



**MB** BIBLICAL  
SEMINARY

## The MB Story: What Makes Us Family? HIS 510

*The mission of MB Seminary is to educate and equip men and women to help lead the church in reaching Canada and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

Instructor: Brian Cooper, PhD  
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Credit Hours: 3  
Prerequisites: None  
Course Term: July 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024  
Instruction: Superbly produced videos in Populi

### Course Description

This course provides an orientation to the historical experience, denominational identity and contemporary priorities and challenges of the Mennonite Brethren Church. The course begins with an historical exploration of the origins and development of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, and the subsequent development of the Mennonite Church within the wider context of Protestantism in Europe. Special attention is then given to the origin and growth of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia, North America, and its emergence as a global movement during the twentieth century. The historical survey will serve as the backdrop against which to interpret cultural, theological and sociological forces and factors that shaped Mennonite Brethren faith and life, theology, worship, ecclesiology and ethics.

### Objectives

By the end of this course, each student should:

- 1) Recognize and synthesize the historical developments leading to the birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church and its subsequent growth as a global theological community (Content).
- 2) Discover and correlate how historic examples of understanding of Mennonite Brethren identity engaged larger currents of Anabaptist and evangelical Christianity with a few to transmitting these insights into one's contemporary ministry setting (Character).
- 3) Assess the contextual nature and self-perceptions of Mennonite Brethren communities and describe how they have shaped their engagement with contemporary society (Cultural Analysis).

4) Critically evaluate the evolution of historic Mennonite Brethren convictions and priorities (Professional Capacities).

### Required Texts and Materials

- Snyder, Arnold C. *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995.
- Available on course website on Populi
  
- Urry, James. *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Printing. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1989.
- Available on course website on Populi
  
- Toews, John B. *Perilous Journey: The Mennonite Brethren in Russia, 1860-1910*. Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1988.
- [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL17079339W/Perilous\\_Journey](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL17079339W/Perilous_Journey)
  
- Toews, Paul, and Kevin Enns-Rempel, eds. *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874-2002*. Fresno: Historical Commission, 2002.
- [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL20387612W/For\\_Everything\\_a\\_Season](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL20387612W/For_Everything_a_Season)
  
- Toews, Paul, ed. *Bridging Troubled Waters: Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century*. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1995.
- [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL3273190W/Bridging\\_Troubled\\_Waters](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL3273190W/Bridging_Troubled_Waters)
  
- Toews, J. A. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*. Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975.
- [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL7017043W/A\\_History\\_of\\_the\\_Mennonite\\_Brethren\\_Church](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL7017043W/A_History_of_the_Mennonite_Brethren_Church)
  
- *Renewing Identity and Mission: Mennonite Brethren Reflections After 150 Years*. Edited by Abe J. Dueck, Bruce L. Guenther, & Doug Heidebrecht. (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2011).
- [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL16498019W/Renewing\\_Identity\\_and\\_Mission](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL16498019W/Renewing_Identity_and_Mission)
  
- *Celebrating 150 Years: The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World*. Edited by Abe J. Dueck. Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2010.
- [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL16494542W/The\\_Mennonite\\_Brethren\\_Church\\_Around\\_the\\_World](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL16494542W/The_Mennonite_Brethren_Church_Around_the_World)

