COURSE DESCRIPTION

This entry-level course will acquaint students with the history, theology, and critical study of the first five books of the Old Testament. The focus is the proper interpretation of its message to Israel and its abiding significance for the church.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The student should leave the course able to:

1. demonstrate a basic understanding of the history and theology of the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

2. reflect on the Pentateuch as an ancient document and the implications of this observation for interpretation.

3. describe the problems associated with a single-authorship view of the Pentateuch, and to summarize and evaluate the traditional, critical theory of its composition—the Documentary Hypothesis.

4. understand the goals and methods of ancient (Israelite) historiography and summarize the issues associated with writing a modern history of Israel.

5. discuss the purpose of the Torah in the life and faith of Israel.

6. discuss the role of the “Law” in the life and faith of the church.

REQUIRED READING

The Bible in a modern translation, e.g., the NRSV, ESV, or NLT.


Longman, Tremper III. How to Read Genesis. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005. 192
pages. $16.00. ISBN 0877849439.

Topical Readings (See below)

(See below for Recommended Readings)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Readings**: Students are expected to prepare for each session by reading the assigned pages on time as indicated in the course schedule, including:

   (a) the biblical texts in translation. Prior reading does not substitute.

   (b) the passages from Victor Hamilton’s *Handbook on the Pentateuch* and all other assigned topical readings. These amount to the core instructional material for the class.

2. **Online Discussion**: Students are required to participate regularly in the online forums.

   The online forums are not “live.” The week is divided into two parts (A and B in the course outline). The professor posts starter questions online. Each student makes posts to the discussion forums, responding to questions by interacting with the readings, classmates, and any other materials provided by the instructor. The course expectation is **at least three posts per student per week**. The posts constitute 40% of the grade and are judged by critical engagement with the readings. (See below for more guidelines.)

3. **Quizzes**: Students will take seven quizzes consisting of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions. You may not use course materials.

4. **Paper**: Students will write a 13-15 page paper on the role and purpose of the Torah in the life and faith of Israel and the “law” in the life and faith of the church. What does the Old Testament itself say about the purpose of the law for Israel? How does it relate to God’s purpose in electing Israel? How does the New Testament understand the role of the law for the church? Further instructions will be distributed in class. **Papers will be due the last week of class.**

   Papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins, using 12-point Times New Roman font. Students must follow the style guidelines found in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (8th ed.; University of Chicago Press, 2013). Please contact me early in the course if you have questions about what is expected.

ONLINE FORUMS

Students are required to make **three substantial posts each week and three follow-up response posts** each week.

The **substantial posts**—amounting to somewhere between 400 and 500 words—should be directed towards the starter questions provided by the instructor. These posts should draw from the assigned readings, which are the primary material for the course. Students are expected to demonstrate engagement with the readings by citing and evaluating them. Each substantial post should include a **follow-up discussion question** for further discussion.
The follow-up response posts should be directed toward the follow-up discussion questions provided by your classmates. They will be shorter than the substantial posts and need not cite the readings.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

The course will follow a set schedule during the week, progressing from Session A to Session B and culminating in the quiz at the end of the week. The discussion forums will be live beginning at 10:00am on Sundays and Wednesdays until 10:00pm two days later. You must take the quiz between 10:00am Friday and 10:00pm Saturday.

Session A:  Sun 10:00am – Tue 10:00pm  
Session B:  Wed 10:00am – Fri 10:00pm  
Quiz:       Fri 10:00am – Sat 10:00pm

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

- 40% Class Participation (quality of online posts)  
- 30% Seven Quizzes Averaged  
- 30% Paper

**GRADING SCALE**

- A = 100-95  
- A- = 93-90  
- B+ = 89-87  
- B = 86-83  
- B- = 82-80  
- C+ = 79-77  
- C = 76-73  
- C- = 72-70  
- D+ = 69-67  
- D = 66-63  
- D- = 62-60  
- F = 59 and below

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

All assignments must be completed on time. Assignments completed late will be accepted only on permission of the instructor and are subject to a penalty in grade. No assignments can be completed after the last day of the quarter without prior permission from the professor for an Incomplete. Such permission will not be granted unless the student can show good reason why he or she was prevented, beyond his or her control, from (unforeseeably) completing the assignment on time. Examples are serious illness or a death in the family. Difficulties such as being too busy, computer problems, and not anticipating the time required to manage job, family, and school responsibilities are not grounds for an Incomplete.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Introduction to the Old Testament and the Pentateuch**

