

Indigenous Experience and Palestinian Theology

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نَعْتَرِفُ بِأَنَّنا نَجْتَمِعُ عَلَى أَرْضِي الأَجْدَادِ التَّقْلِيدِيَّةِ وَغَيْرِ المِتَخَلِّي عَنْهَا لِشُعُوبِ المُسْكُوبِومِ (x^wməθk^wəyəm)،
وَالسُّكُومِشْ (Skwxwú7mesh)، وَالتَّسْلِيلُوثْ (Selfwitulh)، الَّذِينَ حَافَظُوا عَلَى عِلَاقَةٍ عَمِيقَةٍ وَمُسْتَمِرَّةٍ
وَمُقَدَّسَةٍ مَعَ هَذِهِ الأَرْضِ وَالْمِيَاهِ وَبَاقِيِ الخَلِيقَةِ. نَشْكُرُهُمْ عَلَى عِنَايَتِهِمْ بِهَذِهِ الأَرْضِي، وَنُعَبِّرُ عَنِ احْتِرَامِنَا لَهُمْ
كَأَوْصِيَاءِ أَصْلِيَّيْنِ عَلَيْهَا، وَنَسْعَى لِلْعَيْشِ وَالتَّضَامُنِ مَعَهُمْ فِي حَقِّ تَقْرِيرِ المَصِيرِ وَالعَدَالَةِ.

Course Description: The course explores the Palestinian Christian theological experience, focusing on the complexity of identity, fragmentation, and resilience. Students will engage with Palestinian theologian's stories, examining the lived experiences of Christian communities amid displacement.

The course is introductory in level, designed for students with little or no prior exposure to Palestinian theology, and engages the first and second waves of Palestinian theologians through the frameworks of liberation, contextual, and decolonial theologies.

This course engages difficult and sensitive material, including displacement, war, and intergenerational trauma. Students are encouraged to be mindful of their own proximity to these topics and to practice self-care throughout the course.

Course Objectives:

1. Elevate Palestinian Christian narratives of resilience and theological formation
2. Provide foundational knowledge of Palestinian theological thought through personal memories
3. Explore theological perspectives emerging from Palestinian community
4. Employ narrative and Indigenous methodological approaches to theological learning

Course Structure:

- 15 total teaching hours
- 5-day intensive format (Mon – Fri, 2-5pm)

Pedagogical approach

- Centered on Indigenous learning principles
- Prioritizing personal stories and lived experiences
- Collaborative and participatory learning

Student Competencies:

1. Understand the geographical and social fragmentation of Palestinian communities

2. Recognize the complexity of Palestinian Christian identity and theological formation
3. Critically examine the challenges of developing theological discourse amid ongoing contexts of displacement
4. Articulate the lived experiences of Palestinian Christians
5. Demonstrate an understanding of Palestinian Christians as dynamic, resilient and diverse theological agents

Course Requirement

- (1) **For each class session**, *after* each class, students will write up to 500-word reflective journal entry. Journal entries are due at the beginning of each class. A strong journal entry is one that moves toward the following questions:
 - Where do I locate myself in relation to what I heard or read today?
 - What did this material challenge, confirm, or complicate in my previous understanding?
 - Where did I feel resistance, resonance, or recognition and what does that tell me?
 - What connection or insight emerged today that I did not expect?
- (2) **Final Assignment:** write a 2000-word essay “Reflecting on Palestinian Experience through my Positionality”

Essay Guidelines

- Explore Palestinian experience/s through the lens of your own social, cultural, theological and/or geographic positioning
- Draw from course readings, discussion, and personal reflections
- Analyze how your own context informs your understanding of
 - Displacement
 - Land relationships
 - Resistance
 - Theological/spiritual experiences
- Incorporate course materials
- Demonstrate scholarly rigor, and self-reflective understanding

As you write, you may also reflect on: What question am I leaving this course with that I did not arrive with?

Submissions:

- Due 3 weeks after course completion
- Formatted according to academic standards (Chicago Style)
- Demonstrate engagement with course’s Indigenous methodological approach.

Pre-Course Reading – Choose one:

Students are expected to read one of these books before the first day of class.

- (1) Ateek, Naim Stifan. *Call and Commitment: A Journey of Faith from Nakba to Palestinian Liberation Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023.

