



**CENTER FOR
HOLY LANDS STUDIES**

CHLS - STUDYING THE TEXT IN CONTEXT
BIBLE LANDS STUDY TRIP: TURKEY
May 20-June 2, 2025

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An onsite field-study experience of the Bible within the physical, historical, and cultural settings of the Greco-Roman world of New Testament Turkey. Emphasis is placed upon the relationship between physical features of the land, stressing geographical factors affecting settlement communication in the various regions, historical, archeological, and cultural features that shaped this world, its events, and message. Also, the Jewish Diaspora forms a key focus for understanding the spread and growth of the early Jesus movement, particularly through the actions of Paul, Peter, and John.

OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce students to the geography of the Greco-Roman world and how the geography affected the events related in the New Testament.
2. To introduce students through onsite experiences to relevant archeological data and discoveries and how they relate to our understanding of the world of the New Testament.
3. To understand the historical events of the biblical world and how they impacted ancient Jewish culture as reflected in the New Testament.
4. Through an onsite learning experience, to understand the impact of ancient Jewish culture upon issues of biblical interpretation.
5. To introduce students, through onsite experiences, to the history, religions, and cultures of the Greco-Roman world that shaped and influenced the world in which the Gospel spread.

TEXTBOOKS: Required pre-trip reading

Casson, Lionell. *Travel in the Ancient World*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Flattery, Amy and Stein, Jeremy. *Experience Turkey: Travel Guide with Site Overviews and Reflections*. Springfield, MO: Salubris Resources, 2020. (Provided by the Center for Holy Lands Studies)

Shanks, Hershel. *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of their origins and Early Development*. Washington, DC: The Biblical Archaeology Society, 2011.

Young, Brad. *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews and Gentiles*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.

BASIC OUTLINE

Prior to the trip, students will read through the book of Acts, the textbooks by Brad Young, Lionel Casson and Hershel Shanks as well as the Center for Holy Land's Studies *Experience Turkey* book. Once the students arrive in Turkey, they will participate in daily site visits and field-studies, lectures, and "hands-on" learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Students will gain a basic introduction to the history, archaeology, and culture of the Greco-Roman world and Jewish Diaspora through the assigned pre-trip readings. Students will only need to bring the *Experience Turkey* textbooks with them on the trip.

Once the students arrive in Turkey, the backgrounds of geography, history, and culture will be uniquely reinforced through onsite field-studies that incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach utilizing the physical setting to place the biblical text and issues within the spatial, temporal, cultural, and spiritual settings of the first century. As part of the students in land educational experience, they will participate in a series of lectures specifically designed to take advantage of their time in land.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Complete the pre-trip reading assignments.

- Write a five-page, double-spaced, reflective essay using the book of Acts, the course textbooks and CHLS *Experience Turkey* book, as well as 5 other external sources on the role of the Culture in either Jewish Diaspora or the Roman First Century in assisting the spread of the Gospel in the first century.
 - **Due Date: June 27, 2025**

- Write a five-page, double-spaced essay using only the course textbooks, the CHLS *Experience* books, as well as three other sources on the social, political, and religious challenges the Jewish followers of Jesus faced in spreading the Gospel within the Greco-Roman world in the first century.
 - **Due Date: June 27, 2025**

- Maintain a daily reflection journal (digital or hard copy) throughout the trip in which you reflect upon the teaching and experiences of each day. This will be reviewed prior to June 2, 2025

- Participate in daily field-studies and site visits (90 hours in land). See attached itinerary and calendar.

- Participate in lectures and discussion group(s) (on-site, bus, and evening) throughout the course of the trip (25 hours in land).
 - The History of Ancient Anatolia and Modern Turkey
 - Istanbul and the Byzantine Empire
 - The Letters to the Seven Churches (*On Site*)
 - Ephesus
 - Smyrna
 - Thyatira
 - Sardis
 - Philadelphia
 - Pergamum
 - Laodicea
 - Luke: Who Was He? What does he mean to us?
 - The Conquest of Alexander the Great and the Rise of Hellenism
 - Introduction to Revelation and Jewish Apocalyptic Literature
 - The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire
 - Greek and Roman Literature and the New Testament
 - The Churches of the Lycus Valley
 - The Pax Romana and Travel in the Roman World, and the Spread of the Gospel
 - The Greek and Roman Histories
 - Jews, Proselytes, God-Fearers, and Pagans in the world of the New Testament
 - The Jewish Revolt and the Aftermath in the Diaspora
 - Church Growth and History beyond the New Testament Period
 - Paul, The Roman Citizen and the Apostle to the Gentiles
 - The Greek and Roman Pagan System
 - The New Testament and Ancient Jewish Literature

GRADING PROCEDURE

- 5-page paper “Jewish Diaspora/Roman First Century and the spread of the Jesus Movement” (25 Points)
- 5-page paper “Social, Political, and Religious Challenges” (25 Points)
- Daily Reflection Journaling (15 Points)
- Participation in field studies and evening lectures (35 Points)
 - 100-90 A
 - 89-80 B
 - 79-70 C
 - 69-60 D
 - 59-0 F

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SPECIFIC DATA

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