



# MESSIANIC JEWISH THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

*Teaching and living a prophetic vision of Jewish life renewed in Yeshua*

## **S606 – The World of the Apostolic Writings**

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October 3 – December 5, 2021—Fall Term 2021-22

Populi: <https://mjtj.populiweb.com>

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is an introduction to the social, political, religious and cultural world of the Second Temple Period and the backgrounds of the Apostolic Writings. The course provides a panoramic view of the topics, methodology, and sources necessary for responsible study of the Apostolic Writings and early Yeshua-believing community. Some of the topics addressed are Temple, Sanhedrin & Synagogue, Greco-Roman Religions & Philosophies, Sects, Rabbinic Literature, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRICULUM**

This course is an elective.

### **RELEVANCE**

Often the Apostolic Writings are read as a direct descendant of the Tanakh, without any regard to the changes precipitated by the fusion of the Occident and Orient by Alexander the Great and the subsequent conquests by the Roman Empire. Understanding these changes and their influence on the world into which Yeshua came clarifies and illuminates our understanding of the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua and the Early Yeshua believing community. These insights are particularly relevant for Messianic Jewish Believers as they clarify the canonical narrative and shed insight into Messianic Judaism and Messianic Jewish theology.

### **PREREQUISITES**

None.

### **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

The student must have a computer, headset, and high-speed internet access. For assistance with Populi, please contact Rabbi Michael [admin@mjtj.org](mailto:admin@mjtj.org) or Dr. Hillel [drvered@mjtj.org](mailto:drvered@mjtj.org).

### **COURSE FORMAT**

The course will include podcasts, conference calls and asynchronous online discussions. The course is designed as a seminar, which means that the main form of instruction should be class discussion related to the required readings and assignments. Because of its online format, there will be a lecture at the beginning of each week that supplements the reading and explains key issues. The emphasis of the class will be placed on the asynchronous blog discussions. Therefore, it is mandatory that students properly complete their reading so they are prepared to discuss the relevant topic.

## REQUIREMENTS

Listen to all lectures, full participation in all blog discussions, completion of all reading and course assignments, and the completion of a research paper.

## REQUIRED TEXTS (THE PUBLICATION DATES INDICATE THE REQUIRED EDITION OF EACH TEXT)

- Ferguson, E. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003.
- Skarsaune, Oskar. *In the Shadow of the Temple*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- CoursePack

## RECOMMENDED READING

The recommended reading for this class is vast. A comprehensive, categorical list is included in the CoursePack which every student can download from Populi.

## ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS AND DEADLINES

- **Audio lectures, one class meeting via Zoom**  
Listen to audio lectures before joining into the class discussion threads. The class will meet face-to-face via Zoom on Oct. 31. Time of class will be determined in the first week of class
- **Reading and Class Preparation**  
Each student is required to complete all of the required reading (CoursePack, books and articles) before class begins on Sunday of the week they are due. In addition to the reflection questions provided in the CoursePack, each student is requested to ponder areas where the reading has enhanced your understanding of the World of the Apostolic Writings, and any areas that you might disagree with the writer's interpretation of the evidence and why you disagree.
- **Class Assignment**  
Each student will be assigned a book from the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha to research and present to the class in Week 5 (Oct. 31).
- **Discussion Threads**  
Regular and timely participation in the discussion threads posted on Populi is required. Discussion questions will be posted on Sunday of each week. To insure proper participation, **you are required to post separate 300-350 word answers to all discussion questions each week**. Your **first post** is to be made **by Monday** of each week and the second by Tuesday. In addition, you must respond to **at least three of your classmates' posts in each discussion thread each week**. Discussion continues through Thursday 11:59 EST.

The "classroom" interaction through discussion threads is your opportunity to discuss the topics with others students and to express yourself and in the process learn how to formulate opinions, defend positions, and/or reconsider your positions when evidence and reason call for it. As graduate students, you should engage in higher-level critical thinking and analysis. In your analysis, be sure to reference authorities and/or sources, using parenthetical references when citing articles read in class.

