



Grace Communion Seminary

Student Handbook

November 2011

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I. Grace Communion Seminary Mission and Goals

A. Mission statement

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

B. Goals

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

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

II. Contact Information

A. Primary contacts

Mailing address: Grace Communion Seminary
P.O. Box 5005
Glendora, CA 91740-0730

Normally, use our mailing address. But if you are sending anything by UPS or FedEx, or if you are dropping by to see us, then you need the street address: 2011 E. Financial Way, Glendora, CA 91741.

Phone numbers: Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-800-851-2611
Or you can phone 1-626-650-2306
Fax: 1-626-650-2305

Website: www.gcs.ambassador.edu

Email: registrar@gcs.ambassador.edu

B. Administration

1. President: Russell Duke, Ph.D. in Practical Theology from Union Institute and University. Dr. Duke also teaches classes in biblical studies, ministry, and theology. You may contact him at russell.duke@gcs.ambassador.edu
2. Dean of Faculty: Michael Morrison, Ph.D. in Theology (Biblical Studies) from Fuller Theological Seminary. He also teaches courses in New Testament. You may contact him at michael.morrison@gcs.ambassador.edu.
3. Registrar: Susan Earle. She also serves as receptionist and secretary. Her email address is registrar@gcs.ambassador.edu

C. Faculty

Gary Deddo is an editor for InterVarsity press, and he teaches part-time at Fuller Theological Seminary as well as at GCS. He was mentored by James B. Torrance at the University of Aberdeen, from which he received his PhD. He teaches our course on the doctrine of the Trinity.

Russell Duke is the president of GCS. He has experience as a pastor, a teacher, and a university administrator. He received his Ph.D. in Practical Theology from Union Institute and University.

Neil Earle is the pastor of the GCI church in Glendora, CA. He has an M.A. in History from the University of Toronto, and an M.A. in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. He teaches our course about the second millennium of church history.

Tim Finlay is on the faculty of Azusa Pacific University's Graduate School of Theology, but he also teaches one class for GCS. He has a PhD in Old Testament from Claremont Graduate University.

Ted Johnston lives in Ohio, and works with ministry development for the GCI Church Administration & Development department. He has a M.A. in Liberal Studies: Psychology from Regis University, and a M.A. in Christian Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He teaches our course in Trinitarian youth ministry.

John McKenna teaches part-time at Azusa Pacific University as well as at GCS. He studied under Thomas F. Torrance, and received his Ph.D. in Historical Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. He teaches courses in the biblical theology of the Old Testament, and a course on the theology of T.F. Torrance.

Michael Morrison teaches part-time at Azusa Pacific University, works part-time as editor for GCI, and part-time at GCS. He received a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary, and he teaches courses in the New Testament.

Pat Shaw is budget analyst for the GCI Church Administration & Development department. She has an M.A. in Pastoral Studies from

Azusa Pacific University, and teaches our course in women in leadership.

Jonathan Stepp is a GCI pastor in Nashville, Tennessee. He has an M.Div. in Pastoral Studies from Campbell University Divinity School. He teaches our class in early church history, and a course in the practice of ministry.

Eric Wilding is a CGI elder in Toronto, Ontario, and an instructor at Centennial College in Toronto. He has taken all the coursework and is finishing his thesis for the D.Min. at the Toronto School of Theology. He teaches the GCS course in the nature of humans and salvation.

III. Calendar

GCS offices are normally open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time, Monday through Thursday; 8:30 to 4:00 on Fridays.

GCS offices are closed during the following holidays: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Friday, and from Christmas through New Year's Day.

GCS administrative personnel are generally available each day the office is open, and will generally respond to email within two working hours.

Since GCS does not provide office space for part-time faculty, electronic messaging is the best way to correspond with the instructors. To send a private message to your instructor, go to the class website and at the top of the right-hand column, click on "message my professor." Since they are part-time, even during the semesters in which they are teaching a class, they do not necessarily check their messages every day. If an instructor does not respond to a question within two days, or it is an urgent matter, please email the GCS office at registrar@gcs.ambassador.edu, or phone us at 1-800-851-2611.

IV. Course scheduling

GCS has three 13-week semesters each year. In each semester, there are ten weeks of lectures and online discussions, two more weeks for completing

final papers and projects, and one week for final papers to be graded and returned. Short syllabi listing the required textbooks are updated on our website at least four weeks before each course begins. Students can see the assigned readings, order the books, and begin reading ahead of time.¹

Lectures are posted each Monday, and students may access them at any time after they are posted. In some weeks, students are required to participate in online discussions. There is no specific time that all students must be online – students post their comments at any time between Monday and Thursday, for example, and then again between Friday and Sunday. Because these online discussions involve interactions with other students, they must be done on the week assigned; there is no way to “make up” the interaction at a later date.

