

# **Understanding Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses**

## ***Elective Course, The Theology Program***

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### **Course Description**

A course examining the religions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Jehovah's Witnesses as examples of contemporary heretical religions that purport to be Bible-believing Christians. Students will become conversant with the religions' history, organization, claims, doctrines, and practices. Special attention will be given to becoming familiar with the religions' primary or official publications and to addressing the most common objections these groups present to the historic teachings of evangelicalism.

### **Course Schedule**

This course will meet Monday nights, 10:00—11:30 p.m. Eastern time, for eight straight weeks, beginning on February 23, 2009, and finishing on April 13, 2009.

### **Assigned and Recommended Readings**

Students will be assigned readings from the literature of the Mormons and of the Jehovah's Witnesses, on the assumption that students should be directly familiar with the primary source literature of these religions. All of these readings will be available free online. There will also be assigned readings from the Bible. Additional readings giving an evangelical response to these two religions will also be assigned. See the detailed schedule below for a list of all these readings.

Students are encouraged but not required to read introductory books on both religions. Any one of the following books is acceptable as the textbook on Mormonism:

Abanes, Richard. *Inside Today's Mormonism: Understanding Latter-day Saints in Light of Biblical Truth*. Originally titled *Becoming Gods: A Closer Look at 21st-Century Mormonism*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004, 2007.

Jackson, Andrew. *Mormonism Explained: What Latter-day Saints Teach and Practice*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008.

McKeever, Bill, and Eric Johnson. *Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

For an introductory textbook from a Mormon perspective, consider any of the following:

Bushman, Richard Lyman. *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Riess, Jana, and Christopher Kimball Biegelow. *Mormonism for Dummies*. Indianapolis: Wiley, 2005.

Williams, Drew. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Mormonism*. New York: Alpha Books, 2003.

The following is the recommended textbook on Jehovah's Witnesses (note that the four class sessions on Jehovah's Witnesses will follow closely the material in this book):

Bowman, Robert M., Jr. *Jehovah's Witnesses*. Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

Those students interested in an introductory textbook representing the Jehovah's Witness perspective may wish to study the following book, of which some 100 million copies are in print:

*What Does the Bible Really Teach?* Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2005.

The above book is not available in text form online, but the chapters are available for download in MP3 format here: <http://www.jw.org/index.html?option=OrYQZRQVNIBBX>

**Honors Reading:** Any of the books listed above on either Mormonism or Jehovah's Witnesses are acceptable for those doing honors reading.

## Course Assignments

1. Complete all assigned readings as listed in the schedule that follows below.
2. Quizzes: There will be two quizzes, one following the four class sessions on Mormonism, the other following the four sessions on Jehovah's Witnesses. Once the student looks at the quiz, he or she must take the quiz. In other words, you cannot look at the quiz and then study the terms. A study guide is provided below (following the course schedule) with the terms and names you should know. Only the most basic questions about the persons listed will appear on the quiz.
3. Test: There will be a simple test checking your knowledge of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. You may take this after taking the second quiz.

## Assignment and Class Schedule

Date	Topic
2/23	LDS: Joseph Smith and the History of Mormonism
3/2	LDS: The Book of Mormon
3/9	LDS: Joseph Smith's Translations and Revelations
3/16	LDS: Mormon Theology and Religion
3/23	JWs: History, Practices, and Authority
3/30	JWs: God
4/6	JWs: Death and Resurrection
4/13	JWs: Salvation and the Future

### February 23      **LDS: Joseph Smith and the History of Mormonism**

Topics to be covered:

- An overview of the history of the Mormon religion
- Joseph Smith's "first vision"

Assigned readings:

Joseph Smith—History 1:1-26 ([http://scriptures.lds.org/en/js\\_h/1](http://scriptures.lds.org/en/js_h/1))  
2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-10; James 1:2-8

Recommended readings:

Groat, Joel B. "Joseph Smith's 33 Secret Wives." <http://www.irr.org/mit/sacred-lon-br.html>.  
"Mormon History." [http://www.mormonwiki.com/Mormon\\_history](http://www.mormonwiki.com/Mormon_history). Overview of LDS history from a Mormon perspective, with links to articles on specific figures, events, and issues.  
Walters, Wesley P. "New Light on Joseph Smith's First Vision." <http://www.irr.org/mit/first-vision.html>. See also <http://www.irr.org/mit/first-vision/fvision-accounts.html>.

