

# The Geographical & Historical Settings of the Bible

## RS 155

Westmont College  
May 8-12, 14-June 5, 2022

### Professor of Record:

Dr. Sandra Richter  
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### JUC Instructor:

Elaine Philips  
Jerusalem University College, emeritus New Testament professor Gordon College  
Jerusalem, Israel

**Course Description:** This intensive three-week course introduces students to the geography, history, and archaeology of the land of Israel via primary source material, map work, and on-site lectures and exploration. Students will prepare for the three-week intensive in Israel by approximately 20 hours of map work in which they will familiarize themselves with the topography and geography of the holy land through the lens of the biblical narrative. Upon arriving in Israel, students will tour and hike the entire country. They will be exposed to the real space and time of the biblical narrative they have mapped as well as the current populations. One day per week of classroom lecture will be complemented by six days per week of on-site exploration and lecture. Two exams mark the mid-point and final week of the class. This course will forever transform the characters in the pages of the Bible into real people, who lived in real places, and struggled with the very real issues of life and faith. It will also expose Westmont students to the conflicted realities of the "holy land" as they interact with each of the major faith groups and their holy sites.

**Prerequisites:** RS-001 Introduction to Old Testament; RS-010 Introduction to New Testament.

**GE Common Inquires:** As this course is set in a global context engaging people of many ethnic and religious identities, and as its content is the historical identity of ancient Israel and Judea viewed through the remains of their material culture, ancient historians, original inscriptions, and physical settings, this course meets two GE areas Thinking Globally and Thinking Historically. Students will be reading and discussing an array of primary and secondary materials. The primary materials will include the epigraphic and archaeological artifacts of Israel and Judea as well as the historians of the Greco-Roman world. The secondary materials will include current scholarship and Bible readings.

**Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of this course students will ...

1. Experience, enjoy and develop a love for the land of the Bible!
2. Demonstrate competence in the historical context of the Old & New Testaments (on-site discussions, exams, and impression reports).

**Commented [W11]:** The student will be required to map out and physically traverse the land discovering for themselves the topographical and geographic logic of ancient Near Eastern settlement, economic systems, and political alliances that shaped the world of ancient Israel. In this fashion the student will demonstrate substantial engagement of trans-regional connections.

Via primary source reading and lecture material, direct interaction with art work and artifacts the student will be exposed to multiple perspectives from the ancient world. These will include the Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans, and Greeks as well as the various incarnations of Israelite/Jewish culture.

This historical background, studied in the midst of the modern conversation will direct the student to evaluate the impact of global processes on various world contexts and life experiences, particularly as they map out the profound influence the Judeo-Christian ethic has had upon the formation of Western Civilization and the current conflicts in the region.

**Commented [W12]:** The prerequisite of RS-001 assures us that students have had significant classroom exposure to issues of history, historicity, and historiography in the ancient Near East. This class offers them the opportunity to take those abstract experiences into the field. What has been read is now touched and smelt and sketched. In many ways this course is the "Thinking Historically Lab" that completes and compliments the Introductions to the Old and New Testament.

3. Demonstrate competence in the geological, geographical, and cultural context of the Old & New Testaments (on-site discussions, maps, exams, and impression reports).
4. Be able to describe and analyze the dynamics of Israelite and Judean artistic, economic, political, and social identities and thereby connect those realities to both their interpretation of the Bible and their interpretation of themselves (on-site discussions, exams, and impression reports).
5. Be able to analyze historical sources (epigraphy, archaeology, and first century texts) with appropriate attention to their contexts and messages, and how those contexts effect biblical interpretation (on-site discussions and impression reports).
6. Discover that their real time, real space, and real people engagement of Israel has totally transformed the way they read their Bibles and understand the great narrative of redemption.

### COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS:

#### Course Procedures:

This course is designed to get students out of the classroom and into the real space of Israel's story. Students will meet six times prior to departure, spending approximately twenty hours prior working through the narratives of the biblical text *geographically*. Students will identify the topography, soil, and waterways of the "holy land" on military-grade maps, and then map out biblical narratives. They will also study and be quizzed on the dates of major transitions and characters in the biblical text. Upon arrival in Israel, the "real space" encounter begins. For three weeks home base will be just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem at **Jerusalem University College**. We will spend one day a week in the classroom; six days a week on the road exploring the areas mapped and attending to on-site lectures regarding the people and events situated in those spaces. There will be two exams.

#### Course Materials:

##### Required:

- a) A Bible in a modern translation such as NKJV, NASB, RSV or NIV (not a paraphrase)
- b) James M. Monson, *Regions on the Run*. Rockford, IL: Biblical Backgrounds, 1998
- c) Steven P. Lancaster and James M. Monson, *Regional Study Guide*, with supplement. Rockford, IL: Biblical Backgrounds, 1999-2001.
- d) Regional Study Maps 1-7
- e) *Historical Geography Notebook*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem University College, 1998.
- f) Syllabus Maps (James M. Monson, *Geographical Basics in the Land of the Bible*).

The following are helpful for additional information, and are available in the JUC library:

- a) Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*. New and Revised ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- b) Yohanan Aharoni, Michael Avi-Yonah, Anson F. Rainey and Ze'ev Safrai, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1993. (Republished in 2002 as *The Carta Bible Atlas*).
- c) Carl Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.
- d) Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land*. 4th ed. Oxford Archaeological Guides, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

**Commented [W13]:** The student will read the Bible (the national history of Israel) in the context of the Amarna Letters, Lachish Letters, monumental Inscriptions (e.g. the Dan Stele, the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, the Excration Texts, etc.) asking questions of historical context, author, audience, and genre. From these primary sources read historically they will draw conclusions assessing the reliability of these sources and their usefulness in recreating the history of the southern Levant. Students will be asked how one's own social location (both as author and audience) shapes interpretation of both events and the Bible itself.

- e) Efraim Orni and Elisha Efrat, *Geography of Israel*. 4th rev. ed. Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1980.

**Classroom Decorum:** Come prepared! Stay with the group. Bring hat, sunblock, water, and snacks. Take notes. Be pleasant!

## REQUIREMENTS

**Pre-departure viewing and synopsis of the five hour PBS special, "Fifty Years War: Israel and the Arabs."** This PBS documentary will help introduce us to the so-complex dynamics of the Land of Israel. Write a one paragraph summary of each episode, plus a concluding paragraph of personal reaction. Six paragraphs in all. This is due by departure day, May 14<sup>th</sup> at midnight. Please don't make this summary and reaction a burdensome task, rather just one that quantifies the viewing experience.

**Map work (20 Hours):** The completion of seven detailed topographic maps are required *before* departure. These maps will help the student quantify the topographical and geographic logic of ancient Near Eastern settlement, and the economic systems, and political alliances that shaped the world of ancient Israel; and to overlay the national history of Israel (the Bible) upon those larger regional systems. In this fashion the student will demonstrate substantial engagement of trans-regional connections. Maps are available here: [http://mail.bibback.com/RS\\_Maps.html](http://mail.bibback.com/RS_Maps.html)

**Pre-departure meetings (16 hours):** May 8-12<sup>th</sup> is committed to lectures, videos, and discussion regarding cross-cultural communication, modern Judaism, Islam, the Druze, the Samaritans, and the Armenians. All of these learning opportunities are designed to orient students to the current people groups of the land of Israel/Palestine.

**On site-Enthusiastic and *pleasant* attendance**--Because of the nature of the course, attendance at all class sessions and on all field studies is required except for approved medical reasons. *Pleasant*, *compassionate* and *enthusiastic* attendance and participation is required as well. Know that special codes of conduct and regular inconveniences are built into a class of this nature and your cheerful compliance will be most welcome.

