(41-681B) CHIAPAS, MEXICO: LIBERATION, AUTONOMY, INTERDEPENDENCE

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Course Description

This course will offer contextual theological-ethical engagement on issues of indigenous sovereignty, economic and ecological justice, and alternatives to neoliberal globalization, with a focus on the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico and the role of the church in struggles for liberation. The majority of time will be spent in and around the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas meeting with community and religious leaders, with several excursions into the surrounding regions.

Course Objectives

Knowing: To gain awareness of the internal and external historical, socio-economic, political, and environmental dynamics shaping the Chiapas region of Mexico, as well as the roles of 1) the church, in particular the figures and aims associated with Latin American liberation theology, 2) the indigenous Zapatista movement, and 3) civil society organizations in local/global struggles for political freedom, cultural sovereignty, economic justice, and ecological sustainability.

Being: To be decentered, provoked, and ultimately re-shaped by traditions, practices, norms, and perspectives radically outside the dominating ideologies, systems, spirituality, and habits constitutive of neoliberal, US-centric globalization.

Doing: To deepen the capacity for active listening and attentive observation, cultural humility, and the practices of hospitality as guests in spaces that are not our own, to be able to deconstruct the logics and tools of neoliberal oppressions, and to increase proficiency in articulating the theological, communal, and material grounds upon which “another world is possible.”

Required Texts

Books


*Articles (via pdf)*


*Additional Selected, TBD*

Websites

- www.floweroftheword.wordpress.com
- www.schoolsforchiapas.org

*Additional Suggested Resources*


Course Requirements

Pre-Immersion

1) Read all required texts.
2) Attend 3 pre-trip meetings.

Immersion

3) Attend all organized course sessions, lectures, activities, etc. (schedule will be shared on location).
4) Relate to hosts, instructors, colleagues, and local residents with respect, active engagement, and an openness to mutual edification.
5) Drawing upon the Rieger text, keep a travel journal with 7 entries over the 14-day trip in which you answer a) Who/what am I encountering (i.e. seeing, hearing, observing)? b) What am I learning (i.e. key insights)? c) What am I feeling? d) What might these encounters, insights, and feelings mean for how I understand the nature, the presence, and the work of God?

Post-Immersion

6) Theological Reflection Paper (10-12 pages, double-spaced)
   a) Draw directly from the course readings, lectures, conversations, and experiences.
   b) Focus upon an orienting ethical concern raised for you by the course (e.g. indigenous rights, agro-ecological praxis, women’s empowerment, resistance to neoliberal globalization, etc.).
   c) Attend to the relevant intersecting dynamics of religion, economics, culture, politics, environment, and society related to your orienting ethical concern.
   d) Provide theological engagement with your ethical focus and related dynamics by way of doctrinal, biblical, and spiritual interpretation and analysis.
   e) Articulate a constructive proposal, rooted in your theological frame, for how Christian individuals and/or communities might engage in transformative responses.
7) Group Presentation to community (setting, format, content, and aims TBD).

Final Grading

1. Reading, Attendance, Participation – 25%
2. Travel Journal – 25%
3. Theological Reflection Paper – 25%
4. Group Presentation – 25%