Most classes have something due each week. If students need an extension of time in order to complete the final projects or papers, in most cases we will be able to arrange this, although there is a fee for an extension, because it involves additional work for the instructor and support personnel.

The spring semester begins in mid-January, the summer semester in mid-May, and the fall semester in mid-September. For exact dates, see the *Academic Catalog* or our website.

To see which courses we offer in which semester, see our website for the most up-to-date information.

V. Study suggestions

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,” at <http://gcs.ambassador.edu/course>.

¹ If fewer than five students sign up for a course, that course may be cancelled, or it may continue, depending on the discretion of the instructor.

Different students learn in different ways, but we offer here a few suggestions on how to study for your courses.

A. Make a study schedule

All our courses, in order to offer three semester units of credit, must involve at least 135 hours of student work, so that means 11 or more 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 class time, some students who are new to online work 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.

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 pastoral work, 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!

B. Take notes

In most of our courses, the lectures are the most important part of the course. There may be quizzes that include the textbook readings, but the lectures generally indicate to you what the instructor thinks is *most* important for you to know. So read the lectures carefully, when you are most alert. Highlight or underline important points. Circle unfamiliar words, and look up the meanings. 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 last

course in the master's program, TM01, involves a summative exam, so you may want to review the course a few years after you have taken it.)

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

C. 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. However, some of our students have not been in college for decades, so may want a refresher course. To help you in that, see “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted on the “Student Handbook” section of our site. <<http://gcs.ambassador.edu/course/view.php?id=23>>. For additional details, see Purdue University's Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01>. For specifics on citation style, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02>.

D. 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 actually read the book, which means that you will learn 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 simple 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 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.

For more details on a book review, see the guidance given at Duke University: <<http://uwp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/book%20review.pdf>>. Or

at the University of Washington:

<<http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/dreview.html>>. But if your instructor gives you any further description of what is desired, then those instructions supersede anything given elsewhere.

E. 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 by all means follow those instructions. Otherwise, you might find some helpful guidance at Duke:

<<http://uwp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/response%20paper.pdf>>.

F. 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 it has 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, better thought-out, and graded more objectively.

A good contribution to an online discussion...

1. is on time – by the end of Thursday.
2. shows not just opinions, not just facts, but opinions or conclusions based on facts. It shows some thought, and is relevant to the topic.
3. shows some connection of the discussion with the world outside of the forum – lectures, textbooks, or life experience.

4. shows good grammar, logic, and is clearly written.
5. stimulates further discussion, either through questions or with ideas that provoke other students to comment.

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

1. is on time – by the end of Sunday, and it is in the right place (that is, it is posted as a “reply” instead of being posted as a new topic).
2. does not terminate the discussion. Two replies are better than one – either multiple responses in a back-and-forth exchange in the same threaded topic, or comments on more than one 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.
5. shows good logic, and is clearly (and tactfully) stated.

Comments do not need to be *long*. Two medium-length comments are better than one long one. 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 often enough, but topics in some of our courses require lengthier comments.

Grading: different instructors may weight some items more than others, but if each of the above items is counted equally, it adds up to 10 points per week.

G. How to conduct research

Some GCS classes require research papers, in which you must use sources in addition to the required textbooks. These may be commentaries, articles in professional journals, or encyclopedias devoted to theology, ministry, or biblical studies. In the information age, we are not lacking in a multitude of sources – what we lack is an index to everything. What we want is usually “out there” somewhere, but we don’t know where. That’s

what reference librarians are for – they have special training in knowing what resources will help you find which sorts of material.

If you live near a theological library, see if they allow visitors to use their library. They may not let you check out any books, but 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 GCS classes or in your ministry.

But what can you do if you don't have time to drive to a theological library? Welcome to the information age. What you need is probably “out there” on the internet. There is an ever-expanding wealth of scholarly materials available on the internet. This is not the level of research you would need for a doctorate, but it is sufficient for most master's level classes.

We have some instructions on the GCS site that can help you. After you log in to the GCS website, click on the “Help” link. That will take you to several student resources, one of which is “Library Resources.” Click on that, and you'll see a [PDF document](#) explaining some of your 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 35 million possibly relevant pages. You probably don't want to read 35 million pages—you probably don't even want to read 35 pages to see if they have what you are looking for. Some of these are probably good, but others are unsubstantiated opinion, posted by people who know more about the internet than they do the Bible.

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. Some good guidelines are given at <<http://gemini.lib.purdue.edu/core/files/evaluating4.html>>, but chances are, you probably don't want to investigate the qualifications of the authors of 35 pages. Generally you can't find anything because most authors on the internet don't have *any* credentials; they have no particular expertise in the subject.

What you want are resources written by people who actually 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. What you need are books. No doubt, some of those 35 million pages on the internet are actually high-quality resources written by experts. But it is difficult to find the golden needles hidden in the pile of rubble. The faster way to search for high-quality resources is to narrow your internet search to books.

