

**Conflict and Change (C&C)**  
 Spring 2019, Amman, Jordan  
 4 credits

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Office Hours & Class times: Flexible. I am normally working in the office – located in the Magnuson apartment on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor – on Monday and Thursday afternoons. You are welcome to “drop in,” or to ask for an appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**—this course deals with the roughly century-old conflict between the Zionist national movement (the State of Israel) and the Arab and Palestinian peoples of Palestine and the Middle East region. In addition to readings that cover various aspects of the conflict — political, economic, cultural, and religious — every effort is made to present the conflict in an unbiased manner by using both Jewish/Israeli and Palestinian sources and speakers (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) to voice their opinions. The course also relies on site visits and other experiential components that take students beyond the conventional classroom learning experience. With our new MESP setting in Jordan, the plan is to do reading and coursework, including key documentary films, on site in Amman, and to travel (political situation permitting) for about 10 days to Israel/Palestine, where we will have homestays with both Palestinian and Jewish Israeli families, hear a number of local speakers from different perspectives, and visit a number of cities and sites related to the conflict. MESP is non-partisan and the course seeks to foster empathy in students for the national aspirations of both the Jewish and Palestinian peoples.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES — GENERAL & SPECIFIC**

*a. General Objectives*— *This course is particularly designed to establish an introductory foundation* — a beginning, meant to underscore the need for further study. Both lecture-based and experiential, this course is designed to introduce students to the issues, details, and complexities of one of the most intractable conflicts of contemporary international politics. Readings, lectures, speakers, and site visits (see below) comprise the material meant to achieve this overall objective.

From the perspective of intercultural development, this course will provide students with numerous opportunities to practice and develop intercultural skills, such as attending to judgment, suspending judgment, ‘shifting perspectives’ (to see the world from the perspective of different others), practicing empathy, etc. In regard to Christ-centered learning, students will be challenged to ask, “What is God’s perspective on and what is God’s heart for” the people, events, circumstances, history, etc., of this conflict?” and “How would Jesus have us live as his followers, in relation to the people and the conflict?” (including, for example, what it means to love our neighbor, with reference to all parties to the conflict, what it means to be peacemakers, and what it means to practice the “embrace” which Volf discusses in *Exclusion and Embrace*). There are no simple answers to these questions, but we will be asking them throughout the course.

*b. Specific Objectives* — Ideally, by the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Empathetically articulate the *basic narratives* of the conflict from the perspective of various parties. While students need not be neutral, they should at least be able to appreciate the rationale behind various Israeli and Palestinian narratives.
2. Understand how religion (including religious interpretations of sacred texts – the Old Testament, New Testament and Qur’an) impacts the perspectives on the conflict of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Within this, we desire students to understand the Palestinian *Christian* experience and perspective on the conflict, including how they read the Bible and do theology related to the various issues (the land, prophecy, etc.).
3. Understand both the key historical developments and the key issues of the conflict.
4. Reflect *humility* in the face of the complexity of human conflicts like this one. Students should think, argue, and write with a humble recognition that many people of the highest intellectual and spiritual caliber have failed to understand, reconcile, or resolve the issues surrounding this conflict in a manner acceptable to all.
5. *Dine with the 'opposition'*. Because the conflict has religious and political dimensions potentially divisive not only for the participants but for students as well, students are encouraged to note the reality of disagreement, difference, and division of opinion as an opportunity for mutual respect, spiritual humility, and interaction that serves a common learning experience.
6. Be able to appreciate and articulate arguments for a “one-state” and “two-state” solution, and for maintaining the status quo.
7. Understand various Biblical perspectives on the conflict, and begin to articulate a personal, Biblical, Christ-centered perspective and approach.

**APPROACH**

I think you will find the Conflict & Change unit (i.e., the Arab-Israeli and specifically the Palestinian-Israeli conflict) challenging. We have a tendency to embrace one party or another, to take someone’s “side” (though it might not be a “side” but a “section”), to try to figure out who (and what) is “right” and who (and what) is “wrong,” etc. I would

challenge you to strive to go beyond this. Jimmy Carter, who has extensive and deep experience in this conflict, points out that if you take sides you cannot function effectively as a peacemaker; but that everyone here wants you to take their side, which creates tension for us.

We will start the course in Jordan, with lectures by Dr. Levi Sabine, who has lived for years in the Middle East and who regularly teaches on the conflict both in the University in Jordan and in Canada, to both secular and Christian students. We will also watch a number of documentaries, which will help you become more familiar with the dates and the issues, as well as various perspectives on the conflict. After a couple of intensive weeks of class on the conflict, we plan to travel to Israel-Palestine, where we will do homestays with both Palestinian and Jewish Israeli families, visit various sites and cities, and hear an amazing array of speakers, to gain further insight into the many perspectives on and the great complexity of this conflict.

