

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
CS 751 - Chiapas Study Trip
January 14-24, 2008

Instructor: Chris Smith
Co – leader with group – Don Christensen
Program leader – Teresa Ortiz
651-255-6128
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Course Description:

Until the Spanish conquest over 500 years ago, the country we know as Mexico today was the land of indigenous people. This began a long history of slavery, oppression, and genocide that still continues throughout Mexico. This trip will focus on the southern most state of the country which is Chiapas. While there we experience the pervasive strength of Mayan indigenous culture and spirituality. In the state of Chiapas there have been many movements for change and liberation, three of which we will encounter during our trip: 1. The ongoing struggle for autonomy and liberation of the Zapatista National Liberation Army, 2. The active non-violence strategies of Las Abejas, and 3. The liberation theology influence of Bishop Samuel Ruiz who served the Diocese of San Cristobal for over thirty years. During our time in Chiapas we will visit co-operatives, ecological projects, religious communities, worship in Acteal with Las Abejas, and spend time with some of the Zapatista leaders. This course satisfies the global justice requirement.

Required Readings and Related Resources:

1. Teresa Ortiz, *Never Again A World Without Us: Voices Of Mayan Women In Chiapas, Mexico* (Washington. DC: The Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean, 2001).
2. Gary MacEoin. *The People's Church: Bishop Samuel Ruiz Of Mexico And Why He Matters*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996).
3. George A. Collier with Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello. *Basta! Land & The Zapatista Rebellion In Chiapas*, (Oakland, California: Food First Books, 1999).
4. John Ross. *Zapatistas! Making Another World Possible Chronicles of Resistance 2000-2006*, (New York: Nation Books, 2006).

Additional Readings

5. Juana Ponce de Leon, editor. Subcommandante Insurgent Marcos, *Our Word Is Our Word Is Our Weapon: Selected Writings* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001).

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6. John Ross, *The War Against Oblivion: The Zapatista Chronicles* (Philadelphia: Common Courage Press, 2000).
7. Thomas Olesen, *International Zapatismo: The Construction of Solidarity in the Age of Globalization* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

Web Sites

These articles will update you about what has been happening with the Zapatistas since late June, 2005.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/marcos07142005.html> - And scroll down and read the article about the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona – July 2, 2005.

<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/06/314733.html> - And read what is there about the Zapatistas...and follow as many links as you can.

This will acquaint you with Las Abejas, the community that experienced the massacre in Acteal.

<http://www.warresisters.org/nva0500-5.htm> -

http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/other/the_bees_98.html

There are also two CD movies we will watching about Chiapas:

1. Zapatista : A Big Noise Film
2. A Place Called Chiapas

I will also put on reserve a set of CDs that I purchased about the global economy. You are welcome to check them out and watch them on your own. They are an excellent historical series about how the global economy has evolved into what it is today. The series is entitled: Commanding Heights: The Battle For The World Economy.

If you would also like to read what the State Department suggests about traveling to Mexico you can go to http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_2139.html

Course Requirements:

1. To keep a running journal of the trip experience during the 10 days that we are in Chiapas.
2. To do 15 hours of solidarity/advocacy work in your own community upon

returning home. I will be providing this year a list of agencies/churches that are excited and open to have you do your work with them and a list of the kinds of things each organization has invited you to consider.

3. To lead worship at least once on the trip.
4. To attend three pre-trip sessions:
 - A community building session.
 - A session at United to watch the movie A Place Called Chiapas
 - A session to discuss details of the trip and talk a bit about the readings
5. To actively participate in the travel seminar's planned experiences as faithfully and as authentically as one can.
6. The course is pass/no credit course
7. When I return I will do a group evaluation and each of you will receive

Itinerary for our Trip

United Theological Seminary

Program Schedule. Chiapas, Mexico. – January 14-24, 2008

Monday, Jan 14. 8:00 pm. Arrival in Tuxtla Gutierrez Airport.

Transfer to San Cristobal de las Casas. Lodging at Hotel Posada Jovel, 28 Flavio Paniagua, Ph: 52-967-678-1734, HOTELJOVEL@hotmail.com – Gather for prayers of gratitude

Tuesday, Jan 15. 9:30-12:30 Trip orientation and city walk.

12:30 – 2:00 Talk with Father Pedro Arriaga, Parish Priest of Chamula

5:00 pm Talk with actress and activist Ofelia Medina about her project: *Fund for Indigenous Children's Health*.

Wednesday, Jan 16. 10:00 am. Visit to *SIPAZ (International Service for Peace - International organization doing accompaniment in Chiapas)* Talk with Marina Pages and other staff. sipaz@laneta.apc.org www.sipaz.org Ph: 52-967-63

4:30-6:30 pm. Talk with Dr. Mercedes Olivera at *Center for Women's Rights*.

Thursday, Jan 17. Morning: Visit *Caracol of Oventik "Heart of the Zapatistas in Front of the World."* Meet with *Zapatista Junta de Buen Gobierno* (Council of Good Government)

Afternoon: Visit community of Magdalenas de la Paz. Meet with *Autonomous Council of Magdalenas*. Visit Guadalupe Clinic and talk with health promoter. Visit with women's weaving collective, *Magdantsetik*. Lunch with the women. Return to San Cristobal.

Friday, Jan 18. Visit *Universidad de la Tierra - University of the Earth*. Talk with Director Dr. Raymundo Sánchez. Visit the different projects and classes. Lunch at *Unitierra*.

Saturday, Jan 19. Nature walk with Hector Mejia to *Huitepec Cloudforest Reserve*. Visit the *Museum of Maya Medicine* and the *Organization of Indigenous Doctors*.

Sunday, Jan 20. Morning: Go to Chamula to festivities of San Sebastian.. Invited by Father Pedro. Afternoon: Lunch with Tomas Johnson of *Cloudforest Initiatives* at his house.

Monday, Jan 21. Visit Center for Political Analysis, and Social and Economic Research (*CAPISE*) Analysis on human rights, militarization and socio-economic situation in Chiapas and talk with Julio Cesar Ortega Oseguera. Ph: 52-967-679-9738, capise@laneta.apc.org www.capise.org.mx

Tuesday, Jan 22. Visit community of Acteal. Father Mariano Perez. Participate in mass and ceremony. Lunch in Acteal. Talk with *Las Abejas Directive*.

Wednesday, Jan 23. Visit *Chinkultik archaeological site*. Lunch in Comitán. Final evaluation and final reflection in San Cristobal.

Thursday, Jan 24. Leave Chiapas.

