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BB 8321-001 The Bible in its Interpretation in Global Contexts
WX 8321-001 Witness and Ministry in Global Context

Israel/Palestine Immersion
January 1-16, 2019
Perkins School of Theology

I. Course Description

A study of Biblical Hermeneutics in a cultural context different from the students' own cultural context, usually outside the United States, with special attention to the role of theological reflection in an environment affected by globalization in all its dimensions. This course will offer an opportunity for direct encounter with, and reflection on, the issues that affect Christian identity and witness in the Israeli and Palestinian contexts. Students will engage in a multi-disciplinary approach to exploring the meaning of the gospel in understanding how to live Christianly as a religious minority in a religiously plural environment. Upon completion of the course students will have a fuller understanding and experience of inter-cultural collaboration in theology and witness, as well as the complex issues related to international relations and the Middle East.

II. Specific Objectives

- To combine biblical studies, theology, Christian formation and cultural studies with the arts of communication to provide an integrated learning experience.
- To consider the relationship between the “dead stones” (visiting ancient Biblical sites) and the “living stones” (the people from different cultures and contexts currently residing in Palestine and Israel).
- To foster exchange and dialogue between different seminaries and main-line denominations around the globe.
- To introduce participants to the local Christian Church in Palestine.
- To provide interfaith dialogue and encounters with diverse expressions of religious faith in Palestine and Israel.
- To raise awareness of the religious, political, cultural and societal situation in Palestine/Israel.
- To create a forum for exchanging ideas in contemporary contextual theology.

III. Required PRE-IMMERSION Assignments and Obligations

1. Attend the Pre-Immersion Orientation
2. Write up a page that includes the following (**due to professor via email by 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 30**). Bring a copy of it with you on the trip.
 - a. Why did you enroll in this course?
 - b. What are your goals for the course?
 - c. What are some of the questions you are taking with you?

d. What fears or concerns do you have about this course?

3. Readings and Written Assignments

A. Materials Related to the Current Palestinian/Israeli Contexts

For readings 1 and 2 below, prepare a paper of at least 750 words that addresses the following:

- a. Briefly state the chief aim of the book from the author's perspective.
- b. Then offer your responses using some of the following as prompts:
 - What were new insights and thoughts for you?
 - What resonated (or not) with your experience and knowledge?
 - What challenged your assumptions?
 - What insights on the practical/theological aspects of the Palestinian and Israeli contexts did you discover in the text?
 - What insights might affect your future ministry within a global context?
 - What are the strengths or weaknesses of the text?

Be sure to include the word count for each assignment and email to the professor **no later than 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 30.**

Readings

1. Read Mitri Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian*, 1995.

2. Choose **ONE** of the following:

- a. Simon Sebag Montefiori, *Jerusalem, A Biography*. Required: "Part 9: Zionism."
- b. At least 100 pp. (any chapters you choose) of Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land* (2015).

B. Materials Related to the New Testament Piece

For each of the required reading assignments below prepare a paper of at least 300 words that addresses the following:

- a. Briefly state the chief aim of the book from the author's perspective.
- b. Then offer your responses using some of the following as prompts:
 - What were new insights and thoughts for you?
 - What resonated (or not) with your experience and knowledge?
 - What challenged your assumptions?
 - What insights on the practical/theological aspects of the Palestinian and Israeli contexts did you discover in the text?
 - What insights might affect your future ministry within a global context?
 - What are the strengths or weaknesses of the text?

Be sure to include the word count for each assignment and email to the professor **no later than 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 30.**

Readings

1. Read/skim at least pp. 7-102 of Bruce N. Fisk, *A Hitchhiker's Guide to Jesus: Reading the Gospels on the Ground* (2011). Maybe a little on the hokey side, but an imaginative way to convey information and get people thinking. Visually appealing for those who absorb information that way.

2 *Chosen: Reading the Bible Amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2015) by Walter Brueggemann. Quite concise and is written in an accessible style and made to be used in a church study group over a 4-week period. It complements the longer historical material you're reading but it does an excellent job of focusing on the biblical theology piece as it relates to the real, on the ground situation in Palestine and Israel. Useful glossary as well.

3. Mitri Raheb and Suzanne Watts Henderson, *The Cross in Contexts: Suffering and Redemption in Palestine*. Orbis, 2017.

- Friendly note, I recommend (but do not require), that you refer to the itinerary and make a list of Biblical passages that relate to the various sites we will visit. For example, your visit to Capernaum will be far richer if you recall what happened there. When we are at Magdala, you will want to recall all things Mary Magdalene. And so on. (Things also happened in the Old Testament, so don't forget that!). Remember, the concordance is your friend!! Some of the books on the recommended reading list help in this regard as well, as does Fisk.

