ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Thursdays, 7:00-9:30 pm, September 17-Nov 19

Syllabus and Course Outline

Course Aims

Archaeology is the study of the past based on what survives from material culture. As is, the discipline as variously practiced will always be based on fragmentary knowledge from finds and not necessarily in agreement with ancient texts. In the case of the texts of the New Testament canon, while its supernatural content is much debated by the secular world, its overall historicity is generally regarded as reliable in matters of culture, geography, politics and related matters. Thus, New Testament archaeology – although this description is problematic for many as a curious amalgam of metaphysics and history – should not differ from any other regional and chronological archaeological practices if separate from philosophical presuppositions. Some contend this is rarely the case, but objectivity is hardly the monopoly of any vested interest group regardless of scientific or religious persuasion. Suffice to say that Classical Archaeology - whose subject is the Greco-Roman World - as a field has never been proven contrary to the New Testament records despite subsequent redacted documentary history.

This archaeological survey course will address topographies and cultural backgrounds of the New Testament in order to illuminate the texts wherever possible. Because the 21st century is many filters removed from the 1st century when nearly all the documents were written, we must engage the fact that we are separated by time, culture, place and language from the New Testament Era. This at times renders hermeneutics problematic and requires the reader to be flexible if there is not an immediate or even ultimate match between text and cultural topography.

Selected topics addressed include but are not limited to the following: general archaeological principles including important terminology and chronology and dating systems, Jerusalem topography and its environs, general Greco-Roman culture and religious practices, Nero and related Roman Julio-Claudian Emperors, the Conquest of Jerusalem and Masada, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Classical Mystery Cults (including Eleusinian, Mithraic, Isis, Dionysian and Cybele), Paul's Missionary Journeys in the Mediterranean Geography, the transformation of Christianity under Constantine and Gregory in Late Antiquity, and extant city contexts like Corinth, Rome, Athens, Ephesus and Pergamon.

Course Requirements

The format of the course will be in weekly sessions of lecture and discussion, although mostly in lecture mode. Students attend lectures, participate in discussion where applicable and complete assigned readings, including from course text and supplemental as provided. If taken for credit and grade, a midterm and final exam will be completed along with weekly quizzes. The grade weighting will be 33 % for each exam and 33 % for the quizzes.

Primary Course Texts (Supplementary readings to be also assigned)

Supplementary: Ronny Reich et al. *The Jerusalem Archaeological Park*. Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1999; other articles in live links plus extensive online readings to be added weekly.
9/17 Archaeological Principles and Terminology / Biblical Word Plays in Aramaized Hebrew

9/24 Jerusalem Topography, Nazareth and Galilee Topography
Reading: Finegan 43-64, 76-116, 183-290; Reich 86-125, 137-150

10/1 Greeks and Romans in Palestine, especially Caesarea and Decapolis
Reading: Jeffers, 11-88, 110-258; Finegan, 128-44

10/8 Paul: The cities of Corinth and Athens in Acts and Paul’s Epistles
Reading: Jeffers, 259-292

10/15 Paul and John: The cities of Ephesus, Pergamon, Smyrna, the Troad in Acts and Revelation
Reading: Jeffers 321-338; Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (one of Seven Ancient Wonders) (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopedia_romana/greece/paganism/artemis.html)

10/22 Paul: Shipwreck and the cities of Pompeii and esp. Rome in Acts and Paul’s Epistles
Reading: Patrick Hunt, ch. 6, 109-134, “Pompeii” Ten Discoveries

10/29 The Classical Mystery Cults: Competition for Christianity over the Human Soul
Reading: Jeffers, 89-109; Finegan 128-144; Patrick Hunt, “Triptolemos” online: (http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/archaeolog/2005/12/triptolemos_and_beyond.html)

11/5 Nero and the Julio Claudian Emperors and Christianity
Reading: Finegan, 325-330, Suetonius Twelve Caesars: Life of Nero

11/12 Conquests of Jerusalem and Masada under Vespasian / Titus and Hadrian
Reading: Josephus The Jewish Wars 6; online: http://mosaic lk.net/g-masada.html

11/19 Changes to Christianity: From Constantine to Pope Gregory, 4th - 7th centuries

Note: tbp = “to be provided” also note that Instructor reserves right to adapt schedule as needed