



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

## **SL504 Toward a Messianic Jewish Communal Ethic**

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January 14 – March 8 — Winter Quarter 2023-24

Time: Sundays 2:00 – 4:00 PM Eastern

Populi (<https://mji.populiweb.com>)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Messianic Judaism has yet to develop and clearly articulate its own coherent ethical schema. This course will portray ethics as a conceptual framework that integrates and communicates the moral assumptions of a particular community, rooted in historical understandings and tradition, and consistent with the ongoing life of that community in all of its complexities. The future development of Messianic Judaism's communal ethic will be considered in relation of its unique connections to two religious communities with disparate experiences and often competing identities. Students will be challenged to explore "hot button issues" such as social justice, sexual morality, and responses to political authority and reconsider their assumptions regarding these issues in light of revelation and communal identity.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRICULUM**

This is a core course required for all students in the Rabbinic Studies and Jewish Studies programs.

### **RELEVANCE**

To live and act as a Jew who follows Yeshua, one must develop an understanding of what it means to do so. For a religious community, an ethical system integrates theology, history and tradition to form a communal identity and conscience. This course will help students to develop spiritual and moral practices that will concretize their Messianic Jewish identity.

### **PREREQUISITE**

None

### **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

This is an online course. The student must have a computer, headset, and high-speed internet access. Please contact Rabbi Michael Hillel ([admin@mji.org](mailto:admin@mji.org)) for assistance with Populi.

### **COURSE FORMAT**

Lecture via webcast and podcast, asynchronous online discussion, and final essay.

## REQUIREMENTS

Attend all interactive lectures via Zoom, timely completion all reading assignments, full participation in all blog discussions, and final examination.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Hauerwas, Stanley. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1983. [179 pages]
- Jacobs, Jill. *There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice Through Jewish Law & Tradition*. Woodstock, Vt.: Jewish Lights, 2009. [257 pages]
- Rashkover, Randi and Kavka, Martin eds. *Tradition in the Public Square: A David Novak Reader*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008. [365]
- Resnik, Russell. *Divine Reversal: The Transforming Ethics of Jesus*. Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2010. [193 pages]
- Saal, Paul L. *No Longer Male or Female? A Case for Leadership Equality for Women in the Messianic Jewish Synagogue*, Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism, Issue 43. San Diego: MJTI, 2023. [13 pages] Recommended Reading
- Engelberg, Abba. *The Ethics of Genesis*. New York: Kodesh Press, 2014. [331 pages]
- Friedmann, Daniel. *To Kill and Take Possession: Law, Morality, and Society in Biblical Stories*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002. [327 pages]
- Freund, Richard A. *Understanding Jewish Ethics*. (2 Volumes) San Francisco: EmText, 1990. [ 661 pages]
- Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996. [507 pages]
- Hillel, Vered. *A Messianic Jewish View of Divorce*. Keshet; A Journal of Messianic Judaism, Issue 29. San Diego: MJTI, 2015 [26 pages]
- Isaacs, Alick. *A Prophetic Peace: Judaism, Religion, and Politic*. Indianapolis, Indiana University Press. 2011. [224 pages]
- MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984. [286 pages]
- Novak, David. *Covenantal Rights: a Study In Jewish Political Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000 [240 pages]
- Peck, M. Scott. *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*. New York: Simon& Schuster, 1988. [334 pages]
- Saal, Paul L. *Queer for Jesus: A Messianic Jewish Perspective Concerning Alternative Sexuality and the Ethics of Identity*. Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism, Issue 30. San Diego: MJTI, 2016. [22 pages]
- Sacks, Jonathan. *Essays on Ethics: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible*. Jerusalem and New Milford, Connecticut: Maggid Books, 2016 [342]
- Smedes, Lewis B. *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983. [282 pages]
- Wilson, James Q. *The Moral Sense*. New York: Free Press, 1993. [313 pages]
- Yoder, John. H. *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996.

## ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS AND DEADLINES

- 1) Participation in the asynchronous online discussion is crucial to learning in the course and to your course grade. It is necessary to keep current and active during discussion weeks. Please respond early and often. It is preferable that your first response be made by Sunday at midnight. Discussion

questions will be posted within an hour after web class. The blog will be open from Sunday at 4PM EST until Thursday 11pm EST. Please do not respond after the end of the blog.