**On site-Readings and Map Work**—You must prepare your pre-assigned *Regions on the Run* and *Regional Study Maps* map work and complete all assigned readings before class time. Bring all of your map materials and the *Historical Geography Notebook* to all class sessions, including field studies. The completed *Regional Study Maps* and *Syllabus Maps* must be turned in at the time of the final exam. Auditors must complete all map work.

**On-site Exams**--There are three exams. These are noted on the calendar. You are responsible for the preview lectures and field study information for each exam.

**On-site Conversations**—Over the course of our three weeks in Israel the student will interact with an array of people from different regions, cultures, political postures, and faith traditions (Palestinian & Israeli, Christian & Muslim, Zionist & Secularists, Catholic & Orthodox, Armenian & Druze. These

**Commented [WI4]:** The student will gain insight into multiple perspectives arising from the historical and political connections in the land of the Bible. This assignment helps the student to understand the modern conversation and conflicts within the region as well as evaluate the impact of global processes on various world contexts and life experiences.

**Commented [WI5]:** The student will be required to map out Israel/Palestine discovering for themselves the topographical and geographic logic of the history of the ancient Near East, its **economy** and **political alliances** which shaped the world of Israel. In this fashion the student will explore substantial engagement of trans-regional connections, will evaluate the impact of global processes on various world contexts and life experiences and demonstrate substantial engagement of trans-regional connections.

**Commented [WI6]:** The student will be exposed to multiple perspectives and explore the ethical demands of Christianity in light of the nationalistic claims made upon the land of Israel/Palestine.

**Commented [WI7]:** In preparation for each field trip (see the attached calendar), the student will be required to read primary sources historically (the Bible as the national history of Israel, the Amarna Letters, Arad Letters, Dan Stele, Mishnah, etc.) asking questions of historical context, author, audience, and genre. The student will then physically traverse the regions discussed in the texts, discovering via that exploration and on-site lectures the topographical and geographic logic of the **economic** and **political alliances** reflected in those primary sources. Investigation of artifacts, industrialized production sites (oil, wine, sheep, and granaries) and military bases will help the student identify the arguments of secondary sources, recognizing the differences in interpretation reflected in these texts.

**Commented [WI8]:** Via direct engagement with homeland and holy site, in conversation with representative community leaders, the student will be exposed to multiple perspectives arising from these connections in the ancient and modern world. This historical background, studied in the midst of the modern conversation will direct the student to evaluate the impact of global processes on various world contexts and life experiences.

conversations are encouraged! We will formalize these conversations with three evenings of presentation and conversation. This year our conversationalists will include Rabbi Jamie Cowen, Professor Nabil Samara, the Orthodox priests of the Eastern Orthodox church in Balata (Jacob's Well).

### On-site Field Studies

- a) Bring your map materials and the *Historical Geography Notebook* with you on field studies (only the *Historical Geography Notebook* is necessary for the half-day walking field studies in Jerusalem).
- b) Please note the departure time for every field study on the calendar, and plan ahead so that you can be on time for the departures. We don't have very much time once in the field, and every minute counts.
- c) Each student must stay with the class and not wander off unless allowed to do so by the professor. Please be careful when "wandering!" Injuries have occurred in the past!
- d) You will be asked to help set up picnic lunches and take the empty containers back to the JUC kitchen on our return. Please take the initiative to help out in any way possible!
- e) A first-aid kit will be along for all field studies. Notify your instructor if you have any medical need while on the trip.
- f) Modesty kits are needed for certain sites on certain days, as indicated in the calendar.

**On-site Impression Reports**--You must submit an impression report for *each* half-day and full day of field study (a four-day field study requires four impression reports). The impression reports will be due during the class period of the exam for the corresponding field study. The impression reports can be either typed or hand-written, but the length should be the equivalent of one single-spaced typed page for each. Each impression report must end with the "so what" question. How did this particular day of field study impact your understanding of your host culture past and present, your understanding of the biblical text, and how might this field study effect your interpretation of the text? Auditors must write all impression reports.