You can do some pretty good research in a bookstore. You can walk into Barnes & Noble, pull a book off a shelf, sit in a comfortable chair and read all day long, without having to buy anything, not even a cup of coffee. In lieu of a photocopier, you can bring a digital camera and take some pictures of the book pages.

Or 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 quite 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. 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, and once you’ve reached your limit, they will not show you any more. So it’s a good idea to *save what you see*, because you might not see it again.

However, you can’t save or print the page in the normal way. It just comes 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 sc” and works 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. Then you can open a graphics program such as Paint, and press Control-V to paste it into the graphics program, and *then* you can save it to disk or print it from there. This 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 bibliography of related books. You can also type your subject into Amazon's search bar, and Amazon will show you what's available on that topic, even books that do not necessarily have that term in the title.

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

- 1) If Amazon lets you view the inside of the book, you can examine the table of contents, and sometimes the text, too, to see if the book really meets your needs.
- 2) If you think it will be very helpful, a good addition to your own library, you can buy the book. Or sometimes you can sell it back to Amazon, or through Amazon, after you are done with it.
- 3) You can borrow the book from the GCS library (see below).
- 4) Or you can borrow the book from your local public library. Most local libraries participate in an interlibrary loan program, usually through the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). Their database (searchable at www.worldcat.org) includes more than 10 million titles, and millions of those can be sent to your local library as an interlibrary loan. 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.

H. GCS library services

GCS has a library of several thousand books; a catalog of our books is posted at the student handbook section of our website, <<http://gcs.ambassador.edu/course/view.php?id=23>>.

1. Books that are currently being used as textbooks, or will be a textbook within a month, may not be borrowed. Books currently being used by GCI or GCS personnel or other students may not be borrowed.
2. To request a book, send an email to terry.akers@gci.org.

3. For students in the U.S.A., books will be sent via U.S. Postal Service media mail (book rate). Most books take one week to ten days to arrive.
4. The loan period is four weeks, but this 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 terry.akers@gci.org.
5. Return postage is at the student's expense. If you open the original package carefully, you can probably re-use it to mail the book back to us. U.S. Postal Service media mail is generally the most economical. Please send the book to Grace Communion Seminary Library, PO Box 5005, Glendora, CA 91740-0730.
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 register for more classes, or be issued a transcript or diploma. *If the book is worth more than \$50, we recommend that it be insured.*

VI. Course overview

A. Course study materials

In each course, the materials you need are listed in the course syllabus. The short 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. Some 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.

Some 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.

B. Proctoring exams

Proctored exams are required in the following courses: CH01, CH02, CM02, NT01, TH01, TH05, TH06, and TM01. Students are allowed to have the exam proctored in either of two ways:

1. The student may take the exam while being watched on video.
2. Students may also arrange to have the exam proctored by someone else — a librarian, a professional educator, or an ordained person.

Here are additional details about these options:

1. Proctoring by video

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

- a. You must have a camera connected to your computer. Some computers have a camera and microphone built in. Some digital cameras have cables that enable the camera to be used as a webcam, if you have a small tripod. Or you may purchase a small webcam with microphone and connect it to the computer. You may purchase a webcam from many electronic stores. If you allow a few weeks for delivery, you can purchase an inexpensive webcam for less than \$10 from dealextreme.com. Inexpensive cameras sometimes work best because there are fewer adjustments to make – just plug it in, and it will work, if you have a recent version of Windows.

- b. There are various ways to activate a video connection. Both Google and Yahoo offer free video chat. However, we recommend the use of Skype. Skype enables you to make computer-to-computer phone calls anywhere in the world, for free; it also enables video phone calls for free. Go to www.skype.com, position your cursor over the words “Get Skype,” and then click on the type of computer that you have. Click on “Download” in the column labeled “Skype Free.”
- c. You’ll need to set up a free account. The website will ask for your name, email address and password. You’ll need to create a Skype Name; then the installation program will download, and you can run the program to install it. You may need to remain connected to the Internet while it installs.
- d. Your computer, and Skype, should automatically detect your camera. In Skype, go to Tools, then Options, then Video Settings. It will display what the camera is seeing. (If it does not show anything, restart your computer while the camera is connected.) Also click on “Audio Settings” to make sure that your microphone and speakers are working.
- e. You will need to add someone at GCS to your list of contacts. Ask your instructor what the contact name is.
- f. Well in advance, you will need to send us a color copy of a government-issued photo ID, such as a drivers license. With a scanner or a digital camera, make a copy of the ID and send it to registrar@gcs.ambassador.edu. Or you may mail a photocopy to us at Grace Communion Seminary, PO Box 5005, Glendora, CA 91740. Please do this in the first two weeks of the class, if you haven’t already done it for another class.
- g. Also early in the class, test the video connection to make sure that it is working properly. Do this in advance, so that any problems may be resolved before the actual test begins.
- h. For the actual exam, you will make the video connection before you begin the test. The proctor will communicate with you to

confirm that the connection is working. Then begin the test.² You will keep your webcam and microphone on, but the proctor will turn the camera and microphone off. You will no longer be able to see the proctor, but the proctor will still be able to see you. (The proctor may have other work to do at the same time, and we don't want you to be distracted by what we are doing.) We may record the entire video transmission to watch at a later time, if necessary. This recording will not be used for anything other than academic verification.