- **Research Project**  
Each student is to write a short research paper of 8-10 pages (4000-5000, words, not including cover page, table of content and bibliography) that will further develop your understanding of the historical, archaeological, sociological, cultural, or geographical background of the world of the Apostolic Writings. This paper is designed to help you learn how to think critically, analyze and synthesis material on a specific topic and to write a concise and publishable research paper.

### SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS:

The paper may focus on a topic stemming from the material to be covered during the first or second half of the course. You may choose a topic that is prompted by the text of the Apostolic Writings (e.g. who were the Nicolaitans in the book of Revelation?) or you may opt to explore an area of history in more depth (e.g. the cult of the Ephesian Artemis). *The last two or three paragraphs of your paper should draw out the implications of your topic for interpreting the Apostolic Writings.*

The first four-weeks of class focus on Judaism and the life of Yeshua. The following are some appropriate topics:

- what was the city of Nazareth like in the first century (or, Capernaum, Caesarea, etc.)?
- what is the nature of *4 Maccabees* and what are the implications of this text for interpreting the Apostolic Writings?
- the life, projects, and ruling style of Herod the Great – in Israel and in the Diaspora
- Messianic expectations at Qumran as reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls (or, *Psalms of Solomon*, etc.)
- Judaism or Judaisms – diversity or unanimity in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Judaism?
- develop three or four historical events that demonstrate how HaShem sent Yeshua in “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4).
- others ...

The final four-weeks of class focus on Hellenism, the Roman world, and the early church. Some appropriate topics are:

- the cult of Dionysus within the Greco-Roman world at the time of the Apostolic Writings
- how did Paul philosophize in Acts 17?
- who were the Nicolaitans?
- what was the city of Antioch like when Paul was there?
- did Paul receive some education in Greek rhetoric while he was in Tarsus?
- how were theaters used in the Roman cities?

### REFERENCES

A research paper this size should rely on at least 10 sources. In addition to any other relevant books and articles you may find, *you will be required to consult at least three (3) of the following reference works:*

1. Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People of the First Century* (CRINT 1.1-1.2).
2. Shürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. New English version revised and edited by Vermes, Millar & Black.
3. Hubbard, *Christianity in the Greco-Roman World* (Hendrickson, 2010).
4. *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (IVP)
5. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
6. The IVP Dictionaries: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, or *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*.
7. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (new edition, 1979-1988; do not use the old edition published in 1915).
8. *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition).
9. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition).
10. *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*.

11. *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (4 Vols.).
12. *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*.
13. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*.
14. Rousseau and Arav, *Jesus and His World*.
15. McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament*.
16. *Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible* (5 Vols.) (note: this was published in 2009)
17. *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World* (\*an outstanding new resource)
18. Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (2 Vols; IVP)

If anyone has trouble accessing any of these books, please contact the instructor for help. Please consult the bibliography at the end of each section of the World of the NT CoursePack for further quality reference works.

### PAPER FORMAT

The paper should include an introduction, body and conclusion. In the introduction of your paper, please describe the purpose of your paper, the methodology and the most helpful resources you used. The paper must have proper footnotes and a bibliography. Please conform to standard conventions of style (Turabian, MLA, SBL). Please use footnotes and not parenthetical references. Avoid plagiarism in the composition of your paper (see class policies).

Paper topics are to be approved by the instructor on or before Oct. 27. Final papers are **due Sunday, Dec. 5**. Please post your paper on Populi.

If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at [drvered@mji.org](mailto:drvered@mji.org).

