

# NT 5XJ5/6XJ6 – James

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Winter 2023  
Monday 4:00–5:50pm

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Martin Luther is infamous for calling the Epistle of James “a right strawy epistle,” but most Christians ignore Luther’s straw man and embrace the Epistle as compelling and perennially relevant. Indeed, people often memorize and cherish the words of James, finding in them a practical yet radical ethic that is akin to Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. In this course, we will explore James’s teachings and reflect upon their relevance for life in the twenty-first century. We will explore the emphasis that James places on maturity and integrity as hallmarks of the human life lived well. We will also discuss the role that James the Just played in early Judaism and in the early Christian movement.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

### *Knowing*

- Remember the structure and content of the Epistle of James;
- Be familiar with introductory issues and scholarly debates concerning the Epistle;
- Understand the major theological and ethical teachings found in the Epistle;

### *Being*

- Appreciate the importance of participating in critical and respectful discussions concerning biblical texts;
- Be sensitive to the historical and cultural environment in which the early church first communicated the gospel;
- Embody the ethical seriousness that is so evident throughout the Epistle of James;

### *Doing*

- Be able to read and understand books that engage with James in a critical manner;
- Be able to talk intelligently about James;
- Be able to explain and demonstrate how James is relevant to contemporary Christianity;
- Engage in doctoral-level research that invokes James in a responsible manner.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: You are required to complete all of the following assignments. No unfinished assignments are permitted. *Written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn either as Word documents*

(.doc, .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf). A penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all late assignments, including assignments submitted in incorrect file formats. Assignments cannot be submitted after April 6<sup>th</sup> without written permission from the Office of the Registrar ([strickpd@mcmaster.ca](mailto:strickpd@mcmaster.ca)).

***NT 5XL5/6XL6: Class Participation (10%)***

During each class meeting, we will discuss three things: (1) what James's words likely meant in their *ancient* social and historical setting; (2) what James's message reveals *in general* about the kingdom of God; and (3) how James's message is lived out (or might be better lived out) in *contemporary* individuals and communities. Doctoral students are expected to exemplify a level of engagement towards which other students can aspire.

Attendance at weekly meetings is expected, because class discussions are a significant part of the overall learning experience. If an absence is unavoidable, please email me in advance.

***NT 5XL5: Annotated Bibliography (25%)***

DPT students will produce an annotated bibliography that surveys recent biblical scholarship involving the Epistle of James. This bibliography must include at least 15 resources (including at most three commentaries) for a total of around 3,000–4,000 pages of reading. The included resources should display the full range of New Testament studies, exemplifying a variety of different questions and approaches as well as different confessional and/or non-confessional perspectives. Each annotation should, in approximately 100–150 words, summarize the content of a particular resource and its distinctive contribution to scholarship. It is due according to the Course Schedule below.

***NT 5XL5: James for Non-Dummies (25%)***

Drawing upon the above annotated bibliography, DPT students will compose an introduction to the Epistle of James such as would be suitable for a graduate student (or alum) seeking to think and speak about Paul's letter without being ignorant of contemporary scholarship. This overview should touch on the main issues that impact our understanding of the Epistle and/or its importance for subsequent Christian history and theology. While you need not attempt to be unbiased, it is not the focus of the assignment to advocate for a particular point of view. Instead, focus on laying a general foundation for more specialized research. The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It is due according to the Course Schedule below.

***NT 6XL6: Survey of the Relevance of James to NT Scholarship (35%)***

In lieu of a bibliography, PhD students will write an essay that surveys the primary ways in which the Epistle of James has been engaged by NT scholarship. If there are important neglected areas, these too should be discussed. The essay need not advance innovative hypotheses or arguments, but it should demonstrate familiarity with contemporary scholarship as regards both James and the Epistle of James. The paper must be approximately 5,000 words in length. It is due according to the Course Schedule below.