Let me suggest some things to think about, as you read, hear lectures, watch documentaries, and meet people and visit sites during our travel to Israel-Palestine:

- Try to understand the positions and perspectives, the hopes and dreams, and trauma and sufferings, of both Israelis and Palestinians. While students are encouraged to sharpen one another with honest, frank exchanges of opinion, *MESP is officially non-partisan and does not favor either side in the conflict*. If you arrive pro-Palestinian and do not develop greater empathy (from when they first arrived) for the situation faced by Israelis, then the course has failed. Conversely, if you arrive pro-Israel, and do not develop greater empathy (from when they first arrived) for the situation faced by the Palestinians, then the course has failed.
- Please take all the readings and all the speakers seriously. Carefully consider their views. Respect them as human beings created by God in His image and loved by Him. Do not dehumanize or demonize anyone in this conflict, no matter how much you might disagree with them, how much you might dislike their point of view or actions, etc.
- Try to identify different perspectives. How many are there (e.g., Jordanian, Palestinian Jordanian, Palestinian Christian, Palestinian Muslim – but are there variations within those communities? – and various Jewish perspectives)? What are they? How do they differ? Etc.
- Try hard to understand and even empathize with, different perspectives. Try to see how each group (or person) sees the world, how things “make sense” to them. Can you see how you might agree with them, if you were in their place?
- Think about the conflict, and the various perspectives (and accompanying actions, goals, etc.) from an international law angle and from a human rights angle.
- Think about the conflict, the various parties, the various perspectives, etc., from “God’s perspective” – in fact, think about, where do we look for “God’s perspective”? Can we even attempt to identify it? How do we keep from simply “deifying” our perspective, reading it into the Bible and calling it “God’s”? What do we do if Christians have different idea about “God’s perspective”? And what do you think is the “heart of God” toward any and all people who are part of the conflict?
- In line with that, think about different ways of approaching a “Biblical perspective” on the conflict. E.g., how do you see the conflict if you look at it from the perspective of “end times” prophecies? What if you consider the conflict from the perspective of Old Testament teachings about righteous, justice, treatment of “the alien in your midst,” etc.? What if you look at it from the perspective of the life and teachings and example of Jesus?
- Over time, through all of this, try to sort out what you think (and how you approaching thinking) about the conflict. I.e., what is your developing view? What do you believe is true or right (or, is this what you are looking for? What are you looking for, in thinking about the conflict)?
- And through all of this, what do you believe, personally, for yourself, is the call of God / of Jesus, in relation to the conflict? Do you believe you are called to be a “peacemaker”? What might that mean, look like?

## COURSE READINGS AND RESOURCES

i. ***Blood Brothers (Elias Chacour)***: (Read before arrival.) Father Chacour's story will give you a personal account of one Palestinian / Arab Israeli, whose family lost their land and home in the events of 1948. It describes his journey to the priesthood, and some of his experiences along the way. Father Chacour is a good example of someone who is Christ-centered in how he relates to the whole Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

ii. ***The Modern Middle East: a History (Gelvin)***: The advantage of this text is that it fits the data of the Middle East into broader patterns and themes that explain the region as a whole and not as separate accounts of each country. *The key to grasping this text is to note how the main theme of the chapter is discussed as a regional pattern* (defensive development,

modernization, institutionalization of the military, etc.). Students should come away with an increased explanatory power and understanding of the Middle East.

Gelvin describes the modern relationship between the Middle East and the West as an encounter between unequals, one characterized by the political control and economic penetration of western powers, factors that highly influenced the character of the modern Middle East. As you read, pay attention to these consequences, in terms of patterns and influences. According to Gelvin, what lasting patterns of thinking and behavior emerged from this uneven encounter that shaped the modern Middle East?

iii. ***Exclusion and Embrace (Miroslav Volf)***: The sections of Volf that you are reading (Introduction, Chs 1-3, and pp. 207-15, 220-225, 243-273) are particularly relevant to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Consider how his ideas apply to / help us understand the conflict, the dynamic between Palestinians and Israelis. Does he offer any hope? What, how? What are the implications for you, as you follow Jesus and relate to the conflict?

iv. ***Reader***: You will be reading several articles relevant to this course. In addition, the Reader includes some articles that serve as further resource material.

v. (Recommended, not required) For Christian, Biblical reflections on the conflict, I highly recommend *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* by Gary Burge (of Wheaton College in IL), and *Whose Promised Land?* by Colin Chapman. Burge and Chapman both raise Biblical questions about the conflict, with specific reference to the question of who the land belongs to (along with other theological / biblical questions). Consider, as you read, what Biblical/theological assumptions, preconceptions and perspectives you bring to understanding of the conflict; how Burge/Chapman challenge any of these; and what if anything he causes you to rethink.

vi. ***News sites & electronic media*** — These are important resources for keeping up on contemporary issues and events relevant to the course objectives and subject matter (among many others). Given the fact that there is no “objective” / “unbiased” news, it is important to check the news from different sites offering different perspectives; and students are particularly encouraged to check news sites that they do not normally receive their news from.