Recommended Readings: See annotated list at end of syllabus. Let me highlight three here, though:

a. Rev. Danielle Shroyer, *Where Jesus Prayed: Illuminating the Lord's Prayer in the Holy Land* (2015). Rev. Shroyer is a Baptist minister and works and resides in Dallas. I know she'd be happy to sign your book ☺.

b. Rev. Adam Hamilton, *The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus* (2012). Written by a Methodist minister.

c. Rev. John L. Peterson. *A Walk in Jerusalem: Stations of the Cross* (1998). Written by an Episcopal priest.

"How The American Religious Right Is Making The Middle East Peace Process Impossible" <http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/11/10/3720765/religious-right-israeli-settlements/>. Those of you not familiar with dispensationalism most definitely need to read it ASAP, but everyone will benefit. Educational article.

IV. During the Immersion Trip

1. Daily journal.

Keep a journal of your immersion experiences that records reflections of your journey. Record insights from conversations with people, ideas stimulated by your senses (images, smells,

sounds, tastes), and other thoughts. What images of hope stayed in your mind each day? What were images of despair? What ideas and questions arose from dialogue with other members of the class? Interact with your one-page write up on course goals/questions that you prepared before the trip. Feel free to also write poetry, draw, and express yourself in ways that are true to how you process the world.

While points are not noted for each entry, I will assess your level of effort and engagement for this assignment in your final grade.

2. Class Participation.

Participate fully in the immersion experience. Your efforts to build wholesome community among members of the immersion group are an important part of the course.

Grading

Analyses of Pre-Immersion Required Readings: 60%

Course Goals, Journal, and Participation: 40%

RECOMMENDED READING/RESOURCES

I have read the following books and I recommend them. Here are some observations about each of them.

The first three below are in what I would call the “guide for pilgrims” genre.

1) Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's *The Holy Land*.

- Indispensable for pilgrims and useful primarily for planning and quick reference of pertinent passages.
- Read the description on Amazon.
- Here's a paragraph from the back cover that gives you an idea of the breadth of the book:

“With even-handed authority and reverence, this book describes a huge variety of sites, including Stone Age caves, the grandiose buildings of Herod the Great, Roman roads, Byzantine churches and synagogues, the hunting palaces of Muslim princes in the mosques they frequented, Crusader castles and chapels, and beautifully decorated Mamluk houses.”

Particular advantages:

- Written by a seasoned New Testament scholar (and Catholic priest) who is also an expert in the archaeology of the Land.
- Great maps and drawings of pertinent archaeological sites that really orient you quickly and help make sense of what you are seeing.
- Came out in 2008, but still quite up to date.
- Given the number of entries, each entry is necessarily somewhat brief. All of the most pertinent information is there, however.
- 551 pp. Kind of heavy to carry. Available as Kindle edition as well.

2) Webster T. Patterson, *Sacred Sites: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land*. 2004. 145 pp. Written by a Professor of Theology at Loyola. Worked on excavations. Led numerous trips to the Holy Land.

On the back cover of this book, Jerome Murphy O'Connor says the following: "Both accurate and up-to-date, this is less a guidebook than a warm invitation to enter into the spirit of the Holy Places in order to appreciate their unique contribution to understanding events in the life of Jesus. It should be in the hands of all thoughtful pilgrims." I agree with Murphy O'Connor's assessment. Chapter 1 is devoted to Galilee; chapter 2 is devoted to Jerusalem; chapter 3 treats Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Mount Tabor; chapter 4 treats the Greco-Roman world; chapter 5 treats the Jewish Christian church; appendix 1 list biblical sites and references; appendix 2 provides a chronology which includes one column for Events in Sacred History and another for World Events. I especially like that the biblical passages are written out in the book at the appropriate places. It's a nice little book; I enjoyed reading it and felt like I benefited from it. It was a very easy read all the way through. Whereas Murphy O'Connor's book is more of a reference work, this book is a "read from start to finish" book.

3) Lamontte M. Luker, *An Illustrated Guide to the Holy Land for Tour Groups, Students, and Pilgrims*. Abingdon, 2013. Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Adjunct Prof. of Old Testament at the Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies.

This book is a handy little pocket guide. It's 184 pages, includes many color pictures, and is very down-to-earth and practical. It even includes hours of operation for different sites and tells you which way to turn depending on where you're standing when you're at the site. He even tells you when to use the restroom! He does a good job of attending to archaeology, history, and the Bible. Each entry is fairly brief but includes the highlights. In some ways, it's like a miniature version of Jerome Murphy O'Connor's more extensive book. I plan to carry it with me and pull it out on site. Available on Kindle.

