

FALL 2009

COURSES OFFERED by PROFESSOR HAGITH SIVAN

HISTORY 660: JERUSALEM

First, in spite of the elevated course number, this course welcomes students at all levels who are interested in the history of Jerusalem. There are no prior requirements other than an interest in the subject and willingness to commit to a course that strongly emphasizes students' own initiatives and participation.

Beginning with pre-biblical times we will explore that history of the city through primary texts (such as the Bible itself), and modern reconstructions based primarily on archaeological excavations.

Methodologically, the course calls for interactivity between students and the city. You will be asked at the beginning to 'adopt' a Jerusalemite and a visitor in a specific year and you will have to take your 'guest' on a tour of the city in that year, explaining the city's layout, its monuments, and its history prior to the year you selected. For example, you may adopt King Solomon and invite your newest wife, the Egyptian princess, to a tour of your capital. You will also select your guest from among the students since this guest is expected to compare what he/she sees in Jerusalem to what they have at home. Another example: you could be one of the defenders of the city during the Roman siege of 66-70 CE, and take another defender for a tour of the ramparts and fortifications in, say, 68 CE. Your 'guest' could be a Galilean who will comment on the ability of these defenses to withstand the might of the Roman army. Here the main primary source is the fascinating account of Josephus Flavius.

You will also be asked to adopt an archaeological site in the city, and to invite your peers to view the site, to review site identification and its contents. In this case you will be the archaeologist in charge taking your guest through a time machine. There have been numerous dig in the past and the activity continues with full steam in the present.

IN ALL SUCH CASES YOU ARE WELCOME TO USE YOUR CREATIVITY AND TO CREATE A VIDEO OF YOUR TOUR.

We will be often working in small discussion groups whose task will be to ask a leading question of an ancient author. For example: Based on the biblical account of the conquest of the city by David—what do you think could be a leading question? (hint: why Jerusalem?). Your group will then respond to the question from a variety of viewpoints, strategically, economically, historically, etc (not neglecting to provide relevant bibliographical items for the class). These questions will be posted online, on our Blackboard site, so that all members of the class can review and critique the group's responses ahead of class discussion.

HISTORY 401: ROMANS AND BARBARIANS

In this course we review the primary evidence for the barbarian groups that entered/invaded/were invited into Roman territory. We will read the ancient description of the Huns, how the Romans interpreted the presence of barbarian invaders on their soil, and we will ask questions such as why and how did the Roman government allow barbarians to create their own kingdoms in the middle of Roman provinces?

In this course you will have an opportunity to “adopt” a Roman and a barbarian. As a barbarian, you will explore life on the move, reconstruct what you and your fellow nomads felt about the Romans, share your past and your expectations, and maybe even your food. As a Roman, living in one of the provinces that the barbarians invaded and later settled in, you will give us a tour of your hometown, share with us your feelings as you were allocated a barbarian “guest” to host in your home, and as you watched the government authorizing the settlement of the invaders next door to you. You will also have an opportunity to “adopt” a governmental agent, either a counseling member at the imperial court, or an administrator in one of the provinces who had to execute the government's decisions regarding the barbarians. You can also recreate a decisive battle, such as that between the Huns and the Roman “army” in Gaul (ancient France), or between the Goths and the Roman army in Thrace (modern Greece).

Although there are no prior requirements, it is useful to have some background in Roman military history and in the history of Late Antiquity.

HISTORY 107

This is a general introduction to the incredibly rich and complex world of the Ancient Near East (including modern Iraq and Iran), as well as to Greece and Rome. In this course you will have an opportunity to develop your critical skills through becoming a film interpreter, as you comment on an existing History or Discovery channel. You will soon realize that commercial videos are primarily, well, commercial. You will also have an opportunity to “adopt” a person of the Ancient Near East, a Greek and a Roman. As such, you will take us on a tour of your hometown in a specific period of time, while moving forward through a time machine, also introduce us to what we know of your home today, through archaeological excavations.

Note that this course is a vital introduction to the most exciting course that I will offer in Spring 2010—History 503, the Ancient Near East, which is fully online, with your professor in the heart of the Middle East (=Ancient Near East), taking you into the mysteries of archaeological digs as never before seen, interviewing local experts, and giving YOU the opportunity to explore the same sites and to ask your own questions regarding them.