- i. When the test is over, just talk to the proctor, and hopefully the proctor will be there to turn the camera and microphone back on and confirm with you that the process has been successful. If the proctor does not respond, perhaps the proctor has stepped away from the desk for a few minutes. Just end the Skype call, and send us a message saying that you are done.
- j. You should alert other people in your home that you are taking a video proctored exam. This means that they should not interrupt you, and be aware that they are not in visual or verbal privacy.

2. Proctoring with a third party

- a. If students do not wish to be proctored by video, they should inform us that they wish to be proctored by a third party. Each student must select a proctor well in advance and verify that the person is willing and able to proctor the exam during the approximate time period in which the exam must be taken.
- b. The proctor may be a librarian, a professional educator (a teacher or administrator from primary, secondary or tertiary schools), or an ordained person not in the same congregation as the student.
 1. The person cannot be related to the student by marriage or by birth. Second cousins and more distant relationships are permitted, as long as the person meets the qualifications mentioned above.

² Bathroom breaks are not allowed, so plan accordingly.

2. The proctor cannot be under the supervision of the student in any capacity, either on the job or in the church. (However, the proctor may be a supervisor over the student.) Pastors cannot be proctored by anyone in the congregations they pastor.
- c. One more factor involved in selecting a proctor: We prefer that the exam be taken on the proctor's computer, rather than the student's computer. So if possible, the proctor must have an internet-connected computer that the student can use. No matter whose computer is used, the proctor must be able to see the computer monitor at all times, and can testify that the student did not access any unauthorized materials while taking the exam.
- d. Once the student has identified a possible proctor, the student must send us the proctor's name, qualification (e.g., teacher or pastor), email address and phone number. The proctor must have an employer-issued email address; accounts at Gmail and Verizon, for example, are not acceptable. We must be able to visit the website that corresponds to the email address of the proctor to verify the identity and validity of the proctor.
- e. GCS will then contact the proctor to verify that the person meets the qualifications, and is willing to proctor the exam during the time period that the exam should be completed.
- f. GCS will then notify the student whether the proctoring arrangement is acceptable, and if so, will leave it up to the student to set up a more specific time for the exam. This will most likely be done about a week before the exam. The student must then send the instructor and the proctor an email confirming the appointed time, location, and which computer will be used.
- g. GCS will send further instructions to the proctor.
- h. The student will take the exam at the appointed time. Our website records the time and the computer's IP address.
- i. All programs should be closed except for the internet browser and a word-processing program, with only a blank document being open. (Turn off email notifiers, instant messaging, etc.) Unless

the exam instructions specifically allow the student to use other websites, only one window or tab may be open on the browser, and that is the GCS class website on which the exam is being taken.

- j. Some libraries or proctors charge a fee of \$25 or \$30; that is the student's responsibility.
- k. Even if the proctor knows you personally, you must show a government-issued photo ID, and the proctor must sign a statement that the ID has been shown.

VII. Program objectives

A. Master's Level Courses

In Master's Level Courses, we provide graduate-level courses in biblical, theological, and ministry studies according to students' interests and needs, as students wish to improve their pastoral skills or fulfill personal interests. In the MLC, we seek to:

1. Offer courses that are academically sound, comparable to courses taken at other graduate schools, and useful for pastors as they attempt to augment their pastoral knowledge and skills, at a pace that is attainable by bivocational pastors as well as permitting full-time students to progress at the rate they desire.
2. Offer courses that may be applied toward our certificate, diploma, or master's degree programs – the courses are academically identical regardless of the whether the student intends to get a degree or not.

B. Certificate of Theological Studies

Program Goal: In the Certificate of Theological Studies, we seek to prepare graduate students to be conversant in the fundamentals of Trinitarian theology and foundational knowledge of Scripture as God's word:

1. Teach students how to interpret the biblical text, and help them become familiar with the biblical text as a historical document and an inspired and authoritative guide. This objective is attained by courses that are part of the Certificate program, and verified by the students' ability to write exegetical papers.
2. Challenge the student to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions, and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of the word of God. This objective is attained by courses that are part of the Certificate program, and verified through student papers and a proctored exam.
3. Enable students to evaluate themselves as unique persons building strong relationships within the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. This objective is attained and verified by the courses that are part of the Certificate program.