4) Eric Meyers and Mark A. Chancey, *Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, volume 3*. 2012. Yale University Press

For those of you who want to treat yourself to a deeper, more thorough read, you will want to read this book. Our very own New Testament professor Mark Chancey co-wrote the book with Eric Meyers, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Archaeology at Duke University (where Chancey earned his PhD). Myers has led the dig at Sepphoris for some time and Mark Chancey served on that team for number of years. The book is 363 pages long. It was so engrossing, I read the entire book within three days. Jürgen Zangenberg says this on the back cover: "Magnificent – a major achievement for academics and non—academics alike! Myers and Chancey unfold the entire material culture of ancient Palestine, the world of pagans, Jews, and early Christians. Lavishly illustrated and a pleasure to read, this book sets standards for years to come." Bart Ehrman says: "In this succinct but highly informative and authoritative account Myers and Chancey have produced an overview that is refreshing in its concern to integrate archaeological finds with historical narrative. Richly illustrated, *Alexander to Constantine* will be a vade mecum come for anyone interested in the material worlds of the Bible and the histories of Judaism and Christianity." I agree. If you really want to have a broader, understanding of the historical context of many of the sites we will see, this is the best book for it. Lots of the holy sites have signage claiming direct links to first-century Christianity, much of it completely implausible. Chancey's brief chapter on early Christianity in *Alexander to Constantine* addresses this. There are also chapters on Herodian building projects (Masada, CM), Qumran, etc. If you are only going to read one chapter, read that chapter by Chancey. Available on Kindle.

5) [Part of this book is required for the 2016 immersion students]. Bruce Fisk, *A Hitchhiker's Guide to Jesus: Reading the Gospels on the Ground*. Written by a New Testament scholar (who, incidentally, was in the same doctoral program with Chancey), this is one of the most unusual books I've read. It's written from the perspective of a somewhat fictional undergraduate who is trying to see how faith and scholarship mesh. To do so, he takes a trip to the Holy Land. Mark Allen Powell explains it well with his back-cover blurb: "A lively romp that combines travelogue with quest narrative... Along the way, we are introduced to the key issues that occupy modern scholars, and we discover why those issues would matter to people in the world today... This is definitely a creative way of granting students access to modern and postmodern fields of New Testament study." Fisk routinely leads groups of undergrads to the Holy Land, so he knows that angle. Gary Burge writes this: "Bruce Fisk has possibly written the most creative, fascinating, and informed book on the Gospels in a generation... 'Genius' could well describe many of the pages in the book. Fisk is a first-rate scholar as well as a brilliant communicator. Every New Testament teacher owes it to his or her students to consider this as a fresh new text on the Gospels." It's part guidebook, part New Testament textbook. I also appreciate the concern for the contemporary political situation. One thing among many that I really like about the book is the way Fisk actually includes important quotes from ancient scholars, modern scholars, etc. rather than expecting anyone to go actually look up quotes from Josephus in Jewish Antiquities. I believe that those of you ministering in a parish setting where you teach the Bible will find this a useful creative thought-provoking resource for your own teaching ministry.

6) Yossi Klein Halevi. *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation*. 2014. An excellent read written as a novel in some ways. By one of the Shalom Hartman Fellows.

Perkins Regulations Regarding Incompletes

The grade of Incomplete is granted only in rare cases when a student is prevented by extraordinary circumstances of illness or other severe hardship, from completing some major portion of the required course work before the deadline for submission of grades for the term. Requests for a grade of Incomplete must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs no later than [*insert date for submission of all written work from the academic calendar*]. For more information, see the Perkins *Catalog*, p. [36].

SMU Disability Accommodations

Southern Methodist University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Ms. Rebecca Martin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4563) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Then you should schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.

Minority Concerns and the Perkins Curriculum

In 1975 the Perkins Senate passed resolutions which bear on the relation of the Perkins curriculum to this school's common concern for the status of ethnic minority groups and of women both in education for ministry and in the ministry itself. The following statement summarizes these resolutions with respect to all courses except those in the area of Ministry.

1. Instructors and students alike are urged to use inclusive language, images and metaphors which will give full and positive value to both the past contributions and the future prospects of ethnic minorities and women in the church and in society at large.
2. Instructors and students alike are urged to give sensitive consideration to the role of images from a predominantly white and male culture in shaping both the language and concepts of Christian theology and the models and methods of Christian ministry that are widely current today.
3. Instructors are urged to make every effort to provide—in the syllabi, assignments and formats of their courses—opportunities (1) for women students and students from ethnic minority groups to pursue their study with special reference to their own status or tradition and (2) for all students to become acquainted with the special problems and conditions that affect women and ethnic minority groups in human society.

Tourists (by Yehuda Amichai)

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind the heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on the top of Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust over our tough girls
And hang up their underwear
To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower. I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!" I said to myself: "redemption will come only if their guide tells them, 'You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it, left down and a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family.'"

From Poems of Jerusalem by Yehuda Amichai. Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing, 1987.