

## Course Name: BSH525 Historical Background of the NT

Lecturer: Dr. Sheila Gyllenberg

### Day and time of course:

Tuesday, February 28 – May 23, 2023  
16:00-19:00 (ZOOM)

### Emails:

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School year: 2022-2023

### 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 New Testament. The course looks at selected issues that provide context for the study of the life of Jesus and the world of the early church. Some of the topics addressed are Temple, Sanhedrin and Synagogue, Greco-Roman Religions and Philosophies, Jewish Sects, Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

### Course Goals

1. To learn about the political, social and religious world from which both Judaism and Christianity were birthed.
2. To clarify and illuminate the life and ministry of Jesus and the world-view of the New Testament writers.
3. To provide the student with tools that will enhance their study of the New Testament.

### Learning Outcome

After completing this course the student should be able to:

1. Use background information in an appropriate way to a better understanding of the New Testament and its message.
2. View the teaching and ministry of Yeshua in relation to Judaism of his day and discuss New Testament passages in light of relevant passages in early Jewish sources.

## Course Structure

The lessons will be held through a Zoom format, consisting of lectures and interactive discussions between all participants. There will be 10 three-hour live zoom lectures (with breaks). Recordings will be available to registered students.

## Requirements and Grading

<b>Paper</b>	Each student will write a term paper of 2500-3000 words on a term or concept found in the New Testament in light of the use of that term or concept in Jewish or pagan sources from the period (see itslearning). A rough draft or outline and bibliography should be submitted by <b>May 2</b> . <b>Due date for final draft: May 30.</b>	<b>40%</b>
	Midterm examination (online / open book) based on lectures and readings until Passover. <b>Due Date: April 18</b>	<b>30%</b>
	<b>Final examination (online / open book) based on all lectures and readings</b> Date: <b>June 7.</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Total Grade</b>		<b>100%</b>

## Main Text

Green, Joel B. and Lee Martin McDonald, eds. *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social and Historical Contexts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2013

Additional articles from other books will be provided as PDFs to the student

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings
28.02	<b>Lecture 1:</b> Introduction to the course Sources and methodology Historical overview	“New Testament Chronology”, pp 7-22 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . “The Hasmoneans and the Hasmonean Era”, pp 38-53 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . “The Herodian Dynasty”, pp 54-76 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> .
7.3 Purim	<b>Lecture 2:</b> Developments in Judaism in the Second Temple Period: Sanhedrin, Temple and Synagogue	<b>Skarsaune</b> “Jerusalem: The City of the Temple,” in O. Skarsaune, <i>In the Shadow of the Temple</i> , 87-102. <b>Skarsaune</b> , “Synagogue”, pp 122-129 in <i>In the Shadow of the Temple</i> . “Synagogue and Sanhedrin”, pp 264-271 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> .
14.3	<i>Guest Lecturer: Dr. John Relf</i> <b>Lecture 4:</b> Jewish Sects and Parties of the Late Second Temple period: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots.	“Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes”, pp 217-227, in <i>World of the New Testament</i> . “Prophetic Movements and Zealots”, pp 242-251, <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . Josephus, <i>War</i> 2.8.2-13 [119-161]; <i>Ant.</i> 18.1.5 [13-22]

21.3	<b>Lecture 3:</b> Second Temple Period Literature: Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha	<b>de Silva</b> , <i>Introducing the Apocrypha</i> , Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, pp 15-39 (pp 40-41 are optional). Noncanonical Jewish Writings, pp 291-309 in <i>World of the New Testament</i> .
28.3	<b>Lecture 4:</b> The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Yahad Sect	<b>Vanderkam</b> , James and Flint, Peter. <i>The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls</i> . pp. 239-254.  <b>Skarsaune</b> , pp 103-122
4.4	<b>Lecture 5:</b> <b>Greek and Hellenistic Culture</b> Hellenism versus Judaism; Hellenism shaping Judaism	<b>Skarsaune</b> , “The Cultural Dimension: Judaism & Hellenism”, pp 23-46 in <i>In the Shadow of the Temple</i> . “Greek Religion”, pp 105-123 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . “Greco-Roman Philosophical Schools”, pp 135-148 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . “Philo and the New Testament”, pp 405-412 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> .
11.4	<i>Passover Holiday, no class</i>	
18.4	<b>Lecture 6:</b> Yeshua’s ministry in its first century Jewish context: The Historical Jesus and Jewish Teachers of his day.	“Josephus and the New Testament”, pp 398-404, in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . “Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament”, pp 413-423, in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . “Jewish Identity, Beliefs and Practices”, pp 310-324. in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . Healing and Healthcare, pp 330-341, in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> .
25.4	<i>Independence Day, no class</i>	
2.5	<b>Lecture 7:</b> Guest Lecturer- Dr. David Mishkin Yeshua’s Ministry in its first century Jewish Context: Prayers, Parables and Scripture Interpretation.	The Scriptures and Scriptural Interpretation”, pp 85-101, in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> . <b>Evans</b> , “Jesus and Rabbinic, Proverbs and Prayers”, pp 251-208 in <i>Jesus and his Contemporaries</i> . <b>Keener</b> , pp 178-213
9.5	<b>Lecture 8:</b> Roman Society and Religion	Ferguson, Political History. Pp 20-47. Ferguson, Society and Culture. Pp 49-90.
16.5	<b>Lecture 9:</b> "The Way" and Diaspora “Christians” within the first century Jewish community	<b>P.R, Trebilco and C.A. Evans</b> , “Diaspora Judaism” in C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter, eds., <i>Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds</i> , 281-296. “Jews in the Diaspora”, pp 272-290 in <i>The World of the New Testament</i> .

## General Bibliography

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