

NT 640: SOCIAL MILIEU OF THE NEW TESTAMENT  
ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
DETROIT CENTER  
Southfield Campus

Winter Quarter (Jan 9 - Mar 26, 2008)  
Monday - 4:00 - 7:00 PM

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NT 640: Social Milieu of the New Testament.

I. Course Description:

The Social Milieu of the New Testament is a course which presents and analyzes the social, economic, political, and religious aspects of the Greco-Roman world from 150 BCE to 150 CE, that is, from the time of the Maccabean Revolt and the translation of the LXX during Second Temple Judaism to the completion of the writing of the NT documents and the shift from the Jesus Movement to the establishment of the primitive Christian Church. For this course we will use primary and secondary sources to gain direct insight into the world of Jesus' day and the era of his disciples' ministry. We will use selected passages from the NT and from Flavius Josephus, which reflect the perspective and content of the thought world of the first century CE particularly.

II. Course Objectives:

At the completion of this course, you will have gained a fundamental understanding of the following issues and topics related to the study of the New Testament:

1. The significance of the major figures of Second Temple Judaism and the primitive Christian Church.
2. The main themes, persons, and movements influencing the rise of Christianity.
3. The setting in which the New Testament developed.
4. The forms and functions of Jewish, Greek, and Roman factors upon Jesus, the Jesus Movement, and the early church.
5. The bearing of studies in Ancient Near Eastern history, literature, and social customs on the interpretation of the New Testament.

At the completion of this course, you will also have the opportunity to initiate skills in interpretation. These will include:

1. An ability to recognize and understand the significance of the various literary, social, political, and historiographic forces that shaped the NT and early church.
2. An ability to relate comprehensive themes to specific texts.
3. An ability to apply fundamental insights of historical and literary study.
4. An ability to assess the application of relevant Ancient Near Eastern materials.
5. An ability to discriminate between essential questions and peripheral ones

### III. Required Texts:

John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986, ISBN: 0-664-21906-3.

Jacob Neusner, Peder Borgen, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Richard Horsley, eds., *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988, ISBN: 0-8000-0875-5. **PLEASE NOTE: This text needs to be purchased through online means (ex. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com); [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com), etc.) as it is out of print through the publisher.**

Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, ISBN-10: 1-4051-4911-6.

### IV. Recommended Text:

J. D. Douglas, ed. *New Bible Dictionary*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996. ISBN 0-8308-1439-6.

A quality edition of a study Bible.

### V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Interpretation of scripture is not a trifling matter. It is an honor to be entrusted with the high calling of breaking the Word of Life for the benefit of others. This calling deserves our most diligent and careful attention. The exegetical method provides a means for in-depth interpretation of the Bible.

Students should be familiar with M. J. Gorman's *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* as a guide. Research paper will assume a student's ability to interpret biblical texts but will concentrate on developing the themes described in II above.

Papers are due at the date and time assigned. A late paper will receive a deduction of 2% per day late. No credit will be given for papers submitted a week or more after the due date. Papers and exams will reflect original research work guided by the professor, student by student. Papers will include an annotated bibliography of at least 25 works relevant to the field and the topic of the student's paper, over and above the ten pages of the essay.

Assignments will comprise the following:

1. A theme paper of ten pages on a topic assigned by the professor, due at the end of October.
2. An open book, take home mid-term exam due on 15 October.
3. A theme paper of ten pages on a topic chosen by the student and approved by the professor due at the end of November.
4. An open book, take home final exam due on 15 December.

### VI. ATS Grading Scale

A 97-100  
A- 92-96  
B+ 89-91  
B 86-88

B- 83-85  
C+ 80-82  
C 77-79  
C- 74-76

D+ 71-73  
D 68-70  
D- 65-67  
F below 65

(A) Work that goes significantly beyond the assignment (though not in length); characterized by exceptional and creative engagement with the assignment, depth of reflection, or superior research and/or preparation, as well as clarity of thought and presentation.

(B) Exhibits a serious engagement with the assignment; characterized by thoughtful reflection and preparation, as well as coherence and integration of thought.

(C) Fulfills but does not go beyond the minimum requirements, a superficial, incomplete, or muddled response.

(D) Deficient response to the assignment; characterized by failure to address one or more key facets of the assignment or by; addressing them in a deficient or inadequate manner.

(F) Failure to address the main point or several key components of the assignment; fragmented or incoherent response.

## VII. ABOUT WRITING

Papers will be *descriptive* and *analytical* in focus, exhibit clear organization of thought, and give proper attention to style and grammar. Correct documentation of sources must be followed, as specified in the seminary's approved guide for research papers: *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate Turabian. Papers are to be typed and doubled-spaced with one inch margins. If the paper is computer-generated, set the font at 12 point Times New Roman (approximately 275 words per page).

Marks for the above papers will be based on the depth of critical interaction with the topic, organization of ideas, clarity of writing, and proper citation of sources.

Papers may receive a deduction in mark if:

- The paper is less than or more than the assigned limits.
- The paper is handed in after the due date.
- The paper does not follow the correct format for documenting sources.

### Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional presentation of someone else's words, ideas or data as one's own work. In the event the faculty member deems the plagiarism is unintentional, he/she shall typically require the student to rewrite the assignment. In the event the faculty member believes the plagiarism is willful, the sanctions in this document will apply. If the work of another is used, acknowledgment of the original

source must be made through a recognized reference practice, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. To assure proper crediting, a student will acknowledge the work of others.

#### Academic Integrity Policy:

Ashland Theological Seminary seeks to model servant leadership derived from biblical standards of honesty and integrity. We desire to encourage, develop, and sustain men and women of character who will exemplify these biblical qualities in their ministry to the church and the world. As members of the seminary community, students are expected to hold themselves to the highest standards of academic, personal, and social integrity. All students, therefore, are expected to abide by the academic integrity standards outlined in the Student Handbook.

#### Students with Disabilities:

For students who have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let the professor know early in the quarter (preferably the first week) so that your learning needs can be appropriately met. In order to receive accommodations, documentation concerning your disability must be on file with Classroom Support Services, 105 Amstutz Hall, Ashland University, 419-289-5953. Please contact them with any questions you may have.