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Imagining the Holy Land June, 2023

Course Description

Americans have long been aware of the combustible politics of the Middle East. They contribute to the political instability by providing resources—including weaponry—to participants while attempting at the very highest levels to resolve some of the hostilities. Aside from the price of petroleum, however, they have been largely insulated from the conflicts' impact.

All this changed on September 11, 2001. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, resulting in the loss of nearly 3,000 American lives, drew the United States directly into the turmoil. While most Americans have now taken positions on U.S. involvement in the Middle East, however, few have had the opportunity to consider the discourses that have supported the region's violent history. Few have addressed the significance of (for instance) President George W. Bush referring to the U.S. military effort of 2001 as a "crusade" or of Osama bin Laden's insistence on addressing his antagonists as "Jews and Crusaders."

This course will take a close look at texts supporting various claims to "the Holy Land," particularly the city of Jerusalem. It will ask you to consider why the three "peoples of the book" (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) have engaged in centuries of hostilities. You will think about how religious, racial, and political identities are fashioned, how these identities are represented, and how these identities become, often enough, inextricably associated with territory.

All these issues stir debate. Virtually all of them are the subject of intense discussion and often angry controversy among the scholars who have studied them. This course will be no exception. You will undoubtedly hear points of view that will disturb you or conflict with your own. We encourage you, first of all, to consider the material being presented, and second, to formulate your own response to it. We hope this course will be a forum for a great deal of discussion, and we hope that each of you will contribute to a frank, open atmosphere.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- 1) describe the importance of Israel's geography to its historical, geopolitical, and religious significance;
- 2) explain how the Crusades still impact our thinking about Israel and the Middle East;
- 3) discuss various religious claims to the Holy Land by Jews, Christians, and Muslims;
- 4) analyze the complexities of those claims.

Requirements

Here's how you will achieve the learning objectives:

- 1) *Class Preparation, Attendance, and Participation*

“Imagining the Holy Land” is a lecture/discussion class. You must read the assigned texts, see the assigned films, attend class sessions, travel on all excursions, and participate in conversations. All assigned texts can be found online.

- 2) *Photo Journal.*

We will be in Israel for four weeks during which you will be taking two classes, reading important literature, visiting amazing places, and meeting exciting people. We would like for you to keep a journal in which you will comment on your experiences in and with “the Holy Land.” We expect you to include two entries for each week you are in Israel—eight entries in all. For each of these entries, use at least 250 words to comment on your Israel experience in class (coursework and excursions) and, if you wish, beyond the classroom. You could, for instance, offer up a meditation on getting coffee at a Haifa coffee shop, watching people order and talk among themselves, etc. Illustrate each entry with 2-4 photographs. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to reflect on your journey, intellectually and perhaps even emotionally. It should also provide you with insights for the final paper.

Although this is a “journal” we expect it to be written in clear, complete sentences with ideas worked out before committed to paper. Check your spelling and use appropriate grammar. Journal entries are due to us, typed and electronically submitted, the day after we return to the US.

- 4) *Final Paper.* In about 1,500 words, make a cogent argument about how Israel exists as a home to the three “Peoples of the Book.” Address how Israel seems to function simultaneously as a culturally and religiously nonsectarian space as well as a nation in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims are continuously in conflict with one another. In addition to writing words, illustrate your argument using at least 10 photographs from your time in Israel. Your photos should visually illuminate the themes of your essay. We

do not want you to include 10 pictures and describe them one-by-one. Instead, we expect you to start with an essay, make compelling arguments, and illustrate these arguments with photos that make the essay more interesting. You are welcome to add your own photos as well as photos your classmates or professors took and shared with the group.

As we anticipate how the class will go, we believe that the material you will read, the movies you will watch, the sites that you will see, the people we will meet, and the discussions we will hold are going to contribute to framing a meta-narrative about the modern Israeli state and the processes by which it has arrived at its current condition. Good essays will draw from a range of source material including at least three of the course readings as well as many of the sites we see and people we meet along with a variety of photographs. We also expect that you will consult other sources to help solidify the arguments you are making. Be sure to document each source. And don't just offer us a set of observations. Make an argument and defend it with reference to appropriate texts, films, sites, and conversations.

Use clear, complete sentences with ideas worked out before committed to writing. Check your spelling and use appropriate grammar. Final papers are due to us, typed and electronically submitted, on July 31, 2023.

Evaluation

Your final grade will reflect the extent to which you have demonstrated achievement of the learning objectives. Your opportunities for demonstrating that achievement will be weighted as follows:

- 1) *Class Attendance and Participation*: 40%
- 2) *Photo Journal*: 30%
- 3) *Final Paper*: 30%

Course Calendar

Before Travelling to Israel

Watch: *Kingdom of Heaven*, Directed by Ridley Scott, Produced by Twentieth Century Fox, 2005; and *Exodus*, Produced and Directed by Otto Preminger, 1960.