### COURSE OUTLINE

Week Date	Title of Lesson	Reading		
		Ferguson	Skarsaune	CoursePack/Arts.
<b>Week 1</b> Oct. 3-7	Introduction to the Course Historical Development of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple Judaism	5-19, 399-430; 478 - 490	Chaps. 1, 2 & 3	Weekly reading Pgs in Boccaccini
<b>Week 2</b> Oct. 10-14	Sects: Diversity of Lifestyles	513-536	5-6	Weekly reading
<b>Week 3</b> Oct. 17-21	Jewish Institutions: Temple, Sanhedrin & Synagogue	562-582	4 & 7	Weekly reading Horsley articles Bromiley article
<b>Week 4</b> Oct. 24-28	Jewish Beliefs and Practices	537-561	8-9	Weekly reading Stone article
<b>Week 5</b> Oct. 31-Nov. 4	2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple Period Jewish Literature	440-462	<b>Class Presentations</b>	Weekly reading Stone articles
<b>Week 6</b> Nov. 7-11	Hellenism & Greco-Roman Society Graeco-Roman Religions	48-112 173- 318	10-11	Weekly reading
<b>Week 7</b> Nov. 14-18	Greco-Roman Philosophy	319-395	12-13	Weekly reading
<b>Week 8</b> Nov. 24-28	2 <sup>nd</sup> Temple Messianism		15-16	Weekly reading Schiffman & Sumner articles
	<b>Research Reports Due- Sunday Dec. 5</b>			

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the above readings.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### Knowledge of the Discipline

After completing this course successfully, the student will be able to:

1. Understand and interpret the New Testament in its first-century social, cultural, political, and religious context;
2. Grasp the overall sweep of history ranging from the return from Babylonian captivity to the end of the apostolic era. The student will be able to articulate the framework for this history in both written and oral form;
3. Articulate an in-depth perspective on select themes and topics on the history, the culture and the politics of the World of the Apostolic Writings.

### Skill in the Discipline

By the end of the course, the student will

1. Be familiar with many of the key reference works that will serve as helpful resources in preparing articles, lectures, drashot, Scripture studies, etc. for family, congregations and the wider MJ community;
2. Know what resources to consult to obtain useful and accurate background information on any given passage in the Apostolic Writings.

### Spiritual Formation

During the course, each student will:

1. Gain confidence in the reliability of the Apostolic Writings. The goal is to cause the Apostolic Writings to come alive and become tangible thereby strengthening the student's faith and trust in Scripture, as well as a deeper understanding of HaShem's character;
2. Grow in their understanding of what it means that Yeshua came in "the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4). Such insight will enlarge the student's comprehension of the character of HaShem and increase their trust in His faithfulness.

## ASSESSMENT

Grades will be awarded according to the following criteria:

Reading/Discussion Threads	40%
Assignment	25%
Research Paper	40%

## GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grade and grade point equivalents

A	100-94	C+	79.9-78
A-	93.9-90	C	77.9-75
B+	89.9-87	C-	74.9-70
B	86.9-83	F	Below 69.9
B-	82.9-80		

## STRUCTURED WORK HOURS

8 hours	Lectures (podcasts)
24 hours	Participation in asynchronous online discussion
2 hours	Assignment
21 hours	Research Project (4,000-5000 words)
35 hours	Reading
90 hours	<b>Total structured hours</b>

## STANDARD MJTI ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE DISCUSSION</b>				
<b>Analytical Reflection</b>	<b>Evidence/Support</b>	<b>Interaction</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Total</b>
30%	30%	30%	10%	100%
Demonstrates a serious attempt to grapple with the Unit material. Reasonable analysis. Gives opportunity for interaction. Asks relevant questions.	Supports discussion points with references to assigned readings, logical analysis, and examples. Gives citations (work, page number) for material quoted or paraphrased.	Interacts with the instructor and other students. Discusses agreement or disagreement with classmates' analytical reflections and provide explanation of logic; and/or respond to questions posed in classmates' analytical reflections, and when appropriate, reference assigned readings, logical analysis, and examples.	Writes in clear, concise, and grammatically acceptable terms.	

