

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

Instructor: Timothy R. Eberhart

Email: timothy.eberhart@garrett.edu

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

Boff, Leonardo. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Orbis Books, 1987 (ISBN-13: 978-0883445501, price \$12.08 from amazon.com).

De Las Casas, Bartolome, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. Penguin Classics, 1999 (ISBN-13: 978-0140445626, Price \$10.55 at amazon.com).

Rieger, Joerg. *Faith on the Road: A Short Theology of Travel and Justice*. IVP Academic, revised edition, 2015 (ISBN-13: 978-0830840960, Price \$11.52 at amazon.com).

Klein, Hillary. *Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories*. Seven Stories Press, 2015 (ISBN-13: 978-1609805876, price \$19.95 at amazon.com).

Articles (via pdf)

La Botz, Dan, "Twenty Years Since the Chiapas Rebellion: The Zapatistas, Their Politics, and Their Impact," *Solidarity* (<https://solidarity-us.org/site>), January 13, 2014.

MacEoin, Gary, "Samuel Ruiz, Voice of the Voiceless," *Cross Currents. Fall 96, Vol. 46 Issue 3*.

MacEoin, Gary, "'Seeds of the Word' in Chiapas," *National Catholic Reporter Online*, February 18, 2000.

Ruiz, Samuel, "The Politics of Marginalization: Poverty and the Rights of the Indigenous People of Mexico," *Journal of International Affairs*, 1998.

Schmal, John P., "CHIAPAS - FOREVER INDIGENOUS," *Houston Institute for Culture*, 2004.

Additional Selected, TBD

Websites

www.floweroftheword.wordpress.com

www.visitmexico.com/en/state-of-chiapas

www.schoolsforchiapas.org

Additional Suggested Resources

Cintli Rodríguez, Roberto. *Our Sacred Maíz Is Our Mother: Indigeneity and Belonging in the Americas*. University of Arizona Press, 4th Edition, 2014 (ISBN-13: 978-0816530618, \$35.00 at amazon.com).

Hayden, Tom, ed. *The Zapatista Reader*. Nation Books, 2002 (ISBN-13: 978-1560253358, Price \$16.89 at amazon.com).

Vergara-Camus, Leandro. *Land and Freedom: The MST, the Zapatistas and Peasant Alternatives to Neoliberalism*. Zed Books, 2014 (ISBN-13: 978-1780327426, Price \$31.95 at amazon.com).

Vodovnik, Ziga, ed. *Ya Basta! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising*. AK Press, 2004 (ISBN-13: 978-1904859130, Price \$20.24 at amazon.com).

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%