

# Course Prospectus

## For THL 467 Historical Geography of the Bible Lands

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### Overview

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With its focus on *'the Land'*, the Bible is a profoundly geographic text. In spite of this, the geographic dimension of the Bible is often misunderstood, overlooked or assumed. Knowledge of the geography of the lands of the Bible can provide a much fuller understanding the Bible through establishing the context of biblical events and key factors explaining the course of biblical and, indeed, much of world history. *'The Land'* promised to Abraham and his descendants, located on a bridge between the two centers of ancient civilization, has played a pivotal position in the unfolding of the history of what is now known as the Middle East. The names and descriptions given to the natural and man-made features of the lands of the Bible have profoundly affected our civilization, ranging from place names, often reproduced on distant landscapes, to ways we map the world. Its situation on a transition zone between four climatic types, bisected north to south by the Levant (or Dead Sea) Rift System with its complex geology, has made this small area one of the more physically and biologically diverse and agriculturally challenging regions in the world.

#### COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION FOR THIS COURSE

This course deals with the historical geography of the Bible Lands as represented in ancient texts (the Bible as well as Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Canaanite sources). Emphasis is on the interrelationship of history and geography during the Bronze and Iron Ages, including settlement, economic, military, and communication factors in ancient Israel. Upon completion a student should be able to correlate relevant archaeological, historical and biblical material with important sites, roads, and features.

#### PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES

None.

#### COURSE CREDIT

Three (3) semester hours.

### Instructional objectives

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On successful completion of this course, a student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how the physical, social and economic geographical framework and contexts have influenced historical biblical events in the eastern Mediterranean region and the flow of biblical history, generally.
2. Demonstrate an ability to identify and name on maps the location of the major physical and cultural features of the biblical land of Israel, i.e., boundaries of types of political/administrative or natural regions or subdivisions; physical features of mountains, valleys and plains, rivers/wadis, lakes, forests

and wetlands; as well as land and sea trade routes, agricultural areas, fortifications, cities and settlements.

3. Demonstrate an ability to visualize the geographical environments that affected the writers of the Bible and are used in their imagery, by identifying on maps as well as recognizing photographs of where major Biblical events took place.

4. Be introduced to the use of literary, scientific and cartographic resources, tools and procedures in the study of the historical geography of the Bible lands.

5. Develop an increased understanding of the Bible through a better grasp of the geographical factors in biblical episodes.

6. Provide the basis for a better understanding of current events in the Middle East and for future travel to the region.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities have a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Students having a disability requiring an accommodation should inform the instructor through the "Contact Instructor" link on the course home page.

## **Technology access**

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This course requires web access and the student has to have an established e-mail account. The Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary to view documents that are PDF files. One can download the reader free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

## **Course evaluation**

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Student input is welcome for improving this course. Making suggestions by e-mail is helpful. Our goal in this course is to facilitate the successful achievement of all instructional objectives by all students. At the end of the course students have the opportunity of assessing the course. We want to make e-learning courses as effective as we can. We may also ask some other questions concerning a student's experience in distance learning to help us improve our program. We appreciate students letting us know how we can improve our products and services for them and other distance learners.

## **Textbooks**

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The textbooks for this course are as follows:

Beitzel, B.J. *New Moody Atlas of the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Publishers. 2009.

Lancaster, S.P. and J.M. Monson. *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible*. Rockford, Illinois: Biblical Backgrounds. 2008.

Lancaster, S.P. and J.M. Monson. *Geobasics Study Guide: Introductory Map Studies in the Geography of the Land of the Bible*. Rockford, Illinois: Biblical Backgrounds. 2009 & Geobasics Mini-Marking Guide. 2009. Free downloadable PDF file.

Also recommended - Cleave, R.L.W. *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas*. Vols. I, II & CD-Rom. Nicosia: Rohr Productions, 1999.

Students may order this book through the University Bookstore.

The books used or referred to in this course are commercial publications. They represent the views and ideas of their authors, editors, and publishers. Living University does not endorse these texts nor vouch for their accuracy. We simply employ them in helping you master the content of the course.

## Icebreaker assignment

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To begin this course, students must complete an icebreaker assignment to introduce themselves to their classmates through the posting of a short autobiography on the course Forum. The icebreaker assignment is due by the eighth day of the semester. Students post their biographies as a reply to the "Bios" topic on the course forum. A student can earn 25 bonus points in this course by doing so "on time." As there are people from all over the world enrolled in this course each autobiography will help all know, understand and appreciate each other. Students are to read and comment on each other's bios throughout the first week of class.

## Course requirements and grades

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### DUE DATES AND EXTENSIONS

Students must complete the course by the last official day of instruction as set forth in the academic calendar.

### READING AND WRITING EXERCISES

Refer to "Course Calendar" section for basic assignment due dates. Specific assignments and due dates are set forth in each published lesson.

### FILING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

For instructions in how to post assignments, visit the Frequently Asked Questions pages through the link on the course homepage. The preferable way to post assignment is by attachment so that their format will not be corrupted.