The Jordan Times <http://jordantimes.com/>

Al Monitor <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/home.html>

BBC News Middle East [http://www.bbc.com/news/world/middle\\_east/](http://www.bbc.com/news/world/middle_east/)

Al Jazeera <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/>

The Times of Israel <http://www.timesofisrael.com/>

Haaretz <http://www.haaretz.com/>

Jerusalem Post <http://www.jpost.com/>

Palestinian Information Center <http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/en/>

Palestine Chronicle <http://palestinechronicle.com/>

PNN <http://english.pnn.ps/>

Ma'an News <http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx>

Many of these, and other groups/sources, use **Twitter** to disseminate information and perspectives on the conflict, on a daily basis. Some of the many relevant sources include (in no particular order) Haaretz, Jonathan Kuttab (Palestinian Christian), Robi Damelin, Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Gershon Gorenberg (Jewish Israeli writer), Al Haq (Palestinian Human Rights), Middle East Monitor, Ma'an News Agency, Jerusalem Post, Jordan Times, IDF, Peter Lerner, +972 Magazine, Rabbis 4 Human Rights, Mitch Ginsburg, Parents Circle, Breaking the Silence, The Times of Israel, Jewish Voice for Peace, Daoud Kuttab (Palestinian Christian Journalist, brother of Jonathan), Al-Monitor, Al Arabiya English, AJELive (Al Jazeera English), ICAHD, B'Tselem, Musalaha, Holy Land Trust, Sami Awad.

## COURSE LECTURES, SPEAKERS, SITE VISITS, FILMS

### a. *Lectures & Speakers*

For this course, we will utilize a local expert, Levi S., who is working on a Ph.D. on the conflict, and who teaches regularly both in Jordan and in Canada on the conflict. We will have about 20 hours of lecture from Levi, in an intensive format, and accompanied by various documentaries, in the two weeks leading up to our Israel/Palestine trip. We will then travel to Israel/Palestine for about 10 days, during which time we will where we will experience both Jewish and Palestine homestays, several site visits, and hearing from nearly 30 speakers and groups, both Palestinian and Israeli, Christian, Muslim and Jewish, and from various perspectives.

Speakers and group meetings typically include (subject to availability):

Bethlehem: Sami Awad (Holy Land Trust); Dr. Salim Munayer (Musalaha); Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac (Christmas Church, Bethlehem, and Bethlehem Bible College); Sheikh Anwar Zboun; Representatives of the Parents Circle Family Forum (often Rami Elhanan & Bassam Aramein)

Hebron: Hebron Rehabilitation Committee; Christian Peacemaker Teams, Hebron; Jewish Settler, Hebron (Yusef Hartov or others)  
 Ramallah: Jean Zaru, Quakers; Zimam (Nisreen Shahin); Al Haq (or Addameer); PLO Negotiating Team  
 Tantur (Jerusalem): A representative from the U.S. Consulate (recently, Olga Romanova); Gershon Gorenberg; Matan Peleg, Im Tirtzu; Ophir Yarden, Judaism & Modernity  
 Gush Etzion area: Ardie Goldman; Bob Lang or the Mayor; Rabbi Zvi or other; Dan Diker; General Gruber; Watching and discussing a “trigger film” with a group of young people

b. Site Visits

To be determined. In Israel/Palestine, our normal itinerary, conditions permitting, includes visits to Bethlehem, the Old City of Jerusalem (walking tour of the Christian quarter with Hana Bendcowsky; visit to the Al Aqsa compound with a member of the waqf), Ramallah, Hebron, Yad Vashem and Mt. Herzl (with Ophir Yarden), the Path of the Patriarchs (with Rabbi Shaul Judelman), Roots (with Rabbi Hanan Scheslinger and Noor A’wad or other representatives) and other sites.

c. Documentaries & Films

*With God on Our Side (or Waiting for Armageddon)*  
*The Gatekeepers*  
*Little Town of Bethlehem*  
*The Stones Cry Out (or Israel vs. Israel)*  
*West Bank Story*

Recommended / Optional Films:

*The Lab (2013, 60 min); The Law in These Parts (2011, 100 min); Two-Sided Story (2012, 75 min); One Day After Peace (Robi Damelin’s story, 2012, 86 min); Our Land (2014, 50 min, Anna Medearis)*  
*5 Broken Cameras, Wall (or The Iron Wall), Occupation 101, The 50 Years War, The Other Son, Paradise Now, The Lemon Tree, Hijacking the Holy Land, Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land, Encounter Point,*

**ASSIGNMENTS**

*Grading for this course will be based on the following:*

Participation – presence for all required activities, plus active engagement including taking notes on speakers	10%
Reading – completing the reading, as reported on a weekly basis	20%
Chacour 3%	
Gelvin 8%	
Volf 6%	
Required Reader articles 3%	
Journal	20%
Final Assignment(s)	50%
	100%

**Following are the instructions for the assignments. Please read and follow the instructions carefully.**

**Assignment 1:** Participation including Speaker Notes (10%).

Students are required to attend all lectures and site visits, etc. and to be both attentive and participatory, with good “speaker etiquette” (no sleeping, no use of electronic devices, etc.). For a satisfactory score in each of the units, you need to ask at least 3 questions of speakers, over the course of the semester. (More is better, though if you’re a particularly active participant, please leave room for your quieter MESP cohort members to ask questions!)

Students are expected to take notes on all the speakers during the semester, including Travel Component. Notes can be according to your style and approach, and have no requirement in terms of length. They are for your benefit, so you have details to draw upon for your paper. Notes do not have to be turned in, but the Program Administrator or Director may ask to see your notes at any time. Note: students are not allowed to use electronic devices or laptops to take notes (or at all, during speakers).

**Assignment 2:** Reading (20%).

You will be given a schedule for the weekly reading, and asked to **report to the Program Assistant (according to their instructions) every Saturday by 10 pm** on the percentage you have completed of the reading for the week. This is a busy semester, so it's important to keep up with the reading and it is important that you refer to the readings in your papers. Note that there is reading assigned every week for each of the courses (other than the travel days in Israel/Palestine).

**Assignment 3:** Journal (20%).

Students are expected to write three journal entries per week (as specified below), on topics related to P&C, ITP, and/or C&C (if you want a word guideline, 300-350 is a good rough guideline – the point, though, is solid reflection, not number of words). Journals need to be clearly labeled, and **turned in to the Program Administrator every Friday by 10 pm, beginning January 12** (on Travel, it may be another day). **See the separate Journal Assignment document for specific dates and topics.**

Note: for any entry that is late, you will lose 1% of your journal grade, per day, per entry. For any entry that you do not do, you will lose 8% of your journal grade.

Possible topics for “free” entries include:

- Have a conversation with Jordanians (whether they are of Palestinian or Jordanian origin) about some topic that is related to this course. You might ask them about their personal / family history (if they are Jordanian of Palestinian origin), personal experiences of the conflict, their perspective on the conflict, etc.
- Engage with anything in Volf
- Respond to / reflect on any of the lectures
- Respond to / reflect on any of the documentary films
- Does Christian faith have anything useful to say about resolving conflict and promoting reconciliation among Israelis and Palestinians?
- Are you hopeful or pessimistic regarding the possibilities for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians? What are two or three factors which cause you to feel pessimistic, and why? What are two or three factors which give you hope, and why?
- *Yad Vashem* visit — Ophir Yarden will introduce you to Yad Vashem and its significance to the formation of Israeli civil-religious (Zionist) identity. Reflect on what lessons you learned from this day. (e.g., How could this have happened in a European German culture historically infused with Lutheran Protestant influences? In other words, what responsibility does Christianity have for what happened? Would you agree with Israelis who argue that the Holocaust has created an unhealthy sense of exclusive victimization in the Israeli national psyche, one that translates into demonizing all critics of Israel as anti-Semites?)
- *Site visits to Palestinian areas* (Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Jerusalem) – What have you observed, experienced or learned about these areas that indicate both opportunities and constraints? Does occupation define everything about Palestinian life in these areas, or does there seem to be some space for normal life? Explain.

**Assignment 4 (50%):**

**Group Presentation: “Addressing the Issues / Solutions.”** In small groups, you will work to prepare a presentation of a “solution” to some aspect of conflict, after the lectures and the trip to Israel/Palestine. Specific instructions will be given later. Presentations will take place on **Friday March 1 (8 am – 12 noon)**.

As an option, you may elect to write an essay or develop a presentation on what you have learned about the conflict and/or your (current, Christ-centered) perspective on the conflict. This may be done for up to half of the point value of the final assignment. More details available upon request.