

The Geographical & Historical Settings of the Bible

RS 155

Westmont College

May 8-12, 14-June 5, 2022

Professor of Record:

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JUC Instructor:

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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).

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.

- 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 14th at midnight. Please don't make this summary and reaction a burdensome task, rather just one that quantifies the viewing experience.

Pre-departure meetings for Orientation, lectures, and map work (20 Hours): May 8-12th In addition to lectures and discussion regarding **cross-cultural communication, Islam, modern Judaism, the Druze, the Samaritans, the Armenian faith and genocide**, and orientation to the land of Israel, seven maps are required *before* departure. These maps are available at http://mail.bibback.com/RS_Maps.html

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 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.

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



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MAY 8-12	PRE-DEPARTURE DAYS AT WESTMONT COLLEGE
MAY 14/15	TRAVEL TO TEL AVIV
MAY 17-JUNE 4	PROGRAM IN ISRAEL (3 WEEKS)
JUNE 5	DEPART ISRAEL