Requirements: We award a Certificate of Theological Studies to students who complete four courses at least one theology course of their choosing, at least one biblical studies course of their choosing, and two additional courses from anywhere in the GCS curriculum.

C. Advanced Diploma of Christian Ministry

Program goal: In the Advanced Diploma of Christian Ministry, we seek to prepare graduate students for service and leadership in various areas of knowledge and skills in assistant pastoral responsibilities.

Program Objectives: In the Advanced Diploma of Christian Ministry, as foundational to graduate studies in ministerial leadership, Grace Communion Seminary seeks to:

1. Teach students how to interpret the biblical text, and help them become familiar with the biblical text as a historical document and an inspired and authoritative guide. This objective is attained by courses that are part of the Certificate program, and verified by the students' ability to write exegetical papers.

2. Challenge the student to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions, and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of the word of God. This objective is attained by courses that are part of the Certificate program, and verified through student papers and a proctored exam.
3. Give students a broad perspective on acts of the Holy Spirit in the developing church since the first century. This objective is attained by a course in the Advanced Diploma program and verified with a proctored exam.
4. Assist in spiritual and ethical formation and development of relevant leadership skills. This objective is attained and verified by a course in the Advanced Diploma program.
5. Enable students to evaluate themselves as unique persons building strong relationships within the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. This objective is attained and verified by the courses that are part of the Certificate program.

Requirements: We award the Advanced Diploma in Christian Ministry to students who meet the following requirements:

- TH01 Nature of God and Jesus Christ, or TH05 Doctrine of the Trinity
- NT01 New Testament Background
- CM01 Ministerial Leadership
- At least one more course in Christian Ministry
- A church history course, and
- Two electives from anywhere in the GCS curriculum.

D. Master of Pastoral Studies

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

Program Objectives: In the Master of Pastoral Studies, as a program for developing effective pastoral leadership, Grace Communion Seminary seeks to:

1. Teach students how to interpret the biblical text, and help them become familiar with the biblical text as a historical document and an inspired and authoritative guide. This objective is attained by courses that are part of the Certificate program, and verified by the students' ability to write exegetical papers; it will be further reinforced by electives in the master's program.
2. Challenge the student to think theologically, to analyze differences between various Christian traditions, and to synthesize central themes of the nature of God and Christian proclamation of the word of God. This objective is attained by courses that are part of the Certificate program, and verified through student papers and a proctored exam; it will be further reinforced by electives in the master's program.
3. Give students a broad perspective on acts of the Holy Spirit in the developing church since the first century. This objective is attained by a course in the Advanced Diploma program and verified with a proctored exam; it could be further reinforced if students elect to take an additional church history course.
4. Assist in spiritual and ethical formation and development of relevant leadership skills. This objective is attained and verified by a course in the Advanced Diploma program; will be further reinforced by Christian ministry electives in the master's program.
5. Help students develop skills in preaching, counseling, teaching, training, mentoring, and leading in service with our Triune God and his Church. This objective is attained by Christian ministry courses; the specific skills learned will depend in part on which courses the students elect to take.
6. Enable students to evaluate themselves as unique persons building strong relationships within the love of God the Father, the grace of

the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. This objective is attained and verified by the courses that are part of the Certificate program; it will be further reinforced by the master's program, particularly in the Christian ministry electives and in the self-reflection that is an integral part of the capstone course, *TM01 Theology of Ministry*.

Requirement: We award the Master of Pastoral Studies degree to those students who complete the requisite fourteen courses: three in theological studies, three in biblical studies, one in church history, four in Christian ministry, two courses in electives from any area, and the theology of ministry capstone project. A GPA of 2.5 or higher is required.

E. How to proceed through the GCS programs

Our programs are flexible, and few courses have formal prerequisites. It is not mandatory that you qualify for the Certificate before you begin work toward the Diploma, nor to finish the Diploma before you take other courses for the Master's Degree. However, we think that your educational experience will be more enjoyable and more productive if you follow the steps outlined below:

1. Enroll in one of the two required foundational courses:
 - *TH01 Nature of God and Jesus Christ* (or *TH05 Doctrine of the Trinity*) to learn theological terms and basic concepts on God's nature.
 - *NT01 New Testament Background* to establish inductive study skills.
2. Take a second foundational course.
3. Take another biblical studies course to fulfill your third course toward completion of the Certificate of Theological Studies.
4. Take another theology course as your fourth GCS course: We recommend *TH02 Nature of Humans and Salvation* as a follow-up to understanding God's love for humanity.

If you follow this plan, you will have completed your work for the Certificate in Theological Studies. Congratulations!

5. Take *CM01 Ministerial Leadership* or a *Church History* course. Select your course based on when we offer the church history that most interests you. Select the order (CM01 or CH01/CH02) based on the course schedule and your time.
6. Complete the other course from #5 that you have not taken.
7. Take another ministry course. You may want to take *CM02 Pastoral Leadership*, which is a required course for attaining the Master's degree, though you may wait on that and take a different course for the ADCM.