## Weekly Schedule

Teaching Videos (online)	Section Titles	Readings
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Reformation Era</li> <li>• Overview of the Anabaptist Movement</li> <li>• Anabaptism and Political Realities</li> </ul>	<a href="#">The Trial of Michael Sattler</a> <a href="#">The Schleithem Confession</a> <a href="#">Against the Murdering and Robbing Hordes of Peasants</a>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anabaptism and Socio-economic Realities</li> <li>• Anabaptism and the Church</li> <li>• Interpreting Anabaptism</li> </ul>	<i>Anabaptist History and Theology</i> , Chapter 16, 18, 21-25 <i>None But Saints</i> , Chapter 1
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Anabaptist Tradition Today</li> <li>• Anabaptist Migrations</li> <li>• Anabaptists and Government</li> </ul>	<i>Anabaptist History and Theology</i> , Chapter 26, 12, 13 <i>None But Saints</i> , Chapter 2
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anabaptists and Economics</li> <li>• Anabaptists and Theological Identity</li> <li>• Anabaptists and Church Leadership</li> </ul>	<i>Anabaptist History and Theology</i> , Chapter 17, 4-7 <a href="#">Braun, “Organization and Government of the Local Church”</a>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mennonite Brethren in Russia: Background</li> <li>• The Birth of Mennonite Brethren</li> <li>• Leaving Russia: The Migration of the 1870s</li> </ul>	<i>A History of the MB Church</i> , Chapters 2-6 <i>For Everything a Season</i> , Chapter 2
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From Golden Age to Diaspora</li> <li>• Setting a New Direction</li> <li>• The Immigrants of the 1920s</li> </ul>	<i>A History of the MB Church</i> , Chapters 7-9 <i>For Everything a Season</i> , Chapter 3
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalization</li> <li>• Congregational Life</li> <li>• North American Contexts and Identities</li> </ul>	<i>For Everything a Season</i> , Chapters 5, 11, 12 <i>Bridging Troubled Waters --</i> Kyle, “Ecclesiological Developments” <a href="#">Hiebert, “The Scriptural Definition of the Nature of the Church”</a>

<p>Week 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transitions, Innovations, and Milestones</li> <li>• Mission</li> <li>• The International Community of MBs</li> </ul>	<p><i>A History of the MB Church</i>, Chapters 10, 11, 19, 22  <i>Bridging Troubled Waters</i> -- Regehr, "Economic Transformation of Canadian MBs"  <i>Celebrating 150 Years</i>, Parts I, III</p>
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## Course Assignments

The assignments for this course are listed below. Please double-space all written assignments and use proper formatting (Chicago or Turabian).

Assignments are due by 11:59 pm (your time) on the day they are due. I would ask that you submit your assignments in Populi. Once I have marked your assignment, I will put it in your grade book in Populi where you can check your grade and review the comments I made on the assignment (you will receive an automatic notification whenever I put a graded assignment in your grade book). Please note that I reserve the right to deduct 5% of an assignment’s total possible value for each week that it is late (assignments submitted more than two weeks beyond the due date will not be accepted). If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment on time, I will grant one extension of up to one week for one assignment during the course (without penalty) when you inform me of your need for an extension before the due date for that particular assignment. I will also consider extensions in exceptional circumstances such as a medical emergency (when a doctor’s note accompanies the request).

Here is an overview of all the course work followed by a detailed description of them:

### ***Writing Assignments (30% of the final grade)***

During five weeks of the course, you will have to submit writing assignments based on the course themes. Unless otherwise noted, the maximum length for each construction project is 1,500 words.

### Overview of Course Work

Week	Due Date	Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade	Cumulative Percentage
Week 1	July 6	Forum #1	5%	5%
Week 2	July 13	Assignment #1	15%	20%
Week 3	July 20	Forum #2	5%	25%
Week 4	July 27	Assignment #2	15%	40%
Week 5	August 3	Forum #3	5%	45%
Week 6	August 10	Assignment #3	20%	65%
Week 7	August 17	Forum #4	5%	70%
Week 8	August 24			
Week 9	August 31	Research Paper	30%	100%

#### ***Week 2 -- Assignment #1: Building an Identity (15%)***

The early Anabaptists rejected theological tradition and existing church authority as they pursued faithfulness attained through a simple and direct reading of Scripture. Given what you know about their early history (both the good parts and the parts that are not so good), how appropriate is this approach for creating unity and theological direction? How would you suggest it could have been improved?

#### ***Week 4 -- Assignment #2: Shifting Identity (15%)***

In an [article](#) in *Direction*, Richard Kyle described Mennonite Brethren as having shifted from a sectarian posture to a more mainstream evangelical one. Tell me what Kyle means, and tell me what you think this means for Mennonite Brethren identity, now and moving into the future.

#### ***Week 6 -- Assignment #3: All in the Family (20%)***

*This is a two-part project.* The first part involves talking about cultural and theological identity. What happens when family connections and expectations clash with what the community has agreed is the call to discipleship? How do you respond to scenarios such as those among Canadian MBs where some MBs were reluctant to enforce theological conformity because they did not want to have to exclude other MBs who were “family?”

