

OT 410-2 History, Religion, and Culture in the Land of the Bible

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

J- Term 2014

Drs. Patricia Tull and Tyler Mayfield

Tyler Mayfield
tmayfield@lpts.edu
502-992-9375

Trisha Tull
ptull@lpts.edu
812-288-4668

Course Description

Through visits to archaeological sites, museums, and holy places in Israel and Palestine, and listening to a variety of people living in the land today, students will learn about the complex history of the region: the growth of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam side by side, and the impact of religious groups upon the culture. We will contemplate not only the past but the interreligious and intercultural situation today, the sources of conflict, and the strategies by which a wide variety of people seek to live day by day. Each student will read selections from a bibliography, participate in the fall seminar prior to the trip, and after returning home will write a reflective paper.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the complex history of the region: the growth of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam side by side, and the impact of religious groups upon the culture.
2. Develop a mental map of the times, places, and people that comprise much of the Holy Land, including the Galilee region, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.
3. Participate thoughtfully and compassionately in discussion of historical, faith, cultural, and political issues raised in our travels.

Required Readings

Please purchase the following books and read them BEFORE the trip.

- 1) March, Eugene. *God's Land on Loan* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).
- 2) Raheb, Mitri. *Bethlehem Besieged* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).
- 3) Wiesel, Elie. *Night*
- 4) Haas, Amira. *Reporting from Ramallah: An Israeli Journalist in an Occupied Land* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2003). Read at least one-fourth of this book.

In addition, please watch the following interviews, which will acquaint us with some of the people we will meet on our trip:

Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway

A video interview: <http://vimeo.com/13903732>. You may also want to read his article “[Islamophobia](#)”

Dr. Deborah Weissman

Interview: <http://www.veoh.com/watch/v17153349NZyXbaPG?h1=Inside+with+Deborah+Weissman>

You may also want to read “[Interview with Debbie Weissman,”](#) [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).

Hana Bendcowsky

Interview: <http://www.veoh.com/watch/v1660520957yMg9Zj?h1=Inside+with+Hana+Bendcowsky>

You may also be interested in her speech at Conference on Christians and Jews:

<http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2137/conference-on-christians-in-the-holy-land-more-speeches-from-the-first-day> (go down the page to find her)

Neve Shalom/Wahat as-Salaam

Interview with the late leader Abdessalam Najjar: <http://insidetheholyland.blogspot.com/2010/07/inside-with-mr-abdessalam-najjar.html>

You may also be interested in this interview with former director of Tantur Fr. Michael McGarry:

<http://insidetheholyland.blogspot.com/2010/06/father-michael-mcgarry-directed-tantur.html>

Assignments & Evaluation

1) Active, constructive participation in travel seminar events and reflection meetings while in Israel and Palestine (50% of final grade).

Active, constructive participation involves going with an open mind and heart—open to others in the group and their reflections and needs, and open to those we meet on the journey, even when we find ourselves differing with them in opinion or sensibility. We will learn through a discipline of reflection, not reaction; of dialogue, not passivity or monologue; and of thoughtful respect.

In addition, the many in the group who have traveled to the region before should think carefully about how, when, and why you wish to share prior trip experiences with others in the group, and refrain from spoiling others' days with constant reminders of what you did or saw before. This is a new day, new experience, and new community of fellow travelers.

2A) 2-page Response Paper/Book Review. (25% of final grade) Due Feb 10.

Students will write a 2-page paper in response to March's book and in light of the travel seminar. Students will comment on the most helpful section/topic within the book and a section/topic/theme that could be expanded/changed/reworked.

OR

2B) 2-page Paper on Pilgrimage. Due Feb 10.

Students will write a brief paper on the theme of pilgrimage. It should integrate your observations of pilgrims and your own experience of pilgrimage with some critical reading about the subject (we can help you with bibliography if desired).

3) "Presentation" to Louisville Seminary Community. (25% of final grade)

To fulfill seminary requirements for Luce Foundation Travel Fellowships (\$1,000), students must share their travel experience with the larger seminary community. This sharing will take one of three specific forms:

3a) Chapel Service Worship Design, Chapel service will be Thursday, April 3.

3b) Lunchtime Presentation to Seminary Community, Date TBD, probably Feb.

3c) Mosaic Magazine Essay and/or Interview

Students will choose one of these options and work with others to complete the project.