If you have taken the two courses in biblical studies, the two courses in theology, one church history course, and the two Christian ministry courses, you will have completed the Advanced Diploma in Christian Ministry. Congratulations!

8. To proceed through the Master of Pastoral Studies degree (MPS), take a third biblical studies course, either in Old Testament or New Testament studies.
9. Next, take a third theology course.
10. /11. You must take two more Christian ministry courses. If you have not done so already, you must complete *CM02 Pastoral Leadership* for the MPS.
12. /13. You must take two electives; choose either what most interests you or courses that fill gaps in your education.
14. The capstone course for the MPS is *TM01 Theology of Ministry*. This course may be taken after you have completed twelve courses (36 credit hours).

Congratulations: You have completed the Master of Pastoral Studies degree!

VIII. Beginning your studies at GCS

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to get started. First, you have to apply. See the *Academic Catalog* for admission requirements. Fill out an application form, get someone to send us a letter of recommendation, and

ask your previous educational institution to send us an official transcript so that we can verify that you qualify for graduate-level studies. You'll hear from us as soon as we get the materials. If we don't get all the materials within one month, we'll let you know which items are still lacking.

There are additional procedures if your previous education was in a language other than English, or if you wish to transfer credits in from another school, or to have some of your previous experience counted toward your academic requirements. See the *Academic Catalog* for those details.

We do not have any orientation procedures or placement tests. When you are admitted as a student, the Registrar will send you information on how to register for a course. Courses begin in mid-January, mid-May, and mid-September.

A. Technology requirements

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

You may use any of the popular browsers: Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, or Safari.

Most of our course lectures are in PDF format. They may be viewed with a free program such as Adobe Reader. In case you do not already have Reader, there is a link to it on our home page.

We require that you have a word-processing program, such as Microsoft Word. There are also free word-processing programs available, such as Google Docs.

We recommend that you also have a webcam with a microphone, for taking proctored exams (see "Proctoring exams," page 16 above).

B. Getting around our website

Most students are able to navigate our website without difficulty. If you encounter website problems, email us at support@gcs.ambassador.edu, or phone us at 1-800-851-2611.

Here are some guidelines:

- At the top of each page, there are some blue words just underneath the GCS logo. These are called “bread crumbs,” because they show a pathway of where you currently are on our web site. You can use the blue links shown there to get around.
- To get back to *your* home page, which lists the courses you are currently enrolled in, course and site announcements, whether you have messages waiting, and upcoming assignments, click the “**GCS**” link.
- When you are viewing a page in a course, click the **course code** (e.g., NT01) to get back to the main course page.
- When you are logged in, you cannot get back to the GCS home page. You must log out if you wish to see our home page.

C. Forums: how to post

- There are a few different types of forums. Some courses have discussion forums, or will use a forum for an assignment to allow the sharing of the assignment itself between students and so other students may comment on the assignments.
- To access a forum, click on the forum name.
- To post a new forum topic or question:
 - Click the “Add a new discussion topic” button.
 - Type a short subject. For assignment forums, this might be your name, or the name of the topic.
 - In the message box, type your topic or question, or paste it from a word-processing program.
 - If you need to attach a file to your topic or question:
 - Click the “choose file” button.
 - Find and double-click the file you want to attach.
 - Click “post to forum.”

- To view a forum topic or question, click on the topic link.
- To reply to a forum topic or question, first view the topic and decide whether you are replying to the main topic or a subsequent reply. It's best to make your reply in the right context so it appears in the discussion layout at the appropriate place.
 - Click the appropriate “reply” link.
 - Type or paste your reply in the message box.
 - If you need to attach a file, click “choose file,” find the file and double-click it.
 - Click “post to forum.”

D. Asking questions

- If the course has a general discussion forum, you can use it to post a new topic. See above for instructions. Using the discussion forum makes the question and answer available to other students, too.
- If you need to ask a question privately, or there is no discussion forum, you can send a message directly to the professor.
 - In the right-hand column of the course page, click on “Message My Professor”
 - Type your message
 - Click the send message button

E. Problems with messages

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

1. Always logout when you leave. Messages are not sent to email when the site thinks you are online. Click Logout at the top or bottom of the page; that tells the site you are leaving.
2. Change your message settings. By default, the site sends messages only if it detects you are inactive for 10 minutes.

- Click your name at the top or the bottom of the page to display your profile.
 - Click the Messages button.
 - Click the Settings tab.
 - Change the 10 to a 1 in the box next to “for more than.”
 - Click the Save Settings button.
3. Check your email spam folder. Sometimes messages get flagged as spam even if they aren't. You may be able to adjust your settings to prevent GCS from being flagged as spam.