- 2) Reading assignments are indicated on the course outline and should be completed prior to the class to ensure full participation and interaction in class discussions. Any papers that are not publicly available will be provided by R. Saal.
- 3) Class participation and preparation will be assessed in part by submitted notes. Extended outlines will be posted prior to each week's class. These should be downloaded from Populi and used for class notes as well as references from the week's readings. Students' notes should be submitted each week by the Monday at 11PM EST.
- 4) The final exam prompt will be posted February 28, by noon EST. The final exam must be posted on Populi, no later than Sunday, March 7, 2024, by 11:59 pm EST.

### COURSE OUTLINE

Week & Date	Title of Lesson	Required Reading
<b>Week 1</b> Jan. 14-18	Communal Ethics in an Age of Individualism	Hauerwas 1-64 Novak 46-65; 88-110
<b>Week 2</b> Jan. 21-25	The Foundations for Messianic Jewish Ethics	Jacobs 1-48 Resnik 1-79; 93-126 Novak 37-45
<b>Week 3</b> Jan.28-Feb. 1	It All Belongs to the Lord; the Economics of Hashem	Jacobs 49-131
<b>Week 4</b> Feb. 4-8	Peacemaking in an Age of Conflict	Hauerwas 72-149 Novak 253-265
<b>Week 5</b> Feb. 11-15	Tikkun Olam: Individual, Community, Kingdom, and the Public Sphere	Novak 154-230; 345-359
<b>Week 6</b> Feb. 18-22	Inclusivity and Particularity: Finding Eternity in the Face of the Other	Jacobs 132-221 Novak 266-282; 328-344
<b>Week 7</b> Feb 25-29	Sexuality, Gender Roles, and Covenantal Responsibility	Resnik 81-92 Novak 283-303; 304-327 Saal 1-13
<b>Week 8</b> Mar. 3-7	Integration and Integrity	Resnik 129-180

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the concept of communal ethics and recognize normal processes for developing core ethical systems;
- Examine personal core beliefs and integrate them into a well-defined and coherent communal ethical system;
- Articulate a consistent and coherent approach toward the interrelationship between personal, communal and public ethics;
- Articulate the place of Yeshua in Jewish communal ethical dialogue;
- Develop and adopt specific practices for personal and communal moral and ethical growth;
- Evaluate thorny contemporary issues in the light of a unified Messianic Jewish approach;
- Comprehend the controversial issue within Judaism of the relationship between the Torah and ethics.

## ASSESSMENTS

Grades will be awarded according to the following criteria:

- Quality of preparation and participation in online lectures and discussions (30%)
- Asynchronous blog discussions (40%)
- Final Exam (30%).

## GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades 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

16 hours	Webcast Lectures and discussion via Zoom
24 hours	Participation in asynchronous online discussion
12 hours	Final exam (3,000 words)
38 hours	763 pages of assigned reading
90 hours	Total structured hours

## STANDARD MJTI ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE DISCUSSION</b>				
<i>Analytical Reflection</i>	<i>Evidence/Support</i>	<i>Interaction</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Total</i>
30%	30%	30%	10%	100%
Demonstrates a serious attempt to grapple with the Unit material.  Analysis is reasonable and 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>				
	<i>A (exemplary)</i>	<i>B (adequate)</i>	<i>C (passing)</i>	<i>F (failed)</i>
<b>Quality of thought</b>	Fresh or even original	Mostly derivative or clichéd	Fully derivative; clichéd	No evident effort to understand
<b>Engagement with subject</b>	Deeply engaged	Modestly engaged	Superficially engaged	Disengaged
<b>Organization</b>	Well organized	Somewhat choppy	Poor	Disorganized
<b>Mechanics of writing and documentation</b>	Nearly error-free	Some errors or sloppiness	Many errors and very sloppy	Filled with errors and sloppiness
<b>Argument &amp; support</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 automatically 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 to the instructor within 8 weeks of the final assignment of that quarter. 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://www.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 [rabbisaal@gmail.com](mailto:rabbisaal@gmail.com).