- (2) Chacour, Elias. *We Belong to the Land: The story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives for Peace and Reconciliation*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- (3) Isaac, Munther. *Christ in the Rubble: Faith, the Bible, and the Genocide in Gaza*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2025.
- (4) Raheb, Mitri. *I Am a Palestinian Christian: God and Politics in the Holy Land. A Personal Testimony*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.
- (5) Zaru, Jean. *Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman's Journey*. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

Course Outline and Required Readings

Session	Required Reading
Day 1 - July 13 Introduction and Positionality	
Opening session introduces the course, the instructor, and participants to one another. Students are invited to share their positionalities and reflect on how their locations, geographic, cultural, and theological, shape how they encounter Palestinian experience.	(1) Qubti, Shadia. "Liminal Times, Critical Ties." INFEMIT, November 7, 2024. https://infemit.org/liminal-times-critical-ties/ (2) Tuck, Eve, and Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." <i>Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society</i> 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.
Day 2 – July 14 Historical Narrative Through Palestinian Experience	
This session grounds students in the Palestinian historical narrative, covering key dates and events from the Nakba to the present through Palestinian voices. Students will examine how competing historical narratives function, and explore what new frameworks might offer for understanding the Palestinian experience.	(1) PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). <i>Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative: Palestinians and Israelis</i> . Beit Jallah: PRIME Publications, 2003. (2) Ateek, Naim Stifan. "The Nakba (the Catastrophe)." In <i>Call and Commitment: A Journey of Faith from Nakba to Palestinian Liberation Theology</i> , 3–9. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023. (3) Raheb, Mitri. "Palestine: Time for a Paradigm Shift." <i>Academia Letters</i> , Article 1848 (2021). https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1848
Day 3 – July 15 Palestinian Christian Voices in Theological space	
This session treats lived experience as a primary source of theological knowledge. Students will have chosen one Palestinian theologian's book to read	[Choose one only] (1) Ateek, Naim Stifan. <i>Call and Commitment: A Journey of Faith from Nakba to Palestinian Liberation Theology</i> . Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023.

before arriving, and will engage in a shared discussion drawing on multiple voices across different theological generations and contexts.

- (2) Chacour, Elias. *We Belong to the Land: the story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives for Peace and Reconciliation*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001
- (3) Isaac, Munther. *Christ in the Rubble: Faith, the Bible, and the Genocide in Gaza*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2025.
- (4) Raheb, Mitri. *I Am a Palestinian Christian: God and Politics in the Holy Land. A Personal Testimony*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.
- (5) Zaru, Jean. *Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman's Journey*. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

Day 4 – July 16

Decolonial Theological Method – Dismantling Colonial Epistemologies

This session examines how theological knowledge is produced and whose frameworks dominate. Students will explore how Palestinian and Indigenous theologians have developed decolonial theologies of land, and what it means to read Scripture critically from occupied and colonized ground.

- (1) Raheb, Mitri, 2021, “The Bible and Land Colonization.” In *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*, edited by Khiok-Khng Yeo and Gene L. Green, 12-22. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.
- (2) Zacharias, Daniel H., 2021, “The Land Takes Care of Us: Recovering Creator's Relational Design.” In *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*, edited by Khiok-Khng Yeo and Gene L. Green, 80-92. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Day 5 – July 17

Land-Based theology – Embodied narratives of belonging

This closing session brings Palestinian and Indigenous understandings of land into theological conversation. Drawing on both traditions' relationships to place, belonging, and displacement, students will explore how land functions as a source of theological knowledge and what each tradition might learn from the other.

- (1) Qubti, Shadia “Noticing Sumac in Unexpected Places: Engaging Palestinian and North American Indigenous Writings on Land,” In *The Cross and the Olive Tree: Cultivating Palestinian Theology Amid Gaza*, edited by John S. Munayer, and Samuel S. Munayer, 96-118. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2025.
- (2) Woodley, Randy. “When Faith Funds Genocide.” *Randy Woodley* (blog), August 5, 2025. <https://rwoodley7.substack.com/p/when-faith-funds-genocide>

Required Reading Bibliography

- Ateek, Naim Stifan. "The Nakba (the Catastrophe)." In *Call and Commitment: A Journey of Faith from Nakba to Palestinian Liberation Theology*, 3-9. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2023.
- PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). *Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative: Palestinians and Israelis*. Beit Jallah: PRIME Publications, 2003.
- Qubti, Shadia. "Liminal Times, Critical Ties." INFEMIT, November 7, 2024.
<https://infemit.org/liminal-times-critical-ties/>
- . "Noticing Sumac in Unexpected Places: Engaging Palestinian and North American Indigenous Writings on Land," In *The Cross and the Olive Tree: Cultivating Palestinian Theology Amid Gaza*, edited by John S. Munayer, and Samuel S. Munayer, 96-118. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2025.
- Raheb, Mitri, "The Bible and Land Colonization" In *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*, edited by Khiok-Khng Yeo and Gene L. Green, 12-22. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021.
- . "Palestine: Time for a Paradigm Shift." *Academia Letters*, Article 1848 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1848>
- Tuck, Eve, and Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.
- Woodley, Randy. "When Faith Funds Genocide." *Randy Woodley* (blog), August 5, 2025.
<https://rwoodley7.substack.com/p/when-faith-funds-genocide>
- Zacharias, Daniel H. "The Land Takes Care of Us: Recovering Creator's Relational Design." In *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*, edited by Khiok-Khng Yeo and Gene L. Green, 80-92. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021.

