

# Student Feedback – Mishpatim 2014

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## 1. Miguel Marchildon

Dear Dean Turnbull and Director Zalick,

I would like to thank you both for making my participation in the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Law - Hebrew University Summer Program possible. I very much enjoyed this world class program and I was very impressed by the quality of the program and its speakers.

One of the things that stood out for me during the program was the real connection with the subject matter that was made possible through the many field trips. For example, our visit to a refugee help centre in Tel Aviv and hearing the testimony of one of its employees that was once a refugee himself really brought a human perspective to the legal issues of immigration law that we studied in the classroom.

Once again thank you for your generous support and encouragement.

Best regards,

Miguel Marchildon

## 2. Genevieve Mushaluk

I am one of the students who went on this year's exchange trip to Israel to study at the Hebrew University. My decision to participate in the trip was based on my personal desire to travel abroad, participate in different forms of study and experience new ways of life. When I left for the trip I had no idea what I would come out of it with, aside from a course credit – hopefully! I knew little of Israel, the Jewish culture, or of the current political affairs of the area.

The trip was extremely valuable for me, not only because of the extensive, and well put-together course material, but because of the culture that we were able to experience and the social dynamic we were exposed to. It is one thing to read about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and another thing to be able to go to the walls of the West Bank and see for yourself.

I knew very little about religion before embarking on my trip – and by the end I was well-versed in the religious history and was taking tours of the tunnels of the Old City and visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock. The personal development and growth I experienced outside of the course lecturers, and in conjunction with them, is invaluable to me.

This course taught me about the Jewish history and the development of Israel, but actually being there in Israel allowed me to be immersed in what I was learning about, which really made the course come alive.

Everything from the extra field trips outside of the classroom, (my favorite of which was the visit to Masada and the Dead Sea!), to the accommodations at the university, was facilitative of a positive and comfortable experience.

The staff at the Hebrew University was very helpful. Daniel Ohana was a fantastic lecturer, and the numerous guest lecturers provided a well-rounded and diversified look at the material. There was also a young student programmer that helped with our group who was from the Hebrew University, named Anat Daniely, who was very helpful to me personally. I made many visits to Anat's office and we corresponded quite a bit through email as well. She helped me organize trips to explore more of Israel on days we weren't in class, and even sat and talked with me and gave me her perspective on some of the things we were learning in class. She helped me set up my gym classes at the Hebrew University, and really made me feel at home away from home, during my time in Israel.

Needless to say, this all enhanced my experience greatly, and it was all of this – the expanding of social and cultural experiences, the wonderfully directed program, and the helpful & friendly staff at the Hebrew University – that made the trip such a success in my mind.

I hope that this trip can continue being offered, for those who want to go and experience the Holy Land, or study in Israel and learn more about the Jewish society, or for those like me who want to study abroad and wind up coming home with so much more than just a course credit.

It's been great to be able to come home and share my stories with my family and friends. I tell them all about what I learned in the lectures, and then get to sprinkle in my own stories about my adventures and experiences in Israel, and everyone is blown away and interested in the complicated yet fascinating dynamic of Israel, and Jerusalem particularly. (And I'm a terrible story-teller, which just goes to show how interesting the material is on its own!)

Thank you for making this trip a possibility, and for allowing me to participate in such an excellent, and perspective-widening program. This trip turned out to be so much more than I had expected, and I am very grateful for the opportunity. I would (and will!) recommend this trip to other students. The trip had been spoken highly about to me during an early-orientation I had attended for the University of Manitoba back in January 2013 before choosing to study there, and it had been on my mind since. I'm so glad I was encouraged to participate in the exchange because this trip turned out to provide so much personal growth, and I hope to be a part of encouraging others to participate and have the same great experience that I did!

Sincerely,

Genevieve Mushaluk  
2nd Year Law Student (starting September!)  
Robson Hall, University of Manitoba

### **3. Diana Coello Mena**

I had the opportunity to participate in the Introduction to Israeli Law and Society: Ancient peoples and newcomers in the start-up nation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University and to thank Professor Schwartz, Dean Turnbull, Associate Dean Fainstein, professor Ohana and everyone who made this possible.

I learned a lot about Israeli law and how they encounter problems and challenges. I visited a variety of unique places including the Supreme Court, Masada and the Dead Sea. I have memories that will last forever and personally I was able to see how perseverance and taking chances can lead to great success. Thank you again for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Diana Coello Mena

### **4. Andrew Torbiak**

I thoroughly enjoyed my time studying in Israel this Spring. The knowledge and instruction we received was highly comprehensive, especially considering the abbreviated nature of the course. I appreciated the wide span of topics that were covered, especially since each topic (refugees, start-up nation, belligerent occupation, etc) could very easily comprise an entire month of lectures in itself.

The field trips we took were both fun and facilitating to our studies. I had no idea to what extent we would be accessing Israel's landscape and business culture, and I was very pleasantly surprised to have been able to visit the places we did.

Israel is an absolutely fascinating country, and the differences between theirs and our legal systems are astounding to me. Often during lectures (and after most every lecture) we as a class would chat about the contrasts and similarities between the respective supreme courts in both countries, the prevailing social and legal climates, and historical differences which have shaped the cultures.

I am so thankful I could take advantage of this opportunity, and it is one I recommend highly to any and all law students who are able to make the trip.

Thank you to Professor Schwartz, the Faculty of Law at U of M and the Canadian Friends of Hebrew University for enabling me to have this experience.