Week 1: The Bible and the Holy Land

6/5 The Hebrew Bible

Andrew Tobolowsky, [“Introducing the Hebrew Bible and the History of Ancient Israel”](#); Amy-Jill Levine, [“What Is the Difference between the Old Testament, the Tanakh, and the Hebrew Bible?”](#); [Genesis 12:1–8, 37 and 39–45](#); [Exodus 3, 14 and 19–20](#); [2 Samuel 7:1–17](#); [1 Kings 8:1–30](#); [Psalms 84, 100 and 122](#); [2 Kings 25](#); [Psalms 74 and 89](#); Leonard Greenspoon, [“Jerusalem”](#); [Isaiah 2:1–4](#); [Zechariah 14](#)

6/7 The New Testament

Dietmar Neufeld, [“In What Ways Is the New Testament a Religious Text”](#); C. Clifton Black, [“The ‘Good News’ of the New Testament”](#)
Old Testament prophecies said in the New Testament to have been fulfilled: [Isaiah 52:13–53:12](#) in [1 Corinthians 15:3–5](#); [Isaiah 7:1–2, 10–17](#) in [Matthew 1:18–25](#); [Numbers 24:17, Micah 5:2](#) in [Matthew 2:1–12](#); [Genesis 15:1–6](#) in [Romans 4:1–12](#); [Psalm 118](#) in [Mark 11:1–11, 12:1–12](#); [Leviticus 4:1–31, Psalm 40](#) and [Hebrews 10:1–18](#); [Isaiah 54:11–12, Ezekiel 42:15–20](#) and [Revelation 21:1–22:7](#)

Week 2: Faith, Politics, and the Holy Land

6/12 The Holy Land in the Jewish Imagination

Jodi Magness, [“Dead Sea – Qumran”](#); Jonathan Stökl, [“Priests and Levites in the 1st Century BCE”](#); Michael L. Satlow, [“Who Were the Sadducees?”](#); Joshua Garroway, [“Pharisees”](#); Alex P. Jassen, [“Dead Sea Scrolls Community”](#); Joshua Ezra Burns, [“Pharisees and Rabbinic Judaism”](#); Qumran, *Manual of Discipline*, “Of the Commitment” and “Of Social Relations”; [The Eighteen Benedictions](#)

6/14 The Holy Land in the Christian and Islamic Imaginations

Thomas Aquinas, [“Whether Christ Suffered in a Suitable Place?”](#);
Geris Khoury, [“The Significance of Jerusalem: A Christian Perspective”](#);
PBS, [Sacred Journeys: Jerusalem](#);
PBS, [“Muhammad and the Legacy of a Prophet”](#); [Qur’an 17:1–12](#);
YouTube, [“The history of Al-Aqsa Mosque”](#); [Qur’an 6:74–79](#); [Genesis 16, 21:1–21](#); IslamReligion.com, [“The Story of Abraham”](#); YouTube, [“The Cave of the Patriarchs”](#)

Week 3: Crusades and Zionist Identity

6/19 The Crusades and Zionist Identity

Kingdom of Heaven, Directed by Ridley Scott, Produced by Twentieth Century Fox, 2005

history.com, "[Israel](#)"; Theodor Herzl, "[The Jewish Question](#)," 1896;

Ahad Ha'am, "[The Wrong Way](#)," 1889;

Exodus, Produced and Directed by Otto Preminger, 1960

6/21 Zionist Identity

A.B. Yeoshua, "[Facing the Forests](#)"; Yehuda Amichai. [Selected Poems](#);

Amos Oz, "[All Rivers](#)"

Week 4: Imagining Israel/Imagining Palestine/Imagining Peace

6/26 Palestinian Resistance

The Knesset, "[Declaration of Independence](#)," 1948;

[UN Security Council Resolution 242, 1967](#);

history.com, "[Palestine](#)"; [Palestinian National Charter](#), 1968;

[The Hamas Charter](#), 1988;

Ziad Abu Amr, "[The Significance of Jerusalem: A Muslim Perspective](#)," 1994;

Osama bin Laden, "[Jihad against Jews and Crusaders](#)," 2001;

[President Bush Addresses Members of the Knesset](#), 2008;

Mahmoud Darwish, [Selected poems](#)

6/28 Opportunities for Peace/Collaboration/Compromise

David Broza, "[Yihye Tov](#)" (Things Will Be Better)

Mira Awad, "[Think of Others](#)"

Abdul Hadi Palazzi, [A Muslim Scholar Speaks on Islam and Jerusalem](#)