Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Messianism in Jewish Antiquity: Syllabus

Semester: Fall 2025

Course Number: JTP 1225 331 [CRN: 90883]

Sessions Meet: T/TH 3am—4:15pm [Location: Belfer 211]

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner (dov.lerner@yu.edu)

Course Overview

This course will provide a close and near-comprehensive study of messianic ideas within Jewish tradition from the time of the Bible up until the age of the expulsion from Spain. We will begin with an examination of introductory themes – the difference between messianic belief and consciousness, the types of messianic beliefs, and the triggers for acute expectation – and then turn out attention to a chronological exploration of Jewish tradition. Starting with the Hebrew Bible, we will work our way through the Second Temple period into the Rabbinic era – attending to the disparate genres – and then end with the medieval streams of thought – pietist, rationalist, and mystical.

Required Texts

For this course there are no materials that you will be required to purchase—all readings will be made available on canvas or are available online and will be linked or indicated on the canvas page.

Attendance and Participation

This class is a collaborative endeavor and depends for its success on your steady attendance and informed participation, so your final grade may well be swayed by the quality—in addition to the quantity—of your participation in class. Poor attendance (i.e., more than three absences during the term and/or frequently arriving late to class) will lower your final course grade.

Due Dates

Assignments must be turned in on the date and hour they are due unless an extension has been arranged in advance. If you anticipate needing an extension, please let me know well before the due date. Readings listed above a particular date are to be read for that date.

Please be aware of the University's *Academic Integrity Statement* as all students are expected to abide by it [www.yu.edu/academic-integrity], and note the following two announcements:

Special accommodations: Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. The office is located in Furst Hall, Suite 412. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Academic support is available to you if you are having any difficulties that could include the following but are not limited to these: understanding assignments, navigating research papers, issues with time management of your schedule and your life or general college adjustment, please make an appointment with Dr. Beth Hait. She is available Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am - 6pm. To make an appointment, go to yu2.mywconline.com. Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support".

AI Use Policy (Assistive Only)

This course follows Yeshiva University's Academic Integrity Policy on artificial intelligence. The use of generative artificial intelligence or any platform with generative artificial intelligence capabilities is prohibited in this course unless expressly permitted. The use of assistive artificial intelligence is allowed in this course. If you are unsure whether a platform or technology is allowed, please inquire directly.

Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Midterm Submission – 30%

Presentation/Final Project – 60%

Week 1: Welcome & Introduction
Readings: n/a
        August 26th: Belief & Consciousness
Readings: "Messianism and Mythology" [K. Seeskin]
        August 28th: Triggers & Types

Week 2: Biblical Texts
Readings: "The God of History" [J. Svenungsson]
        September 2nd: History & Prophecy
Readings: Selected Texts
        September 4th: Pre-exilic & Post Exilic

Week 3: Second Temple Trends
Readings: Book of Daniel, Chapter 7
        September 9th: Apocalypse
Readings: Selected Texts
        September 11th: Militancy & Mysticism

Week 4: Rabbinic Debates I
Readings: Selected Texts
        September 16th: Mishna & Amidah
Readings: Selected Texts
        September 18th: Midrash I

Week 5: Rosh Hashanah

Week 6: Rabbinic Debates II
Readings: Selected Texts
        September 30th: Mishna II [REMOTE]
Readings: n/a
        ~~**October 2nd**~~: *Yom Kippur*

Week 7: Sukkot

Week 8: Rabbinic Debates III
Readings: *n/a*
        ~~**October 14th**~~: *Shimini Atzeret*
Readings: Selected Texts
        October 16th: Talmud I [REMOTE]

Week 9: Rabbinic Debates IV
Readings: Selected Texts
        October 21st: Talmud II
Readings: "The Political Theory of the Diaspora" [D. Biale]
        October 23rd: Historical Assessments

Week 10: Pre-Medieval
Readings: Selected Texts
        October 28th: Geonim
Readings: Selected Texts
        October 30th: Geonim II

Week 11: Medieval I
Readings: "Sephardic and Ashkenazic Messianism in the Middle Ages" [D. Berger]
>   **November 4th**: *Sefard* vs *Ashkenaz*
Readings: n/a
>   **November 6th**: ****MIDTERM****

Week 12: Medieval II
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **November 11th**: Rashi & Tosfot
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **November 13th**: Maimonides I

Week 13: Medieval III
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **November 18th**: Maimonides II
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **November 20th**: Nachmanides I

Week 14: Medieval IV
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **November 25th**: Nachmanides II
Readings: n/a
>   **November 27th**: *Thanksgiving*

Week 14: Medieval V
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **December 2nd**: Abraham Abulafia & Ecstatic Kabbalah
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **December 4th**: Zohar & Theurgic Kabbalah

Week 15: Medieval VI
Readings: *The Last Confession of Jospeh Della Reina* [B. Bassman]
>   **December 9th**: 1391 & Practical Magic
Readings: Selected Texts
>   **December 11th**: 1492 & Don Isaac Abarbanel

Week 16: Class Presentations
Readings: n/a
>   **December 16th**: Presentations
Readings: n/a
>   **December 18th**: Presentations

Week 17: Review
Readings: n/a
>   **December 23rd**: Looking Forwards & Backwards
Readings: n/a
>   ~~**December 25th**: Study Day~~

January 7th @ 11:59pm: *Final Assignment Due*