### STUDY TIPS

Distance learning emphasizes self-motivation. The instructor functions as a facilitator with the student as the driving force in mastering course content. Students are encouraged not to put off completing their readings and assignments.

## Grading

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A course grade will be determined based on the number of points a student has earned over the semester as follows:

Research Paper (248 points)

Writing / Mapping Assignments (six, each worth 42 points, for a total of 252 points)

Quizzes (four, each worth 75 points, for a total of 300 points)

Exams (a midterm and a final exam, each worth 100 points, for a total of 200 points)

TOTAL 1000 points

Posting the autobiography on time can earn a student 25 bonus points. These points could make the difference between an A or a B, or passing or not passing.

Grades are in the traditional American style of an A, B, C, D, or F. In distance learning, we believe that the measure of mastery of course subject matter is completion of 80% of the objectives for a course. That means that we want students to earn at least 600 points in this course. If they do not do so then they have not achieved the level of the mastery we would like them to have.

We want this course to be competency-based and so it is possible for the entire class to receive an A or a B. There is no artificial curving of scores in the assignment of grades (if you do not know what that means, do not worry about it). Mastery of the material is what one's goal should be.

Grades, assigned by points, are as follows:

A 900-1000 points

B 800-899 points

C 700-799 points

D 600-699 points

F Below 600 points

## Academic irregularity

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Students have the responsibility for conducting themselves in such a manner as to avoid any suspicion that they are improperly giving or receiving aid on any assignment or examination. An academic irregularity not only includes cheating but also includes plagiarism (taking another's ideas and/or words and presenting them as if they were the writer's own) and the submitting of the same paper in separate courses without prior consent from the faculty members concerned.

In cases of suspected academic irregularity, faculty members may refuse to grade such papers, completely or in part, or examinations, and to record each of them as a failure.

If an academic irregularity is sufficiently serious, the University may take one or more of, but not limited to, the following actions:

1. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F;
2. Place the student on academic probation; and/or
3. Dismiss the student from the University.

## Course calendar (Only textbook assignments are indicated below. Other readings are found in the lessons.)

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### Lesson 1 Introduction: The Role, Methods & Focus of Historical Geography in Biblical Studies

#### Reading Assignments

#### Topic 1- Definitions, Sources & Approach

Beitzel x-xii; 14-17; 18-32; 98-105; Cleave II, 4-9; Geobasics 1

#### Topic 2- Biblical Land of Promise

**Writing/Map Assignment 1 due**  
**Quiz 1**

### Lesson 2 The Physical Geography of Bible Lands I: Geology & Regions

#### Reading Assignments

#### Topic 1- Geologic Structure, Processes, History & Minerals

Beitzel 56-58; 32-56; Cleave II, 12-236 (regional maps & satellite photos); Geobasics 2-25, Geobasics Mini-guide

#### Topic 2- Regions, Landforms, Relief & Soils

**Writing/Map Assignment 2 due**

**Quiz 2 due**

**Lesson 3 The Physical Geography of Bible Lands II: Weather & Water**

Reading Assignments

**Topic 1- Weather & Climate**

Beitzel 64-66;58-64;  
Cleave II, maps &  
photos

**Topic 2- Hydrology & Water Balance**

**Topic 3- Climate Change & Past Climate Scenarios**

**Writing/Map Assignment 3 due**

**Quiz 3**

**Lesson 4 The Physical Geography of Bible Lands III: Biogeography**

Reading Assignments

**Topic 1- Vegetation & Phyto-geography**

Beitzel 66-67; Cleave II,  
maps & photos

**Topic 2- Fauna & Wildlife Re-introductions**

**Topic 3- Biblical Botany & Ecological Restoration**

**Writing/Map Assignment 4 due**

**Exam 1**

**Lesson 5 The Human Geography of Bible Lands I: Place Names & Rural Land Use**

Reading Assignments

**Topic 1-Toponymy**

Beitzel 72-76; 106-142;  
Cleave II, maps &  
photos

**Topic 2- Rural Land Use, Settlement & Tenure**

**Topic 3- Water Technology**

**Topic 4- Agricultural Technology**

**Writing/Map Assignment 5 due**

**Quiz 4**

**Lesson 6 The Human Geography of Bible Lands II: Economic Geography**

Reading Assignments

**Topic 1- Roads, Trade & Transport; Strategic Factors**

Beitzel 76-86;40;145-  
206; 220-231. Cleave II,  
maps & photos,

**Topic 2- Urban, Administrative & Defense Structure**

**Topic 3- Economic Development, Mining & Manufacturing**

Geobasics Mini-guide.

**Writing/Map Assignment 6 due**

**Lesson 7 The Human Geography of Bible Lands III: Brief Survey of Developments from Divided Kingdoms to Present**

Reading Assignments

**Topic 1- Alexander to Hasmonean State**

Beitzel 207-219; 232-276.

**Topic 2- Roman-Byzantine**

**Topic 3- Moslems-Crusaders-Mamelukes-Turks**

**Topic 4- Napoleon- British Mandate-State of Israel**

**Research Paper due**

**Exam 2**