

**RS101.2 Rabbinic Seminar 2**  
**Rabbi Paul L. Saal**  
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**Winter Semester – Jan 12th, 2025 - Mar 16th, 2025**  
**Populi (<https://mjti.populiweb.com>)**



**Zoom**

(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84460196108?pwd=3bJtU0H8x8Kb5vFSmeI3IjhjGZY8X.1>)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

All Messianic Jewish rabbis should serve within the context of a faith community. This course exposes the future rabbi to practical strategies for developing healthy and maturing Messianic Jewish synagogues, havurot, and independent minyanim. Foundational issues such as solid governmental structure, legal compliance, and financial accountability are covered. Other subtle but vitally important skills imparted are how to deal with difficult people, how to handle disappointments, and how to inspire others. All of these can make communal leadership a lifelong joy for the rabbi, his or her family, and the congregation.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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

- Understand, describe and implement the most culturally relevant format for the community within which they serve.
- Understand various structures of congregational governance.
- Mediate congregational and interpersonal disputes with minimal disruption or harm.
- Prepare congregants for covenantal life and relationships.
- Create safe havens for individual and communal growth.
- Understand proper legal and financial practices, and where to seek appropriate counsel.
- Engage and integrate technological developments if appropriate.

**RELATIONSHIP TO THE CURRICULUM**

This course is required for the Master of Rabbinic Studies Degree and the Madrikh Program and is limited to Rabbinical or Madrikh program students.

**RELEVANCE**

Messianic Jewish congregations are living, breathing incarnations of two great truths: the Messiahship of Yeshua and the importance of Jewish covenantal life. However, for these twin pillars of truth to permeate the soul of the Jewish world, to be inculcated within the lives of Jewish people, and to have the impact they deserve, our Messianic Jewish synagogues and havurot must grow and prosper. Therefore, the purpose of this course is to facilitate the numerical, relational, and financial growth of Messianic Jewish congregations and havurot, helping them to honor our tradition and our Messiah in the power of the Divine Presence.

## PREREQUISITES

None

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The student must have a computer, headset, and high-speed internet access. For assistance with Populi, please get in touch with Rabbi Michael at [admin@mjtj.org](mailto:admin@mjtj.org).

## FORMAT

Video conferencing via Zoom. Written reflections via an asynchronous blog on Populi.

## REQUIREMENTS

Attending all interactive lectures via Zoom, timely completion of pre-assigned reading before weekly class, weekly reflections on readings, and group interactions are to be posted on the asynchronous blog.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Saal, Paul L.: "Messianic Jewish Communities by Design: Open Doors and Reserved Seating" *Kesher*, a *Journal of Messianic Judaism* 36, 2020, <https://www.kesherjournal.com/article/messianic-jewish-communities-by-design-open-doors-and-reserved-seating/>
- Kaunfer, Eli. *Empowered Judaism: What Independent Minyanim Can Teach Us About Building Vibrant Jewish Communities*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2010.
- Wolfson, Ron. *The Spirituality of Welcoming: How to Transform Your Congregation into a Sacred Community*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006.
- Pardo-Kaplan, Deborah, chair. UMJC Dorot Study Task Force Report, <http://www.umjc.org/dorot>, 2022

## RECOMMENDED READING

- Aaron, Isa and Cohen, Steven M. *Sacred Strategies*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010.
- Banks, Robert J. *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting* (Revised Edition). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994.
- Browning, David. *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Comiskey, Joel. *The Spirit-filled Small Group: Leading Your Group to Experience the Spiritual Gifts*. Lima, OH: CCS, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *2000 Years of Small Groups: A History of Cell Ministry in the Church*. Morena Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2014.
- Finzel, Hans. *Change is Like a Slinky*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2014.
- Malphurs, Audrey. *Values-Driven Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.
- Miller, M. Rex. *The Millennium Matrix*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- McGinnis, Alan Loy. *The Friendship Factor*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979.
- Peck, M. Scott. *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988. Schaller, Lyle E. *The Change Agent*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972.
- Prell, Riv-Ellen. *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989. (Out of print, but invaluable).