F. How to upload an assignment

- File assignments are the most common type of assignment given by our professors. The icon looks like a hand holding a sheet of paper. The professor expects you to write a paper, then upload it to our web site. Most of our professors work in Microsoft Word. If you use Microsoft Word, you may post your assignments in that format. If you use some other word processing software, please save your document in Microsoft Word (doc), Rich Text Format (rtf), or pdf before posting it.³
- To post your assignment:
 - Click on the assignment link.
 - Click the choose file button.
 - Click the upload this file button.
 - Click the continue button.

IX. Academic progress

We exist to help you make academic progress. There are a few things that can prevent progress, however.

³ There are also websites such as zamzar.com that will convert a file into doc format.

A. Academic dishonesty

Presenting another person's work as if it were your own is called plagiarism. Even if it is done accidentally, such as by carelessly failing to acknowledge a source, it is a serious violation of academic integrity. In general, any quote of more than five words in a row should be put within quote marks, and the source noted. It is not enough to mention the source – the quoted words should be enclosed in quote marks (or double indented as a quote). The penalty for plagiarism, whether accidental or intentional, is a failing grade for the assignment in which it occurs, or on the second offense, failure of the course.

For more information about plagiarism, see Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>>. For tips on avoiding plagiarism, either by paraphrasing or using quote marks, see <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/03/>>.

Extensive quoting is not defined as “plagiarism” if the sources are given credit, but it may still be unethical. Quotes should not comprise more than 20 percent of any of your papers. Use quotes when they support your thoughts – do not use them as a substitute for your thinking. Most quotes need some sort of introduction or commentary from you, to indicate why you are including them – as an authoritative definition, for example, or a well-said conclusion to your research, or as a view you are trying to refute.

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

Academic dishonesty also includes cheating on an exam. You may be copying your own notes, but if notes are not allowed on the exam, then that is dishonest, and cause for failure of the course. You must assume that you cannot use *any* materials unless you are specifically authorized to do so by your instructor. For example, some instructors permit the use of plain Bibles, those without study notes or chain references. In general, if external materials are permitted, you will need to be familiar with them already, otherwise you will not have enough time to complete the exam.

It is also a violation of academic integrity to assist another student in plagiarism or other form of cheating. For example, if you give your paper to another student knowing that they will probably copy it, you are

participating in the dishonesty. If you give another student a copy of the exam questions, both students are engaging in academic dishonesty.

B. Grades

Grades are part of academic work – grades are the means by which instructors tell you whether you are meeting the goals of the course. If you are not learning what you should, then we do you a disservice if we cause you to think you have mastered the material. If you are unable to do a particular task of ministry well, and yet we make you think that you are fully capable of the task, and we thereby encourage you to accept ministry responsibilities that exceed your capabilities, then we have done a disservice to you and to all those affected by that ministry. If you go on to further academic work at another institution because we have overrated your academic abilities, then we have done a disservice to you and the other academic institution, and have given people reason to doubt the integrity of GCS as an educational institution.

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

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

An A is reserved for outstanding students. B’s are appropriate for students who did well, and C’s are for those who fulfilled the assignments, but did not do very well in them.

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

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

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

C. Academic probation and disqualification

Students are put on academic probation if their term and cumulative GPA falls below 2.5. This is a warning that a student is in danger of academic disqualification.

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

- 1) A student fails in two or more courses in any given year.
- 2) A student on academic probation fails to achieve both a term and cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (C) or higher.

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

The President and Dean may waive academic disqualification if individual circumstances warrant such action. A student who becomes disqualified academically may appeal the disqualification by filing a petition with the Registrar's Office within two weeks of the date of notification of disqualification.

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

D. Leave of absence

Health difficulties, financial concerns or family circumstances may lead a student to leave the Seminary for a year or longer. The Leave of Absence option allows students to interrupt their studies for a specific length of time. The leave of absence indicates a continuing relationship with the Seminary and allows students to resume studies later without reapplying for admission to the Seminary.

A further advantage of requesting a formal leave is that it may extend the time limit required for the master's degree. Normally, all course work must be completed within 10 years; this may be extended to 12 years if the student has requested a leave on one or more occasions.

A leave of absence generally does not exceed four semesters in length. Students should make the request for leave of absence in writing to the Registrar.

E. Termination

If students have repeated failures in academic honesty, repeated violations of student conduct as outlined in the *Academic Catalog*, or repeated failures of a course, GCS will terminate them as a student, and they will not be allowed to register for any courses.

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

F. Examination and course re-takes

In general, we do not allow students take an examination again. We *do* allow students to take a course again, and only the second grade is then counted in the GPA.

G. Graduation requirements

Students must have a minimum GPA of 2.7 in order to graduate. A student cannot graduate if there are any outstanding obligations to the Seminary, such as library fines. We do not give “honors” at graduation.