Second, how can MBs work intentionally to grow cultural diversity in the larger community and at the same time forge theological unity?

***Forum Posts – Online Discussion (20% of the final grade)***

The online discussion groups will serve two purposes. First, they will address questions and provide a forum for students to process what they are learning in the class. Second, they are community hermeneutic working groups leading to fuller insight into the course material.

**Week 1 Questions**

- If Martin Luther's reformation ideas were so revolutionary, why did the Radical Reformers (i.e., the Anabaptists) not simply follow his lead?
- Why did Martin Luther find the Anabaptists (the hordes of peasants in his tract) so threatening?
- Based on what you believe about Christian unity, how appropriate was the Anabaptist move to start a new church (which they actually did when they reinstated believers' baptism)?

**Week 3 Questions**

- How applicable do you think Anabaptist principles about church community are today, in your church?
- What three things would be the most dramatic changes if your church decided to become more Anabaptist?
- Anabaptists emphasized nonconformity as a high priority. What did it look like then, and what might it look like today?

**Week 5 Questions**

- Why did some Anabaptists stay where they lived while others migrated to new areas?
- What are the pros and cons of living in cultural enclaves as some Anabaptists have?
- How consistent with their expressed theological convictions have Anabaptists (including MBs) been in relating to governments?

**Week 7 Questions**

- What have been the greatest opportunities for growth, and obstacles to growth among MBs?
- How relevant is it to try to develop and emphasize an MB denominational identity today?
- How should Canadian MBs choose to relate to the other global MB churches of ICOMB?

***Research Paper (30% of final grade)***

Students will write one major research paper 15-20 pages in length (no more) on an MB history topic of his/her choosing. Students are encouraged to consult the professor of topic ideas. Papers must use primary and secondary source material.

Want to get a good grade? Here are some tips for writing a good paper.

- Sources must be clearly cited throughout your paper using the format provided by Chicago Manual of Style, or Turabian. Proper citation can hardly be overstated—although over-footnoting can be a problem, it is a lesser sin than under-footnoting. Proper citation can greatly help an author avoid plagiarism (the failure to properly attribute the author of a quote or idea used).
- Quotes longer than 4 lines must be single-spaced and indented, i.e. blocked. These quotes should be used sparingly and never have quotation marks.
- Students may use either footnotes or endnotes, other than consistency—do not use both, and never use parenthetical citations.
- A bibliography is required at the end of any research paper. A good rule of thumb is that the bibliography should have at least as many entries as the paper has pages. So if you write a 15-page paper, your bibliography should have at least 15 entries.
- Pages must be numbered. A research paper must have a title page. Please spell my name correctly.
- Use italics for the titles of books, plays, newspapers, etc., and foreign phrases (unless common in English, e.g. Status quo need not be italicized, but *raison d’etre* should be).
- Numbers under 100 should be written out, unless a sentence contains numerous numbers, or if numbers under 100 are mixed with numbers over 100. E.g. Although she wrote 121 plays, only 18 survive. Only eighteen of her plays survived to the present. If you do not have time to read all of her plays, then I recommend plays 3, 6, 11, 14, 17, and, 18.
- Numbers of centuries must always be written out. Use the seventeenth century, never use the 17th century. When the century is an adjective than use a hyphen, otherwise resist the temptation to do so. E.g. The seventeenth-century Dutch golden age [adjective]. When the century is a noun there is no hyphen. E.g. Great artists of the seventeenth century include Rembrandt.
- Generally avoid the use of “felt” or “feeling” to describe a person’s conviction or motivation. Avoid contractions in formal scholarly writing [unless in a quote]. E.g. Use did not instead of didn’t. Always proofread and edit your paper—do not rely solely on spellcheckers. Or Ernie.
- When choosing a topic to research and write about have fun, think about what you want to know more about, what question you want to explore, or what simply interests you.
- The essay should include, usually in the introductory paragraph, a clear statement of a thesis. The thesis statement makes the main point of your essay. It differs from the statement of a theme (which states a topic to be discussed but not what will be said about it). It also differs from a summary (which summarizes the document but doesn't have a point to make about it). You can test whether an introductory statement is a thesis statement by seeing whether it can be preceded by the clause, "This essay aims to demonstrate that...". Think about the topic of your paper; your thesis is what you want me to believe or think about it. It is your job to use your thesis to convince me.