**Commented [WI9]:** The on-site impression reports are designed to be the permanent archive of the student's responsible and informed articulation of how the past has shaped the future--both theirs via the role the biblical narrative has played in their personal formation, and the contemporary peoples of the land of Israel/Palestine.

**FINAL GRADE:** In consultation with Westmont faculty, JUC faculty will calculate your grade.

10%--Attendance and *pleasant* participation

10%--Impression Reports

10%--Summary of "The Fifty Years War"

30%--Completion of assigned *Syllabus Maps* and *Regional Study Maps*, including in-class personal markings

40%--Exams





# 5A 2022 [16 May – 5 June 2022]

Instructor:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>*Please bring your passport, this schedule, and a pen to the orientation meeting on Tuesday</p> <p>**Dress for Hezekiah's tunnel and bring flashlights</p>	<p>May 16</p> <p>ARRIVAL DAY</p> <p><b>Group Dinner</b></p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>17</p> <p>8:00-12:00pm Orientation, Course Introduction, &amp; Jerusalem Preview at JUC * 1:00-5:30pm Old City Walk</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>18</p> <p>7:30am-12:30pm OT Jerusalem Walk 1:30-5:30pm Geo/Arch/Hist Intro.</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>19</p> <p>7:30am-12:30pm NT Jerusalem Walk 1:00-5:00pm Benjamin Preview</p> <p><b>Western Wall Tunnels</b></p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>20</p> <p>7:00am BUS Jerusalem Approaches Field Study</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7:00am BUS Benjamin / Ephraim Field Study</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>
<p>22</p> <p>FREE DAY <i>Optional Tour of YotvataShalem</i> 1:30 pm</p> <p><b>Vespers</b> 8:00-9:00 pm Jerusalem</p>	<p>23</p> <p>8:30-9:45am Exam 10:00am-12:00pm Preview: JSP, Negev, Dead Sea Area</p> <p>FREE AFTERNOON</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>24</p> <p>7:00am BUS Judah / Shephelah / Philistia Field Study</p> <p>Arad</p>	<p>25</p> <p>7:00am BUS Biblical Negev Field Study</p> <p>Arad</p>	<p>26</p> <p>7:00am BUS Dead Sea Area Field Study</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7:00am BUS Samaria Field Study</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>28</p> <p>FREE DAY <i>Optional Tour of Israel Museum</i> 1:30 pm</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>
<p>29</p> <p>FREE MORNING 1:00-2:30pm Exam 2:45-4:45pm Preview: Galilee</p> <p><b>Vespers</b> 8:00-9:00 pm Jerusalem</p>	<p>30</p> <p>7:00am BUS Galilee Field Study</p> <p>Dinner &amp; Discussion with Nabil &amp; Sama Samara</p> <p>Nazareth</p>	<p>31</p> <p>7:45am BUS Galilee Field Study</p> <p>Galilee</p>	<p>June 1</p> <p>7:30am BUS Galilee Field Study</p> <p>Dinner &amp; Discussion with Rabbi Jamie &amp; Stacy Cowen</p> <p>Galilee</p>	<p>2</p> <p>7:00am BUS Galilee Field Study</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>3</p> <p>FREE MORNING 1:15-3:00pm Exam 3:15-4:00pm Departure meeting &amp; Certificate Ceremony</p> <p>Jerusalem</p>	<p>4</p> <p>FREE DAY</p> <p>6:00am BUS Jordan Field Study (Gilead)</p> <p><b>Erev Shavuot</b> Jerusalem</p>
<p>5</p> <p>DEPARTURE DAY</p> <p><b>Group Dinner</b></p> <p>Shavuot</p>	<p><b>Emergency Contacts</b>                      JUC Office: 02-671-8628/8625                      President: Oliver Hershey, 058-5087048                      Short-Term Programs Coordinator: Becca McDonald, 058-6861324                      Instructor:  <i>This calendar is subject to change in the field due to weather, time of day, or other variables.</i></p>					