

How does RS 155 “The Historical & Geographical Settings of the Bible” taught in Israel and Palestine fulfill the GE Common Inquires “Thinking Globally” and “Thinking Historically”?

“The Historical & Geographical Settings of the Bible” is a critical addition to the RS curriculum as it is the only RS course we teach in Israel that addresses the geo-historical context from which the biblical narrative emerges.

This course brings students into direct contact with the particularities of Israel and Judea’s place and time via the topography and hydrology of the Southern Levant as well as the artifacts, architecture, art and epigraphic remains of the peoples of the Bible from the Middle Bronze through the Roman Periods. Students will engage with the formation and transformation of the cultures of this region via the synthesized lens of anthropology, ecology, geology, hydrology, literature, and their own lived experience. They will “think historically” about the real people who populate their Bibles, why their civilizations unfolded as they did, and the impact those people have had on our current world.

This course will engage the culture and lifeways of past people groups and the many current ethnic and religious identities to be found in Israel and Jordan as well. In addition to academic engagement, students will be given many opportunities to engage religious and social leaders from the land of the Bible in a global context.

It may be helpful for the committee to know that this particular course has been taught throughout the CCCU for many years (45+!) and has a long-lived reputation for being a “game changer” for students. This course carries “historical” and “global” tags at Gordon College and the “historical perspective” tag at Wheaton College.

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 cultural and historical context of the Old & New Testaments (participation in on-site discussions, exams, and impression reports).
3. Demonstrate competence in the geological, geographical, and hydrological context of the Old & New Testaments (participation in 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 (participation in 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 (participation in 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.