- Schwartz, Sidney. *Finding A Spiritual Home: How a New Generation of Jews Can Transform the American Synagogue*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.
- Steinke, Peter L. *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.
- Warren, Marcus and Jim Wilder. *Rare Leadership.: 4 Uncommon Habits for Increasing Trust, Joy and Engagement in the People You Lead*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016.
- Wuthnow, Robert, ed. *I Come Away Stronger: How Small Groups Are Shaping American Religion*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

**ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS AND DEADLINES**

Classes will be held once a week on Sunday evenings at 7:30 pm ET. We will meet via Zoom for a live 75-minute interactive webinar.

Reading assignments for the week are indicated on the Course Outline and should be completed before class to ensure full participation and interaction in class discussions.

Weekly reflections will be uploaded to Populi each Wednesday by 11 PM EST. These posts are meant to be personal reflections on the week’s lecture, class discussions, and readings.

**SCHEDULE**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Title of Lesson</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
Week 1 January 12	The basics of effective leadership— now more than ever.	Familiarize yourself with the Dorot Task Force Report prior to the first class.	Post January 16
Week 2 January 26	Absorbing the New Basics of Synagogue Growth (Rabbi Rich Nichol)	Read Wolfson through “Welcoming Ambiance”	Post January 30
Week 3 February 2	Best Practices - Governance, Finances, Location, Rabbinical roles and other critical “growth” issues	Read Wolfson through to the end	Post February 6
Week 4 February 9	Congregation as Family (Rabbi Ben Volman)		Post February 13
Week 5 February 16	Varied models of “Synagogue”	Read Kaufner Ch. 1-3	Post February 20
Week 6 February 23	The Art and Science of Connecting (Jennifer Caracello)	Read Kaufner Ch. 4-7	Post February 27
Week 7 March 2	Inclusivity and Particularity: Relating to Gentiles, Inter-	Read Saal	Post March 6

	marrieds, singles, older folks and other sub-groupings		
Week 8 March 9	Enhancing Relationships in the Kehillah through Conflict resolution		Post March 13

### ASSESSMENT

Task	Description	Percent of Grade
<b>Participation</b>	Attendance and engage with discussions	50%
<b>Discussion Board Posts</b>	Posting on the discussion board and responding to others	50%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### Participation

Students will be asked to participate regularly. Discussions should show evidence of interaction with the reading assignments; Participants should show respect for the opinions of others.

### GRADING SYSTEM

This is a Pass/Fail Seminar

### STRUCTURED WORK HOURS (1 TRIMESTER CREDIT = 45 HOURS)

Task	Hours
Reading	25
Class Time	10
Discussion Board Posts	10

<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>45</b>
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## 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 in the student's academic record. If unsure whether an action is permissible, 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 coursework by the stipulated due date. Extenuating circumstances are essential, unplanned, unanticipated, and unavoidable disruptions in one's life or work. To request an incomplete, fill out the "Request for Grade Incomplete" form on the MJTI web page (<http://www.mjti.org/forms>). The form will 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 coursework is due to the instructor within eight weeks of the final assignment of that quarter. If the work is not completed within this time, the instructor determines whether a reduced grade or a grade of F is warranted based on the amount and quality of the work that has been completed. 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 their many responsibilities as adult professionals. MJTI will consider a leave of absence for a student experiencing hardships that make adequate progress in their academic program unusually difficult. Due to severe and unforeseen circumstances (including personal, family emergency, medical, and military service), students who cannot 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 submit 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 starts, the student will be refunded according to the refund policy 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, usually a failing grade. MJTI does not accept unofficial withdrawals 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 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 to meet the instructor's deadline for submitting grades to the MJTI office. Work may be accepted later than the due date at the instructor's discretion, with a grade deduction for each late day.

6. **Late Assignments:** The grade will be reduced by 10% each day or part of the day an assignment is late. An instructor may adjust this policy to be lenient with students when their situation warrants graceful handling.
7. **Change of Student Status:** A student 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.
8. **Discussion privacy:** The course discussion is accessible only to those registered for the class through Populi. 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.
9. **Instructors and Email:** Regardless of the course format, instructors shall be available during the course week for private contact with students via email. Instructors must respond via email within 24 hours of receiving student inquiries (Sunday – Thursday). These guidelines apply to student emails and student questions asked of the instructor in asynchronous discussions.
10. **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)