**A. Introduction to the Old Testament**

Content Reading: Boadt, “Introducing the Old Testament,” 11-25 (15 pp)  
Optional: Hill & Walton, “Historical Overview of OT Times” (21 pp)
= 40 pp

B. Introduction to the Pentateuch
Content Reading: Hill & Walton, “Introduction to the Pentateuch,” 47-61 (15 pp)
Friedman, “Torah (Pentateuch),” 605-608 (4 pp)
LaSor, Hubbard, Bush, “The Pentateuch” (12 pp)
Bandstra, “Survey of OT History,” 10-21 (12 pp)
= 45 pp

Week 2: Biblical Criticism
A. The Composition of the Pentateuch
Content Reading: DOTP, “Authorship of the Pentateuch,” 61-71 (11 pp)
Friedman, “Torah (Pentateuch),” 608-622 (15 pp)
DOTP, “Source Criticism,” 798-804 (7 pp)
Whybray, Making of the Pentateuch, 43-63, 129-31 (24 pp)
= 57 pp

B. History and Historiography
Content Reading: Davies, “Searching for ‘Ancient Israel’” (27 pp)
Shanks, “The Biblical Minimalists” (11 pp)
Walton, “Understanding the Past: Historiography” (21 pp)
= 59 pp

Quiz #1 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 3: Genesis 1-11
A. Creation
Bible Reading: Genesis 1-3
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 19-47 (29 pp)
Topical Reading: Walton, “Genesis 1 is Ancient Cosmology” (8 pp)
Longman, How to Read Genesis, 71-80 (10 pp)
Selections from Enuma Elish
Biologos.org, “Can Scientific and Scriptural Truth Be Reconciled?” (3 pp)
= 50 pages

B. The Primeval History
Bible Reading: Genesis 4-11
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 57-77 (21 pp)
Topical Reading: DOTP, “Sons of God, Daughters of Man,” 793-797 (5 pp)
“Ancient Near Eastern Flood Accounts” ZIBBCOT 48-49 (2 pp)
Longman, How to Read Genesis, 81-87 (7 pp)
“Tower of Babel,” ZIBBCOT 60-65 (6 pp)
= 41 pages

Optional: Walton, “Mesopotamian Background of the Tower of Babel” (20 pp)
Quiz #2 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 4: Genesis 12-50
A. The Patriarchs and Matriarchs
   Bible Reading: Genesis 12-50
   Content Reading: Hamilton, *Handbook*, 81-129 (41 pp)
   Topical Reading: *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 18-21, 29 (5 pp) (22-28 optional)
   Longman, *How to Read Genesis*, 88-98 (10 pp)
   = 56 pages

B. The Purpose of Election
   Bible Reading: Genesis 12
   Content Reading: Wright, *Mission of God*, 222-264 (43 pp)
   = 43 pages

Quiz #3 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 5: Exodus
A. The Exodus from Egypt
   Bible Reading: Exodus 1-15
   Topical Reading: Mariottini, “The Name of God: Jehovah” (2 pp)
   = 41 pages

B. The Giving of the Torah
   Bible Reading: Exodus 19-40
   Topical Reading: Walton, “Covenants and Treaties” (12 pp)
   = 58 pages

Quiz #4 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 6: Topics
A. The Purpose of the Torah
   Bible Reading: Exodus 19; Deuteronomy 4-6
   Content Reading: Block, “The Grace of Torah” (20 pp)
   Kaiser, “The Law as God’s Gracious Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness” (22 pp)
   = 42 pages

   Bible Reading: Matthew 5-6; Galatians 3; Romans 2-3, 5; 7; 9:30-10:8
   Content Reading: *IVP Dictionary of NT*, “Law” (33 pp)
   *For your paper, consult the readings on law in the bibliography.*
The Promised Land
Content Reading: DOTP, “Land, Fertility, Famine,” 487-491 (5 pp)
Kaiser, “The Promised Land” (10 pp)
= 48 pages

Begin to think about your paper on the purpose of the “law.”

