



## Academic Teaching and Biblical Studies

*Teaching the Bible Visually or Geographically*

Sunday, 4-6:30PM—Hilton Bayfront – 300 A (Level 3 (Aqua))

Presentation Syllabus

Moderator: Richard Newton, Elizabethtown College

William Sanger Campbell  
The College of St. Scholastica  
[BCampbel@css.edu](mailto:BCampbel@css.edu)

4:00-4:20

### *Mark and the Movies: Making Sense of the Bible*

Students who are not majoring in biblical studies often find the Bible's concepts, contexts, and linguistic and literary styles alien and off-putting and, therefore, experience biblical writings as tedious to read and difficult to understand. In addition, students today are much more attuned to visual media (internet, television, movies, and the like) and less interested in reading in general. In order to address and, hopefully, overcome these potential problems, I propose that students in NT and Bible courses do a comparative analysis of the Gospel of Mark and the screenplay, *It's a Wonderful Life*. By utilizing a medium with which students are more comfortable to familiarize them with the Gospel and to introduce them to critical methodologies for reading ancient narratives, this analysis, in Jonathan Culler's words, "reduces [the Bible's] strangeness so that it speaks . . . in an idiom [they] can understand."

Tyler J. Griffin  
Brigham Young University  
[Tyler\\_Griffin@byu.edu](mailto:Tyler_Griffin@byu.edu)

4:21-4:41

### *Breathing New Life into Ancient Texts for Tech-savvy Students Today*

Students today are digital natives. Most have spent significant time immersed in video games, smart phones, tablets, and countless computer technologies. These students are inherently comfortable and capable of navigating complex visual and spatial environments while processing vast amounts of information. Most academic teaching today, however, relies heavily (and at times, exclusively) on textual and logical argument to engage the learners. This can lead to an inordinate focus on what we are teaching while disregarding who we are teaching. Much more could be done to bridge this technological gap between academic teaching styles and current learning preferences. Immersive technologies can be used in academic settings to increase a "sense of time and space" for the students.

This presentation will "practice what it preaches" by showing many examples of how various forms of interactive tools and apps can be used to enhance the teaching of a variety of pericopes in the New and Old Testaments. This will also be an opportunity to find other academics who have the interest and means to help contribute in designing and developing similar teaching tools to be shared.

Charles Trimm (email)  
Talbot School of Theology (Biola University)  
[charlie.trimm@biola.edu](mailto:charlie.trimm@biola.edu)

4:42-5:02

*War and Peace in Canaan: Teaching Old Testament Geography and Politics Through a Classroom Game*

The sheer number of city and nation names in the Old Testament is overwhelming to the average student....One activity I have done to help the students “feel” how the geography of the land of Canaan affects politics is through a semester-long classroom game. The students are divided into six groups, and each group is assigned a city in Canaan/Syria, representing a small kingdom in the time when the empires were weak (approximately 1000-800 BCE).... The finale is a simulation of an attack by Assyria. Not only is the game a fun part of class that many student look forward to, it helps the students viscerally learn the connection between geography and politics, and events in the game usually roughly follow how events happened in Old Testament times. This paper will present the basics of the game and various ways to adapt it to the classroom.

5:02-5:12 DISCUSSION

Seth Heringer  
Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena)  
[sheringer@apu.edu](mailto:sheringer@apu.edu)

5:12-5:32

*Playing with Maps: Using Interactive Maps to Teach Biblical Geography*

Although learning the geography of Israel during different eras is a valuable learning outcome, the means to do so need to undergo creative rethinking.... Map tests force surface learning through memorization, [but] such memorization is not, in the words of Chip and Dan Heath, “sticky.” Interactive maps, created with RPG Maker VX Ace, serve as better learning tools for students willing to engage with them. By “interactive map” I mean a map like those in classic role playing games such as Final Fantasy, The Secret of Mana, or The Legend of Zelda. These maps allow for the representation of a large piece of land on an “overworld” map in addition to submaps that could correspond to cities or smaller areas of land. Characters with dialogue, scripted events triggered by an action, and enemies to battle can be added to these maps if desired. The challenges of using an interactive map in this manner are quite significant, but a well-designed map that walks students through important locations by setting up an interesting story can be a powerful teaching tool.

Taylor Halverson  
Brigham Young University  
[taylor.halverson@byu.edu](mailto:taylor.halverson@byu.edu)

5:33-5:43

*Teaching the Bible with Google Earth and other Visualization Tools*

Emerging visualization tools, particularly geographical tools, offer promising opportunities to engage our students more significantly in reading and understanding Biblical texts. The purpose of this presentation is to provide several examples of how meaning, understanding, and interpretation of the Bible may be enhanced when it is read in its geographical context. I will introduce several free geographical study tools such as Google Earth, the Google Earth Bible ([scriptures.byu.edu/mapscrip](http://scriptures.byu.edu/mapscrip)) and the VirtualWorldProject.org. Then I will model teaching and studying practices that employ these tools to help learners develop their Biblical interpretation skills.

Christopher M. Jones  
Beloit College  
[jonescm@beloit.edu](mailto:jonescm@beloit.edu)

5:44-5:59

*Presenting Ancient Spaces Using Google Earth*

Biblical literature is filled with vividly imagined spaces. These texts depend on the lived experience of their early readers for their rhetorical power. We appreciate them only insofar as we know the material worlds that they presuppose. Most of our students, however, have little access to these worlds. In the classroom, I have taken to using spatial theory, in tandem with the free version of Google Earth, to help my students bridge the gap. My presentation will present an annotated bibliography of theoretical readings on space, place, and lived experience with

attention given to pedagogical concerns. I will present an interactive lesson on how to use Google earth as a moveable, interactive map that includes lecture content, discussion questions, visual stimuli, and relevant geographical features that can be used in the classroom or made available to students to explore on their own. And I will share a list of web resources for locating biblical places and using Google Earth.

Tim Wardle  
Furman University  
[TIM.WARDLE@FURMAN.EDU](mailto:TIM.WARDLE@FURMAN.EDU)

6:00-6:20

*"Seeing" the Temple: Teaching the Gospels and Acts Through Virtual Tours*

One way to illuminate the first century Jewish religious world, and the importance of the Jerusalem temple at the center of that world, is through a combination of the Virtual World Project, a visual simulation model of the Herodian Temple Mount jointly produced by the Urban Simulation Team at UCLA and the IAA, and Jerusalem.com's (anachronistic but engaging) virtual tour of the Western Wall. Using interactive media in the classroom grabs student attention and enriches discussion, while virtual tours make for great at-home activities for flipped and blended settings. And if "homework" involves taking virtual tours, students are more likely to do it.

DISCUSSION 6:20-6:30