

# Bring the Religious Studies Classroom to Your Community

## History

Westar's popular Jesus Seminar on the Road (JSOR) program forms the core of its public outreach. Every year, for more than twenty years, teams of Fellows—professors from accredited universities who are skilled at communicating with a general public—have been taking the scholarship of religion to communities across North America and sometimes even abroad.

The JSOR program began as the brainchild of Associate member Marilyn Muelbach of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where the first program was hosted by a Unity Church in 1995. On that occasion, Roy Hoover and Robert Funk, co-authors of Westar's then recently-published *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, formed the team. Since that auspicious beginning, Westar has staged hundreds of JSORs across North America—in towns and cities as diverse as Boston, Massachusetts, Medicine Hat, Alberta, and Dallas, Texas—and as far afield as Brisbane, Australia, and Hamilton, New Zealand. The program has been so popular, in fact, that some hosts have made it an annual event. Sarasota, Florida, for instance, celebrated its twentieth-anniversary JSOR in 2015.

## Program

Designed to address significant issues in current biblical and theological research and scholarship, the program usually comprises a Friday evening lecture and four hours of presentations and discussions on Saturday.

Topics fall under six main categories: The Historical Jesus, The Historical Paul, The Birth of Christianity, Archaeology, Bible and Culture, and God Matters. Each program can be tailored to the specializations of the faculty and interests of the local host. Visit our online catalog for more information: [westarinstitute.org/regional-programs/](http://westarinstitute.org/regional-programs/)

## Responsibilities

An overview of the responsibilities taken on by Westar and the host appears below. To learn more, pick up a host manual at the website at the address above.

### Westar Institute...

- Covers the costs of presenter travel, lodgings, and honoraria
- Engages the presenters
- Arranges travel and lodging for the presenters
- Develops the program in partnership with the host and presenters
- Creates publicity materials and supports promotional activities

Have you been eagerly awaiting a chance to attend a Jesus Seminar on the Road but have not found one in your area? Why wait? Invite us to your community.

### Local sponsor...

- Provides suitable space for the event
- Guarantees \$3,000 minimum in registration fees. To achieve that minimum, an event would need to attract 40–50 participants.\*
- Names local coordinators to oversee registration and exhibits, along with local/regional promotion and marketing
- Coordinates volunteers and logistics on the day of the event (e.g. room set-up, hospitality, sound)

\*Income over and above \$5,000 is split 50/50 with hosts.

## Publicity

Local publicity is vital to the success of a JSOR. According to a Spring 2014 survey, 42 percent of JSOR attendees found out about the event from family and friends, and 23 percent of attendees learned of it from a church notice. While Westar creates publicity materials and shares the event widely, hosts should be aware of their critical role in the success of the event. There is simply no replacement for a friendly face and personal recommendation.

The good news is that most publicity is simple and straightforward. Cassandra Farrin will happily offer advice and support, along with a local publicity checklist.

## Feedback

“Loved all of it. I enjoyed the speakers relating the ancient world to our world, and our politics. Loved the sense of humor.” (Billings, MT)

“A chance to hear firsthand from scholars doing cutting-edge work.” (Washington DC)

“Openness to question, scholarship, rooted in humanity, not proscribed theology or doctrines.” (Davidson, NC)

“Enjoyed the topic and speakers. Very compelling, interesting, and respectful.” (Norman, OK)

## Contact Us

Potential hosts can express interest by contacting Marketing Director Cassandra Farrin by email ([cfarrin@westarinstitute.org](mailto:cfarrin@westarinstitute.org)) or by phone (208-954-6848). Cassandra supports hosts with logistics and publicity, while Executive Director David Galston works with the hosts to develop the program and invite qualified faculty.