<b>Assessment Criteria for Essays</b>				
	<b><i>A (exemplary)</i></b>	<b><i>B (adequate)</i></b>	<b><i>C (passing)</i></b>	<b><i>F (failed)</i></b>
<b><i>Quality of thought</i></b>	Fresh or even original	Mostly derivative or clichéd	Fully derivative; clichéd	No evident effort to understand
<b><i>Engagement with subject</i></b>	Deeply engaged	Modestly engaged	Superficially Engaged	Disengaged
<b><i>Organization</i></b>	Well organized	Somewhat choppy	Poor	Disorganized
<b><i>Mechanics of writing and documentation</i></b>	Nearly error-free	Some errors or sloppiness	Many errors and very sloppy	Filled with errors and sloppiness
<b><i>Argument and support</i></b>	Well-argued and documented	Reasonable clarity and support	Roughly argued and poorly documented	No clearly supported argument or support

## MJTI COURSE POLICIES

1. **Preparation:** Each student is expected to be prepared for and to participate in the online class discussions.
2. **Dishonesty and plagiarism:** Any form of dishonesty (copying from another student's work or allowing your work to be copied) or plagiarism (passing off another's work as your own, not giving appropriate credit to another's ideas) will not be tolerated. Such misconduct will result in an automatic "F" grade for the class and a permanent notice placed in the student's academic record. If you are unsure whether an action is permissible or not, please check with the instructor.
3. **Incompletes:** Incompletes will only be granted when the instructor and Academic Dean agree that significant extenuating circumstances have prevented a student from finishing the course work by the stipulated due date. Extenuating circumstances are major, unplanned, unanticipated, and unavoidable disruptions in one's life or work. To request an incomplete, fill out the form "Request for Grade Incomplete" on the MJTI Webpage (<http://www.mjti.org/forms/>). The form will be sent to the Registrar who will request permission from the Instructor and then the Academic Dean for final approval. If the Incomplete grade is granted, the completed course work is due no later than six weeks from the assignment due date for the quarter in which the class occurred. If the work is not completed within this time, the instructor, based on the amount and quality of the work that has been completed, determines whether a reduced grade or a grade of F is warranted. Further extensions of time, justified by extreme circumstances, are granted only by the Academic Dean.
4. **Leave of Absence/Withdrawal:** MJTI programs are designed to permit students to pursue their studies while managing the many responsibilities they have as adult professionals. MJTI will consider a leave of absence for a student who is experiencing hardships that make effective progress in her/his academic program unusually difficult. Students who, due to unforeseen and serious circumstances (including personal, family emergency, medical, and military service) are unable to take or complete a course during the academic year may submit a Request for a Leave of Absence status to the MJTI Registrar's office. Such status is granted at the sole discretion of the Academic Dean.

Students desiring to drop or withdraw from courses after registering may do so by submitting a Change of Course Status form to the Registrar. If the course is dropped before the quarter begins, the only financial penalty charged is a \$30.00 drop/withdrawal fee. If the change is requested after the quarter begins, the student will be refunded according to the refund policy stated on page 28 of the current catalog. Non-attendance does not constitute official withdrawal. A student who begins a course and does not officially withdraw will receive the grade earned for the entire course, which will usually be a failing grade. MJTI does not accept unofficial withdrawal from a class. A student who officially withdraws from a class will receive a W on their transcript.

5. **Extensions:** Extensions of the due date for the final assignments are not permitted. Students who do qualify for an Incomplete should submit as much work as possible by the due date so that the instructor has time to grade all work in time to meet the instructor's deadline for submitting grades to the MJTI office. At the instructor's discretion, work may be accepted later than the due date, with a deduction of grade for each late day.
6. **Change of Student Status:** A student who has registered to take a course for credit may switch to the status of auditor up to, and including, the last day of the fourth week of class by submitting a Change of Status request form to the Registrar, (<http://mjti.org/forms/>). The tuition differential will only be refunded if the request form is received by the end of the fourth week of the course.
7. **Discussion privacy:** The course discussion is accessible only to those registered for the class through Orbund. To ensure a positive forum for course interaction, students are asked to refrain from excerpting lessons or thread discussions from the course in any format. This will enable the cultivation of a safe and honest forum for dialogue.
8. **Instructors and Email:** Regardless of the course format, instructors shall be available during the course week for private contact from students via email. Instructors are required to respond within 24 hours of

receipt (Sunday – Thursday) of student inquiries made via email. These guidelines apply both to email from students and to student questions asked of the instructor in asynchronous discussion.

9. **Questions:** If you have any questions regarding assignments, feel free to e-mail them to the instructor at [drvered@mji.org](mailto:drvered@mji.org).