

THE SERLING INSTITUTE SUMMER PROGRAM AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY

By Yore Kedem



In June-July 2022, the Serling Institute Summer Education Program took place over 24 days on the Mount Scopus campus of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A diverse group of eight students from a variety of colleges

at MSU participated in taking two courses.

Prof. David Mendelsson taught his class on the Emergence of the State of Israel. This course included daily lectures, and two field trips. On the first Sunday of the program, Prof. Mendelsson took the group to Tel Aviv to see some of the locations discussed in the class, and the streets named for the people who created Israel. Another field trip took the students to Mount Hertzl, where they discussed aspects of Israel's national and secular identities. Prof. Mendelsson

has been teaching this course for our program for many years, and students appreciate his sense of humor and excellent teaching approach.

Cultural Diversity and Immigration in Israel was the other course in this program. Taught by Yore Kedem, Assistant Professor of Hebrew at MSU, this class requires students to interact with locals. To meet Israelis, students did weekly observation exercises in Central Jerusalem, the Old City of Jerusalem, and Central Tel Aviv. For each exercise, students sat in an area and people watched. They documented their observations and interviewed passers-by, shop owners and street performers.

In addition to these field experiences, students went to Ashdod where they met Sharon Eretz to learn about how she came to study in Israel, converted to Judaism and made Aliya (immigrated to Israel). Another trip concentrated on communities and boundaries in Jerusalem. The group went from West



Kibbutz Dalia

Jerusalem, past the bus station for East Jerusalem, and into the Old City. The tour continued from the Muslim Quarter to the Christian Quarter, through Modern Jerusalem to Mea She'arim, a Jewish ultraorthodox neighborhood. Students learned to observe the visible boundaries such as the Ottoman ramparts around the old city or roads that separate neighborhoods, and discussed the boundaries that are invisible to outsiders such as those between the Muslim and Christian quarters. Jerusalem is one of very few places in the world where one can experience thousands of years of history and multiple different cultures within a walking trip that takes less than five hours.

On the third week of class, we went to Kafr Qara to visit the Triangle R&D center, where Dr. Ibrahim Yehia hosted the group. Students learned about the work Dr. Yehia and fellow researchers do to investigate issues that relate directly to the Arab community in the area. We learned about the development of solar panels integrated into greenhouse fabric, and the research into digitization of ancient books and documents in the Muslim world. On the same day, the group went to Kibbutz Dalia where we met Danny Korninsky, who took us on tour of the kibbutz. Danny told us about Dalia's history, how it changed over the

years, and about life on the kibbutz today.

Students wrote research projects for this course. Topics included diversity in the Israeli Defense Forces, messianic Jews, performing Israel through the tourism industry, cultural experiences at the Western Wall, and interracial and interreligious dating/marriage in Israel. Other students completed projects on cultural representations in Israeli popular music, the pressures to have children, and language diversity and opinions in modern Israel.

Students appreciated the program's depth and breadth. Students learned about the challenges and rewards of conducting field research. As Kattiah Richardson reflected:

"Despite the issues that language obstacles can cause, I did end up with quite a few interviews – many of which were extremely helpful, with people that I did not want to stop telling me their story."

Daniel Zivian summarized his experience by writing:

"The study abroad program was thought-provoking, a close look at what Israeli life is like on the ground."



Triangle R&D Center, Kafr Qara

Photos credit- Yore Kedem