

**NYACK COLLEGE**  
**El Araj Excavation Project**  
**ARC502/BIB460**  
**3 Credits**  
June-July 2019  
Dr. R. Steven Notley

**Objective:**

This course comprises preparation for and participation in the archaeological excavations at el-Araj on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Preparatory assigned readings will maximize the student's learning experience during their study and excavation in Israel. As such, these should be completed before travel. Relevant archaeological, historical, and biblical information will be presented during field trips in the region to broaden the students understanding of the historical and geographical setting of Bethsaida-Julias in Roman antiquity. Course assignments will involve three components. First, the student should read and review the two books listed that introduce the discipline of archaeology. In addition, the student should read Rainey's brief introduction to the discipline of historical geography and how it incorporates archaeology into its multidisciplinary approach. Next, the student should read the issues involved in the identification of "lost" historical sites in general and specifically the site of Bethsaida-Julias. Finally, the student is expected to apply what they have learned in their active participation in the two-week archaeological dig at el-Araj. The student should take from the experience a more profound integrated understanding of how geography, history and archaeology shape their reading of ancient texts, including those of the Bible.

**Texts:**

- E. H. Cline, *Three Stones Make a Wall: The Story of Archaeology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).
- D. C. Benjamin, *Stones and Stories: An Introduction to Archeology and the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).
- A. F. Rainey, "Dimensions and Disciplines," *The Sacred Bridge* (Jerusalem: Carta Publishing, 2005), pp. 9-24.
- J. F. Strange, "Bethsaida," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 1:692-693.
- M. Nun, "Has the Lost City of Bethsaida Finally Been Found," *Jerusalem Perspective*, 54 (1998): 12-31.
- R. S. Notley, "The Search for Bethsaida," *The Sacred Bridge* (Jerusalem: Carta Publishing, 2005), 360.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Et-Tell is *Not* Bethsaida." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70 (2007): 220-230.

- S. Langfur, "Bethsaida: Two Possibilities," Cited April 2018. Online:  
<http://www.netours.com/content/view/78/26>.
- K. Cole, "New Archaeological Survey to Determine Location of Bethsaida, Key City in Jesus' Ministry," Religion News Service (June 10, 2014). Cited April 2018. Online:  
[http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=13984](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=13984)
- M. Aviam and R. S. Notley, "Has Bethsaida-Julias Finally Been Found?" The Bible and Interpretation. September 2017. Cited April 2018. Online:  
<https://www.bibleinterp.com/PDFs/Bethsaida-Julias.pdf>

### **Assignments:**

The students should order and complete the map marking assignments in the *Geobasics Study Guide* by J. M. Monson and S. P. Lancaster. The booklet can be ordered at [www.bibback.com](http://www.bibback.com) (\$15 + shipping and handling). When you visit the website, select "Purchase" and follow the instructions. You will also need to click on "Downloads" to download the *Geobasics Mini-Marking Guide*. The download is free. The student is responsible to complete the map marking prior to their arrival in Israel. Bring the *Geobasics Study Guide* with you. We will reference it in our field trips. [25% of the grade].

- A. The student will read both Cline and Benjamin's introductions to archaeology and write a 7-page comparative book review. The review will look at the content, scope and presentation of each work. The review should include new information that the student has gained from the books with specific examples, and points with which the student agrees or disagrees in the writers' presentation. The review is to be formatted according to *The SBL Handbook of Style*. Students should send their reviews as Adobe PDF files to [steven.notley@nyack.edu](mailto:steven.notley@nyack.edu) before August 15, 2019. **No late work will be accepted.** [25% of the grade].
- B. Students will read the assigned readings listed above regarding the history and site identification of Bethsaida. They will write a 5-page response paper to the content of the readings with examples of information that you have learned, noting points where you may agree or disagree. Footnotes and bibliography should be formatted according to *The SBL Handbook of Style*. Students should send their summaries as Adobe PDF files to [steven.notley@nyack.edu](mailto:steven.notley@nyack.edu) before August 15, 2019. **No late work will be accepted.** [25% of your grade].
- C. The student will actively participate in the Israel archaeological excavation at el-Araj and the field school that accompanies the dig. S/he should keep a digital daily journal of their experiences and reflections. The daily journal should include brief descriptions and/or pictures of work completed that day, information and encounters, and the student's reflections on how the experiences of that day have impacted their understanding of history and archaeology. The journal will be submitted for assessment the final day of the trip. **No late work will be accepted.** [25% of your grade].