Sincerely,

Andrew Torbiak

## **David Meier**

May 30 (4 days ago)

I apologize for any text that comes out funny, I'm not working off of a north american keyboard at the moment.

I had a great time learning about and exploring Israel during my time there at Hebrew University. For me, not being Jewish and having never really been informed about Jewish culture, there was a lot to take in. I think the classes were exceptionally well put together, with a variety of topics ranging from the history of the country to current world affairs and business economics, and all the way down to various issues with the minority residents of the country. And the classes were more than simple enough to follow, even for students with no business or economic study under their belts. The speakers were great, it was obvious a lot of expertise in various fields was being brought before us. And the field trips too, over all I think it was felt by all that we were getting quite the trip for the amount the trip was costing us as students up front.

The country was fascinating, and it's always a pleasure to learn how other non-North American parts of the world work and function. Israel was a great place to come and learn, I never had any fears about anything happening over there, even when travelling around on our own on days off. There were great beaches to visit, plenty of shopping for this inclined, and more historical sites for a tiny country than I thought possible. It really is a great country to come and visit, and coming to see Israel through this course was a great way to leverage my degree and money to really get a great learning experience. I would highly recommend this trip to anyone that asked about it.

## **5. Tamara Reimer**

This email is my response to the experience at Hebrew University.

I will not lie - I knew nothing of Jewish culture or the struggles of Israel prior to the program offered by Robson Hall. I was completely ignorant, as bad as that may sound. This was one of my main reasons for partaking in the program. I feel that in order to succeed in the legal profession, you need to understand, and be sensitive to, the fact that every individual comes from a different background and has their own struggles. I wanted to ensure that I did not limit myself; that I could give myself the best possible ground on which to base my legal career, and this, I feel, is what the program accomplished. The personal growth that we gained from not just the program, but simply being in Israel and experiencing the culture, is priceless. I am extremely grateful for all the donations that went to help fund the program, for without them, I never would have been able to participate in this amazing experience.

While we could not cover every topic in depth over the three weeks, the material that we were presented was more than adequate. The program was fantastic. Dr. Ohana was a wonderful professor. He ensured that we understood the material and presented both sides, rather than simply his own

opinion. We could not have asked for a better professor. The field trip to the Supreme Court was, for me, the highlight of the trip. It would have been nice, however, if we had been able to sit in on a case/petition (though given the holidays, it is understandable that we were not able to).

The program was extremely beneficial and I would highly recommend that any incoming law students participate in the program

Sincerely,

Tamara

## **6. Cory Tokar**

I would like to thank everyone involved for allowing me the amazing opportunity to study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for this past month. The experience was unlike anything I have encountered before, and the trip and course together was exactly what I needed after a long first year in law school.

Without any prior knowledge of the Israeli legal system, I was surprised to learn how similar and yet different it was from the legal system in Canada. Now obviously I understand that Israel is a new country, but I found it fascinating to learn how the legal system has evolved over time and how it is adjusting to face the current issues occurring in the country. I found it especially interesting how the Supreme Court would cite case law from other countries including Canada, which offered insight to where they would like their Courts to go, while at the same time dealing with the reality that the Constitution is not quite where the founders imagined and thus the Courts were often at odds with the government.

The course load was also very enjoyable as it gave us a perfect balance to study and read the material, while still allowing enough time to travel across the beautiful country and enjoy everything that Israel has to offer. Furthermore, the field trips to Masada, the Dead Sea, as well as being able to visit with a refugee I found to be eye opening experiences, as it just went to demonstrate the issues the region faced thousands of years ago, as well as some issues that Israel currently faces as it is in the very unique position of being a democracy in the Middle East.

Again, I would just like to thank everyone involved for the opportunity that allowed me to study abroad at the Hebrew University, and a special thanks to those who raised funds in order to assist us students with the financial costs of the program, it means a lot to me. So thank you again, and I would highly recommend the program to any interested student in the future, I consider it to be a valuable experience. Thanks again so much!

Sincerely,

## **7. Susan Haas**

I am a 2014 participant in the Hebrew University Mishpatim program, and I would like to thank you for helping me to take part in this opportunity.

This program has been an amazing chance to not only visit one of the most historically important regions in the world, but to also gain a better understanding of the complexities that are grappled with here today. I came into this program with a very limited understanding of Israeli society, and I can't imagine that I would ever have learned as much if I hadn't had the opportunity to come and see the reality on the ground and to learn from teachers who live that reality each day. Much of the complexity gets lost in translation between daily life here and media in North America.

It has also been an excellent opportunity to draw comparisons between Canada and Israel, and to see how influential some aspects of Canadian jurisprudence have been. We can also draw many parallels between legal issues faced in Canada regarding Aborigines and multicultural accommodations, and those faced in Israel regarding Arab, Ultra Orthodox, and other minorities. Professor Schwartz has done an outstanding job of provoking thoughtful discussion on this topic. It has been an excellent opportunity to view Canada through a more critical lens, which is something any citizen in a democratic country should strive to do in hope of working toward improvement.

The field trips are also a wonderful tool to enhance the program, providing some historical benefit through trips to Masada and Yad Vashem, and contributing to understanding of the contemporary setting through trips to the Supreme Court and the African Refugee Development Centre. We have also done some exploring in our own time, and one of the highlights of my experience here was finding the Jerusalem Boxing Club, a non-profit club where Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and Arabs train together. Seeing more of Israel besides the classroom is one of the most beneficial aspects of the Mishpatim program.

I cannot speak highly enough of this experience, and I hope that you will continue to offer your support to this amazing program.

Sincerely,

Susan Haas