of a particular passage — especially on those rare occasions when the instructor does not respond to email as quickly as the student desires.

Our initial translation will be from the Johannine Letters, after which we will turn to the first chapter of the Gospel according to John (using Countryman, pp. 174–176); the second semester of the course will then continue reading and translation of select New Testament texts.

After approximately the first month of class, the student will need access to the standard manual critical edition of the New Testament (also valuable for its references and study aids):

Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.; American Bible Society).

In addition to Countryman and the Nestle, you will also need to consult a Greek-English “lexicon” (i.e., dictionary) regularly after the first month or so of the class, when Countryman’s glosses will grow thin. The most affordable print lexicon is:

Mark A. House, *A Compact Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Hendrickson).

A free online option is accessible via https://books.google.com/books?id=E-kUAAAAYAAJ&printsec=titlepage&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false:

G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Scribner’s).

Or you may wish to obtain this more current and informative lexicon:

Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press);

or its massive and even more informative parent volume, in print or electronic form:

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, ed. W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich (often referred to as “BDAG”; University of Chicago Press).

The student may also wish to consult the following works on various topics as the course proceeds:

Samuel Lamerson, *English Grammar to Ace New Testament Greek* (Zondervan);

R. E. Van Voorst, *Building Your New Testament Greek Vocabulary* (Society of Biblical Literature); and

Mark L. Strauss, *The Biblical Greek Companion for Bible Software Users* (Zondervan).

LEARNING AIDS: For the initial lessons, a recorded guide to Greek pronunciation will be made available under my name at <http://austingrad.edu/resources/faculty>. A number of handouts presented in the course of the class are also available at that link; be sure to watch for the coveted “Verbamatic” (and ask about the T-shirt).

For drilling on vocabulary, the student may wish to employ <http://www.flashcardmachine.com/p/1e4n2b> (if that link doesn’t work, cut and paste it into your browser).

Other online aids to the study of the Greek New Testament can be accessed through the “Greek New Testament Gateway” (<http://ntgateway.com/greek/>) maintained by Prof. Mark Goodacre of Duke University; in particular, you may find some of William Mounce’s learning aids helpful (<https://www.teknia.com/greek>), although pronunciation and grammatical explanations may differ from those in our class and text.

TUTORING: AGST employs a Greek tutor for your benefit. The tutor’s contact and schedule information will be provided early in the fall semester. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of tutoring at the earliest point that you encounter difficulty learning the material or feel you are in over your head.

SCHEDULE: We will learn the elements of Greek grammar according to the schedule below, typically at the rate of one topic per week of class, while we also read through the Johannine epistles according to the schedule in Countryman and then other NT passages as announced. Quizzes, usually every Monday, will be announced at least one week in advance.

Topic

Alphabet & c.

Countryman, 1–6

The Clause

Countryman, 9–13

The Substantive:

Cases

Countryman, 15–19

Case Endings: 1st and 2nd Declensions

Countryman, 22–27, 180 #2

Prepositions with Nouns

Countryman, 31–34

Agreement of Nouns and Adjectives

Countryman, 38–40

Case Endings: 3rd Declension

Countryman, 44–46

The Verb:

Tenses

Countryman, 55–56

Formation of Tenses

Countryman, 64–65

Personal Endings

Countryman, 50–52

Augment & Reduplication

Countryman, 57–59

Infixes

Countryman, 61–63

Moods

Countryman, 69–72

Participles

Countryman, 69–70, 78–81

Infinitives

Countryman, 114–116