H. Student records and transcript requests

Student records are confidential, so we cannot process a transcript request unless we receive a signed request and a \$10 fee. We cannot send a transcript if you have any outstanding obligations to the Seminary, such as library fines. Send all requests to the Registrar and include instructions on where the transcript should be mailed. We will retain your academic records permanently.

I. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Federal law mandates that:

1. Students have a right to see what is in their educational files.
2. Students have the right to challenge information in the file, or to insert a statement into the file if the student believes that the records are inaccurate, misleading or a violation of privacy.
3. Students can, but are not required to, waive the right to see certain items in their educational files, such as letters of recommendation. The person giving the recommendation should know whether or not the student has signed a waiver.
4. GCS has the right to release basic facts about the student to anyone who asks:
 - student’s name and years in which the student took classes at GCS.
 - courses the student has passed, and (if applicable) which courses the student is currently taking.
 - whether the student has been given a certificate, diploma, or degree.
5. Additionally, we may release more information about our students to an accreditation agency or government agency so they can contact those students to verify what we are doing. This includes names, addresses,

email addresses, telephone numbers, and previous educational qualifications. We will not release this information for other purposes.

6. Other than the above-listed information, GCS will not release additional information about the student without signed consent. Transcripts, grades and other personal information will not be released without written permission.
6. If students believe that GCS is not complying with the requirements of FERPA, they may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education.
7. Faculty should not allow one student to see another's grades. If faculty use student assignments as samples for future classes, all identifying details must be removed from the document.

X. Non-discrimination policy

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

We will provide reasonable accommodations for faculty or students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis.

XI. Respecting copyrights

All GCS materials are copyrighted, and may not be published in any form, or presented orally, without written permission from the President. Class lectures, forum discussions, quizzes and exams should not be shared with others, except for your spouse. Online discussions are confidential, and what a student writes in a forum should not be publicized in other places, unless permission has been granted in advance by the student. Even so, students should realize that confidences are not always kept, and should not write things that would cause them substantial harm if they were made more public.

Students are to abide by all copyright laws – they are not to post copies of copyrighted materials on our website, for example. Students are allowed by

the “fair use” provision of copyright law to make copies for research purposes – not to copy an entire book, but to copy a small percentage of the book. One rule of thumb is that copying should not affect the commercial market for the book. It may be acceptable to make copies in lieu of using a library, but not to make a copy instead of purchasing the book. Further details on copyright law can be seen at <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/731/1/>>.

XII. Appeals and grievances

If a student has a grievance with a specific instructor, whether about student grades or conduct, course content, or serious deviation from the published syllabus, the student should first attempt to resolve the problem with the instructor. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached within 14 days, the student should contact the Dean of Faculty with a full description of the situation (if the Dean of Faculty is the instructor, then contact the President; see page 4 for email addresses). The Dean will consult with the instructor and the President, and will notify the student of the decision within 14 days.

If the grievance is about academic disqualification, dismissal, financial matters or GCS policies, the student should first attempt to resolve the problem with the Registrar. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached within 14 days, the student should contact the Dean of Faculty. The Dean will consult with the Registrar, and will notify the student of the decision within 14 days. Students have the right to appeal financial and academic matters to the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education. See http://www.bppe.ca.gov/forms_pubs/complaint.pdf.

XIII. Refund policy

A. For cancellation within five days of enrolling

Students who cancel within five days of enrolling receive a refund of all monies paid.

B. For classes being audited

Refunds for audits are based on the week in which the request is made – see percentages below.

C. For classes taken for credit

Notification of cancellation should be made to the Registrar and/or course instructor. If the request is made orally, we will confirm it by a follow-up email to ensure that it is really you requesting the cancellation.

1. Students who cancel before the first class will receive a full refund (currently \$225).
2. For students who cancel by Sunday after the first class, that is, during the first week, a refund of tuition shall be 100% of the tuition cost.
3. If a student withdraws from a course by Sunday after the second class (i.e., after the first week, or during the second week), the refund shall be 80% of the tuition.
4. If a student withdraws from a course during the third week, the refund shall be 70% of the tuition.
5. If a student withdraws from a course during the fourth week, the refund will be 60%.
6. If a student withdraws from a course during the fifth week, the refund will be 50%.
7. If a student withdraws from a course during the sixth week, the refund will be 40%.
8. If a student withdraws from a course during the seventh week, the refund will be 30%.
9. If a student withdraws from a course during the eighth week, the refund will be 20%.
10. If a student withdraws from a course after the eighth week (e.g., during the ninth week), the refund will be 10%.
11. There will be no refund after the tenth lecture has been posted. A grade of W will be assigned if the student has a passing grade; a grade of F will be assigned if the student is failing.

Refunds will be given within 30 days after the student has given notice of withdrawal. If special circumstances exist, such as serious health

problems or a death in the family, GCS may deem that a larger refund is appropriate.

GCS is not responsible for the textbooks you have purchased from third parties; we do not give refunds for any textbooks.

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