

Morocco: Jewish and Muslim Religion and Culture

A Mini-Mosaic

January 2-20, 2013

Prof. Shalom Staub

Morocco offers a fascinating opportunity to explore multiple dimensions of religion and culture in the Middle East/North Africa region. The site of Jewish communities for roughly 2,500 years, with distinctive Muslim practice and belief, Morocco represents a nexus of Jewish, Arab, Berber, African, Spanish and French cultural elements and influences.

The Morocco mini-mosaic is designed to extend into the “field” the academic explorations undertaken by students in the Fall 2012 *Ethnography of Jewish Experience* course and/or the Spring 2013 *Saints and Demons: Muslim and Jewish Popular Religion in the Middle East* course. Though these two courses have different foci, the mini-Mosaic experience in Morocco will enrich the learning for students in either course:

- Apply a “lived religion” perspective to understand the variety of popular religious practices and their relationship to “official” religion—both Islam and Judaism,
- Understand the distinctive characteristics of Moroccan Islam and Judaism, particularly the prevalence of saint worship and religious healing for relief from spirit possession,
- Understand the historical impact of secularizing and modernizing trends, how these affected Moroccan communities, and contemporary secular-religious dynamics,
- Understand the complex set of relationships among Arabs-Jews-Berbers in Morocco, both historically and in contemporary Morocco.

Students will have the opportunity to interact with Moroccan scholars, community leaders and members, educators, artists, healers, musicians, and university students in such locations as Rabat, Marrakech, Casablanca, Fez, Essaouira and rural Berber villages in the Atlas Mountains. Students will conduct structured observation and interaction in particular sites and interviewing where possible.

The mini-mosaic will include home-stay opportunities. Students will have the opportunity to interact with university students at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, and Dar el-Hadith al-Hassaniya (a religious university) in Rabat, and the Maimonides School (a Jewish school with both Jewish and Muslim students) in Casablanca. We will have opportunities to interact with crafts workers preparing special "towers" for processions to mark the Prophet's Birthday in Sale, gnaoua musicians who play the trance-inducing music that accompanies religious healing ceremonies in Rabat and Marrakech, and the folk healers themselves. We will have the opportunity to visit

religious shrines venerated by Muslims and Jews (and some are shrines venerated by Muslims *and* Jews), including interaction with rural Berber Muslim and Jewish villagers.

Students participating in this study trip must be enrolled in at least one of the following courses:

Fall 2012: Religion 260/Judaic Studies 216/Sociology 230--Ethnography of Jewish Experience

Spring 2013: Religion 247/Judaic Studies 216/Middle East Studies 250--Saints and Demons: Muslim and Jewish Popular Religion in the Middle East

No language skills are pre-requisite, though students with background in French, Arabic or Hebrew will be able to utilize those language skills in Morocco.

Program Cost

The comprehensive program fee is \$1800. Airfare and visa fees are not included; however, group travel will be arranged.

Included:

Full room and board
Academic excursions
In-country transportation
Pre-departure orientation
Emergency insurance

Financial Aid

Financial aid is available to eligible Dickinson students. Requests for financial aid must be submitted via the online application by the application deadline.

Eligibility

Students with a minimum 2.8 GPA are encouraged to apply.

The deadline for applications is April 30th. The application form is available at https://dickinson.studioabroad.com/index.cfm?FuseAction=Programs.ViewProgram&Program_ID=10074&Type=O.