Week 7: Leviticus
A. Sin and Sacrifice
Bible Reading: Leviticus 1-16
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 231-279 (49 pp)
Topical Readings: Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible” (7 pp)
= 56 pages

B. Holiness
Bible Reading: Leviticus 17-26
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 281-293 (13 pp)
Topical Reading: DOTP, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” 706-732 (27 pp)
DOTP, “Holy and Holiness,” 420-430 (11 pp)
= 51 pages

Quiz #5 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 8: Numbers
A. In the Wilderness (Part 1)
Bible Reading: Numbers 1-20
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 303-337 (35 pp)
= 46 pages

B. In the Wilderness (Part 2)
Bible Reading: Numbers 20-36
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 341-360 (20 pp)
Topical Reading: DOTP, “Tabernacle,” 807-826 (20 pp)
De’ir Alla Inscription (cf. Numbers 22-24)
“Balaam in the Setting of the ANE,” ZIBBCOT 380-381 (2)
= 42 pages

Quiz #6 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 9: Deuteronomy
A. Remember the Past; Be Careful in the Future
Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 1-11
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 367-383, 390-400 (27 pp)
Topical Reading: DOTP, “Deuteronomy, Book of,” 182-192 (11 pp)
 DOTP, “Covenant,” 139-154 (15 pp) 
= 50 pages

B. The Deuteronomic Torah
Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 12-34
Content Reading: Hamilton, Handbook, 402-435, 444-461 (50 pp)
= 50 pages

Quiz #7 due Saturday 10:00pm

Week 10: Wrap Up
A. Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua-Kings)
Bible Reading: 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 17:7-20; 22-23
Content Reading: Knoppers, “Introduction,” 1-12, skim 13-18 (12 pp)
Noth, “Central Theological Ideas” (11 pp)
Richter, “Deuteronomistic History” (10 pp)
Nicholson, “Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist” (8 pp)
= 43 pages

B. Preaching from the Pentateuch
Content Reading: Wright, “Preaching from the Law” (17 pp)
Block, “Preaching OT Law to NT Christians” (17 pp)
= 34 pages

Paper due Saturday at 10:00pm

TOPICAL READINGS (Listed according to the Course Schedule)


Bandstra, Barry L. Pages 10-21 in Reading the Old Testament: Introduction to the Hebrew


SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introductory Texts


Thematic and Topical


Commentaries


**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the act of passing off as one’s own the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper acknowledgment or documentation. Plagiarism may include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Submitting as one’s own material copied, borrowed, or purchased from some other source. This includes, but is not limited to, downloading term papers from the internet, purchasing a paper from a “term paper mill,” reproducing parts or all of an article or book section, copying another student’s paper, and so on.

2. Copying verbatim or taking ideas from a source without providing documentation (i.e., footnote or quotation marks).

3. Copying verbatim or taking ideas from a source and providing fraudulent or misleading documentation.

4. Copying verbatim from a source without using quotation marks or a block quotation. When copied material is not properly identified with quotation marks, readers are led to believe that the material is the writer’s own words, when in fact it is someone else’s, which is the essence of plagiarism. Providing a footnote after copied material without using quotation marks is not adequate documentation and constitutes plagiarism.

5. Paraphrasing material that is too close to the original, whether documented properly or not. A paraphrase is unacceptable if it merely changes a few words or transposes phrases or sentences in the original source, but retains the bulk of the text as it originally appeared.

Since plagiarism is a form of claiming for ourselves what belongs to another, it constitutes an infringement on someone else’s intellectual property and is a form of stealing. It is a very serious violation of Christian ethics and raises profound questions about fitness for Christian ministry. The seminary takes these matters extremely seriously and will take disciplinary action against those who engage in plagiarism.
It is sometimes difficult to know whether or how to acknowledge and document certain kinds of material. When in doubt, consult Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed., 2013, especially those sections dealing with using quotations and footnotes. Students are expected to know and follow the guidelines in Turabian. Ignorance of them is no excuse.

**COURSE EVALUATION**

Students must complete an online course evaluation using the seminary Moodle system at [http://moodle.seminary.edu](http://moodle.seminary.edu) in order to receive a final grade for the course. The evaluation will be open for one week starting the last day of the term. If you need assistance connecting to Moodle or accessing the evaluation, please send an email to moodlehelp@seminary.edu.