### March 2      **LDS: The Book of Mormon**

Topic to be covered:

- The Book of Mormon

Assigned readings:

*Book of Mormon*

Title page, Testimony of Three Witnesses, Testimony of Eight Witnesses, Brief Explanation  
<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/bm/contents>

1 Nephi 1, 6, 13; 3 Nephi 12-14; Book of Mormon 6, 8; Moroni 8, 10

Joseph Smith—History 1:27-75 ([http://scriptures.lds.org/en/js\\_h/1](http://scriptures.lds.org/en/js_h/1))

Recommended readings:

- Duffy, John-Charles. “Mapping Book of Mormon Historicity Debates—Part I: A Guide for the Overwhelmed.” *Sunstone*, Oct. 2008. [Liberal Mormon periodical article.]  
[https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=44](https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44).  
See an overview here: <http://www.religiousresearcher.org/blog/?p=154>.
- Walters, Wesley P. “The Book of Mormon Today: Challenges to Its Relevance and Authenticity.” <http://www.irr.org/mit/book-of-mormon-today.html>.
- Wilson, Luke P. “The Scientific Search for Nephite Remains.” <http://www.irr.org/mit/bom-arch-v1.html>.

## **March 9                    LDS: Joseph Smith’s Translations and Revelations**

Topics to be covered:

- Joseph Smith’s other “translations”
- Doctrine & Covenants

Assigned readings:

*Pearl of Great Price*

Book of Moses 2:1-5, 26-27 (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/moses/2>)

Book of Abraham 4:1-5, 26-28 (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/abr/4>)

*Doctrine & Covenants* (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/dc/contents>)

21; 57:1-5; 84:1-5; 87; 124:49-53

*Joseph Smith Translation* (<http://scriptures.lds.org/en/jst/contents>)

John 1:1-19 JST (compare John 1:1-18)

Romans 4:2-5 JST (compare Romans 4:2-5)

Hebrews 6:1; 7:3 JST (compare Hebrews 6:1; 7:3)

Recommended readings:

Groat, Joel B. “Joseph Smith’s ‘Inspired’ Revisions to the King James Bible.”

<http://www.irr.org/mit/js-translation-condensed.html>.

*The Lost Book of Abraham*. <http://www.bookofabraham.info/>. An award-winning documentary produced by the Institute for Religious Research; it may be viewed online free.

## **March 16                    LDS: Mormon Theology and Religion**

Topics to be covered:

- Apostasy and restoration in Mormon belief
- God and the development of Mormon theology
- Preexistent spirits, marriage, and family
- Apostles, prophets, and the church's organization
- Salvation, temples, and LDS rituals

Assigned readings:

1 Corinthians 15:3-9; Ephesians 1:1—4:16

*Gospel Principles*, chapters 1-7, 16-17, 45-47 (<http://www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,11-1-13-1,00.html>). Official LDS doctrinal manual; the chapters are all quite short.

Articles of Faith (<http://www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,106-1-2-1,00.html>)

Recommended readings:

Bowman, Robert M. Jr. "LDS Apostles and Prophets: What Did the New Testament Apostles Say?" <http://tinyurl.com/47lfhk>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Yet Again, Are Mormons Christians? Shedding Light on a Hot Topic." <http://www.religiousresearcher.org/blog/?p=172>.

Groat, Joel B. "God Was Once a Man Like Us: Finessing an Off-Putting Mormon Doctrine." <http://www.irr.org/mit/finessing-god-once-a-man.html>.

Wilson, Luke P. "Are Mormon Temples Christian?" <http://www.irr.org/mit/are-mormon-temples-christian.html>.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Did Jesus Establish Baptism for the Dead?" <http://www.irr.org/mit/baptism-for-the-dead.html>.