When choosing a topic to research and write about have fun, think about what you want to know more about, what question you want to explore, or what simply interests you.

The essay should include, usually in the introductory paragraph, a clear statement of a thesis. The thesis statement makes the main point of your essay. It differs from the statement of a

theme (which states a topic to be discussed but not what will be said about it). It also differs from a summary (which summarizes the document but doesn't have a point to make about it). You can test whether an introductory statement is a thesis statement by seeing whether it can be preceded by the clause, "This essay aims to demonstrate that...".

The thesis statement should be substantial, not truistic (incapable of being shown false) or trivial. To the question, "Can a valid argument be made against this thesis statement?" the answer should be "yes".

### Course Evaluation

Because your feedback is very important to me, I have made the course evaluation a required part of the course. You will find the course evaluation in Populi.

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	93-96.99	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	90-92.99	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skilful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	87-89.99	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	83-86.99	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	80-82.99	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	77-79.99	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.
C	73-76.99	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external



				sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	70-72.99	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision <i>or</i> references and resources not taken fully into account <i>or</i> examples are basic or not completely convincing <i>or</i> barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

### Assignment Assessment

When I assess written assignments and presentations, I tend to look for the following:

- Appropriateness – The content matches the requirements of the assignments.
- Substantiveness – The content reveals deeper level thinking. This may take the form of critiquing existing ideas and proposing new ones. It may involve applying ideas from the readings and class discussions in deeply personal ways. It could also include a novel integration of ideas from various sources. As you think about substantiveness, I would also ask you to go beyond “left brain” thinking that focuses on systematic and logical thinking. Add “right brain” analysis that views concepts in intuitive and more holistic ways. This may involve viewing assignment topics from creative vantage points by using word pictures, analogies, metaphors, pictures, diagrams, drama, poetry, music, and other creative devices that can often enrich conceptual meaning and make it more personal. In order to get an A on an assignment, **you really need to present your ideas in an integrative and creative way.** Go beyond the stated expectations of an assignment (not in terms of length ☺). Surprise me with a novel combination and/or expression of ideas.
- Coherence – The content flows in a consistent and meaningful way.
- Engaging – The writing style does not distract from the content (e.g. grammatical mistakes), but rather engages the reader’s attention. By the way, I love creative title pages that introduce a theme or multiple themes from your assignment in an engaging way.

### Academic Notes and Policies

#### Artificial Intelligence

Where students make use of generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing, among others) to complete any course-related work, the generated material must be clearly and correctly indicated, and cited/referenced using the Chicago/Turabian referencing style for generative AI. (Information about the required reference style is listed in the course syllabus.) Citation is not required to document the use of simple proof-reading and editing tools (e.g., Grammarly).

Failure to clearly indicate and reference AI-generated material will be reported as academic misconduct.

Students should consult the Instructor if they have any questions about the use of generative AI tools.

### **Paper Formatting**

Students are required to adhere to the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format for all papers. Please consult the [Purdue Owl](#) website for information or:

Turabian, Kate, L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

### **Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism**

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire MB Seminary community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at MB Seminary.

### **Assignment Grade Appeals**

Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made directly to Dr. Brian Cooper, Director of Student Development, [briancooper@mbseminary.ca](mailto:briancooper@mbseminary.ca).

### **Web Support-Student Portal** — <https://mbseminary.populiweb.com>

All students at MBS will receive a MBS-Populi username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application. If you have any difficulty with your password or your login credentials, please contact Keith Reed, Director of Ministry Support, ([keithreed@mbseminary.ca](mailto:keithreed@mbseminary.ca)).

### **Course Intensive/Campus Closure**

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to your church host and contact.

### **Equity of Access**

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the MB Seminary Director of Student Development ([briancooper@mbseminary.ca](mailto:briancooper@mbseminary.ca)) of that fact **before the beginning of a course** so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. To repeat: To ensure that instructors know to accommodate a student who has a

learning access issue, the student must inform the Director of Student Development of a disability before the beginning of the class. After that is too late.