***NT 6XL6: Course Syllabus (15%)***

PhD students will prepare a course syllabus designed for a college or seminary course. The course must deal with the Epistle of James and must be intended for a post-secondary institution. Although the format of the course and syllabus are not prescribed, your syllabus must clearly define not only the content and organization of the course but also its objectives. In a supplementary document, you must explain in brief paragraphs how each component of the course contributes the overall objectives. The syllabus and accompanying explanation are due according to the Course Schedule below.

***NT 5XL5/6XL6: Research Paper (40%)***

In consultation with both the professor and their doctoral supervisor, DPT students will define an area of intersection that involves both the Epistle of James and the student's own practice-led research. A research paper will then be written in which the student explores this area of intersection and thereby advances scholarly understanding of his or her practice. For PhD students, this paper can pursue any line of inquiry that is relevant to the Epistle of James and potentially publishable as a piece of New Testament scholarship. Research papers must be approximately 8,000 words in length. They are due according to the Course Schedule below.

**GRADING SUMMARY****NT 5XL5**

Participation	10%
Annotated Bibliography	25%
James for Non-Dummies	25%
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

**NT 6XL6**

Participation	10%
Survey	35%
Course Syllabus	15%
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

**TEXTBOOKS**

Students are required to possess the following:

An English translation of the New Testament.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the MDC chapel entrance. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5

International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON, M9A 3C3: phone 416.620.2934; mobile 416.668.3434; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Meeting Date	Preparation (Due at Meeting Time)	Lecture Topics	Written Assignments (Due @ 11:59pm)
Jan 9	Course Syllabus	Introduction to the Course Who Reads James?	
Jan 16	George (2000) Allison (2014) Bauckham (1999) Jas 1:1–5:20	James the Just	
Jan 23	Hartin (2005) Tiller (2005)	James and Judaism	
Jan 30	McKnight (1999) Bauckham (2001)	James and Jesus	
Feb 6	Painter (2005)	James and “Christianity”	
Feb 13	Allison (2001) Land (2019)	The Epistle of James	Bibliography (DPT) Survey (MA/PhD)
Feb 20	Smith (2016)	Family Day (No Class)	
Feb 27	McKnight (pp. 1–58)	Intensive Hybrid Week (No Class)	
Mar 6	Jas 1:2–15 McKnight (pp. 59–122)	Suffering and Trust	Non-Dummies (DPT) Syllabus (MA/PhD)
Mar 13	Jas 1:16–2:26 McKnight (pp. 122–263)	Mercy and Torah	
Mar 20	Jas 3:1–4:12 McKnight (pp. 264–366)	Maturity and Integrity	
Mar 27	Jas 4:13–5:12 McKnight (pp. 366–429)	Wealth and Justice	
Apr 3	Jas 5:13–20 McKnight (pp. 430–461)	Healing and Community	Research Paper

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**

So that you can benefit as much as possible from the class sessions, please note the following expectations.

1. Please respect the opinions of others, even if you do not agree with them. Extend courtesy by not ridiculing others' ideas, but feel free to respond to them logically and critically and in an orderly manner.
2. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation after class to the professor.
3. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
4. Students may eat and drink in class so long as they do not distract others or leave a mess behind.
5. Students should not engage in anything during class time that prevents them from focusing and participating in class discussions.
6. Students are not to carry on private conversations in class. If something is unclear, the whole class will benefit by a question being asked out loud.
7. Cell phones and related devices are to be silenced during class. If a student must for some reason accept a phone call, he or she ought to discretely leave the class in order to do so.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines may be asked to leave the class.

## **STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty (<https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>).

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com can submit an electronic copy of their work via email in PDF format and no penalty will be assigned, but all submitted work is

subject to normal verification standards in order to ensure that academic integrity has been upheld (e.g. online search).

## **STYLE**

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses:

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

## **GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class. The binding version of the syllabus is the one posted to Avenue to Learn (A2L).**