Recommended Bibliography

- Aldred, Raymond, and Matthew R. Anderson. *Our Home and Treaty Land: Walking our Creation Story*. Kelowna, BC, Canada: Wood Lake, 2022.
- Asal, Houda. *Identifying as Arab in Canada: A Century of Immigration History*. Translated by Mary Foster. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2021.
- Ateek, Naim. *Justice and Only Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989.
- Atshan, Sa'ed. *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020.
- Awad, Bishara, and Mercy Aiken. *Yet in the Dark Streets Shining*. Cliffrose Press, 2021.
- Battell Lowman, Emma, and Adam J. Barker. *Settler: Identity and Colonialism*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2025.
- Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Chacour, Elias. *Blood Brothers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984.

- Charles, Mark, and Soong-Chan Rah. *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019.
- Charleston, Steven, and Elaine A. Robinson, eds. *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Fisk, Bruce N., and J. Ross Wagner. *Being Christian after the desolation of Gaza*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2025.
- Isaac, Munther. *The Other Side of the Wall*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker. *A Native American Theology*. New York: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Kairos Palestine. *A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering*. Bethlehem: Kairos Palestine, December 11, 2009. <https://www.kairopalestine.ps/index.php/about-kairos/kairos-palestine-document>
- . *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide*. Bethlehem: Kairos Palestine, November 14, 2025. <https://www.kairopalestine.ps/index.php/about-kairos/kairos-palestine-ii>
- Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Krawec, Patty. *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future*. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022.
- Lansdowne, Carmen. *Wearing a Broken Indigene Heart on the Sleeve of Christian Mission*. Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2025.
- Munayer, Salim and Lisa Loden. *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Context*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.
- Nikondeha, Kelley. *The First Advent in Palestine*. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022.
- Nadar, Sarojini. *Gender, Genocide, Gaza and The Book of Esther: Engaging Texts of Terror(ism)*. Routledge, 2025.
- Raheb, Mitri. *Decolonizing Palestine*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2023.
- Raheb, Mitri, and Graham McGeoch. *Theology after Gaza: A Global Anthology*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2025.
- Sabbah, Michel. *Reading the Bible in the Land of the Bible*. Jerusalem: LPJ, 1993.
- Salaita, Steven. *The Holy Land in Transit: Colonialism and the Quest for Canaan*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006.
- Smith, Robert O. "Reading Palestine Realities with American Indigenous Eyes." In *Palestinian Identity in Relation to Time and Space*, edited by Mitri Raheb, 135-150. Bethlehem: Diyar Publisher, 2014.
- Sugirtharajah, Rasiah S. *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Teebi, Saeed. *You will not kill our imagination*. Toronto, Ontario: Scribner Canada, 2025.
- Warrior, Robert. "Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians." *Christianity and Crisis* 49, no.12 (1989):261-265.
- Wildeman, Jeremy, and M. Muhannad Ayyash, eds. *Canada as a Settler Colony on the Question of Palestine*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2023.

Wilson, Shawn. *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2008.

Woodley, Randy S. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

Recommended Podcasts

Across the Divide. Podcast. Peace Catalyst International.

www.acrossthedividepodcast.com

Bad Theology: Busted. Podcast. Institute for the Study of Christian Zionism.

www.badtheologybusted.com

Christ at the Checkpoint. YouTube playlist.

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmJV_FeHTuF237E1URotWcJJ7fz0yQh_0

Qubti, Shadia, et al. *Women Behind the Wall*. Podcast. www.womenbehindthewall.com

Recommended Videos

Journeyman Pictures. "The Story of Palestinian Christians: The Stones Cry Out." YouTube, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cNIQji_ITk

Speakman, Porter, Jr., dir. *With God on Our Side*. 2010. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NahTjAsDThs>

Zinshtein, Maya, dir. *Til Kingdom Come*. 2020. <https://watchdocumentaries.com/til-kingdom-come/>