<b>Quiz #1: Mormonism-Related Terms and Names</b>			
<b>Terms to Know</b>		<b>People to Know</b>	<b>Key Dates</b>
Book of Mormon	Nephites	Joseph Smith (Jr.)	1820 (first vision)
Doctrine & Covenants	Lamanites	Joseph Smith III	1830 (Book of Mormon published, church founded)
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	Lehi	Brigham Young	1844 (Joseph Smith killed)
Pearl of Great Price	First Vision	James Talmage	1847 (Mormons arrive in Utah)
Book of Abraham	temple		1877 (B. Young dies)
Book of Moses	baptism for the dead		1890 (polygamy officially ends)
Articles of Faith	celestial kingdom		
Salt Lake City	Temple Square		

## **March 23**                    **JWs: History, Practices, and Authority**

Topics to be covered:

- History of Jehovah's Witnesses
- Unusual practices and taboos of the Jehovah's Witnesses
- Jehovah's Witnesses' organization and publications

Assigned readings:

*Jehovah's Witnesses—Who Are They? What Do They Believe?*

<http://www.watchtower.org/e/jt/index.htm>.

Recommended readings:

Bowman, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 9-20.

## **March 30**                    **JWs: God**

Topics to be covered:

- The divine name Jehovah (YHWH)
- Jehovah's Witnesses and the Trinity
- The deity of Jesus Christ
- The New World Translation

Assigned readings:

*The Divine Name that Will Endure Forever.* <http://www.watchtower.org/e/na/index.htm>.

*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* <http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/index.htm>.

Matthew 28:16-20; John 1:1-18; 20:17-31; Romans 10:9-13; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1 (all);  
1 John 4:1-6

In the New World Translation (<http://www.watchtower.org/e/bible/index.htm>):

Matthew 28:19; John 1:1; 8:58; Romans 10:9-13; Hebrews 1:6, 8; 1 John 3:24—4:6

Recommended readings:

Bowman, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 20-30.

## **April 6**                      **JWs: Death and Resurrection**

Topics to be covered:

- Death and the intermediate state
- Jesus' resurrection and the nature of the resurrection body
- Eternal punishment of the wicked

Assigned readings:

“Is There Life after Death?” [http://www.watchtower.org/e/20010715/article\\_01.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/e/20010715/article_01.htm).  
Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 23—24 (all); John 2:19-22; Acts 2:24-32; 1 Corinthians 15 (all); Rev. 20:10-15  
In the New World Translation (<http://www.watchtower.org/e/bible/index.htm>):  
Matthew 25:46; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

Recommended readings:

Bowman, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 30-48.

## April 13                      JW's: Salvation and the Future

Topics to be covered:

- Salvation, grace, faith, and works
- The JW doctrine of two classes of Christians
- The JW doctrine of an invisible “presence” of Christ
- The new heavens and the new earth

Assigned readings:

Matthew 24 (all); Revelation 5:10; 7 (all); 14:1-5; 21:1-4  
“Can You Believe in a Paradise Earth?” [http://www.watchtower.org/e/20031115/article\\_01.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/e/20031115/article_01.htm).  
“Have You Been Saved?” [http://www.watchtower.org/e/19960201/article\\_01.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/e/19960201/article_01.htm).  
In the New World Translation (<http://www.watchtower.org/e/bible/index.htm>): Revelation 5:10

Recommended readings:

Bowman, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, 48-70.

<b>Quiz #2: Jehovah's Witness-Related Terms and Names</b>			
<b>Terms to Know</b>		<b>People to Know</b>	<b>Key Dates</b>
<i>Watchtower</i>	Gentile times	Charles Taze Russell	1874 (Russell's second “presence” begins)
New World Translation	Watchtower Bible & Tract Society	Joseph F. Rutherford	1914 (end of the “Gentile times”)
anointed class	other sheep	Nathan Knorr	1925 (patriarchs expected to rise)
Brooklyn	paradise earth	Frederick W. Franz	1975 (expected end of sixth millennium)