

CH 128 - SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEALS OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

Dr. Carolyn J. Pressler

Email: cpressler@unitedseminary.edu

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SYLLABUS

GOALS OF THE COURSE

Pentateuchal Law is an important resource for understanding the social, political and religious values of ancient Israel. In this course, students will examine the major collections of Old Testament law as an expression of Israelite ideals. These ideals provide important visions and norms for contemporary communities of faith. At times, they also present problems for the modern interpreter. Students in this course will attend to the contemporary theological and ethical significance of the Pentateuchal Laws.

The course is designed to help the student:

- ◆ Gain an introductory knowledge of the content, historical context(s) and main issues of critical scholarship of each of the major legal collections in the Pentateuch (i.e., the Decalogue, the Book of the Covenant, Deuteronomic Law and Priestly Law).
- ◆ Gain practice in a range of exegetical methods appropriate to the study of Pentateuchal Law.
- ◆ Practice developing theological and ethical responses to the Biblical Laws that are appropriate to her/his faith community and that are consistent with her/his hermeneutical framework.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Brown, William P., ed. *The Ten Commandments. The Reciprocity of Faithfulness.*

Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.

Patrick, Dale. *Old Testament Law.* Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985.

(Reprinted by Wipf and Stock, 2006.)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Harrelson, Walter. *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000.

Matthews, Victor, Bernard Levinson and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, eds. *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East.* London: T&T Clark. 2004.

REQUIRED ARTICLES

1. Miller, Patrick D. "The Human Sabbath," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* ns 6 no 2, 1985, pp. 81-97.
2. Hanson, Paul D. "The Theological Significance of Contradiction Within the Book of the Covenant," in *Canon and Authority: Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. George Coats and Burke Long. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977, pp. 110-131.
3. Miller, Patrick. *Deuteronomy, Interpretation.* Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1990, pp. 1-17.
4. Lohfink, Norbert. "Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Office," in his *Great Themes From the Old Testament.* Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982, pp. 55-75.

5. Milgrom, Jacob. "Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System." *Interpretation* 17, 1963, pp. 288-301.
6. Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger*, pp. 41-57.
7. Wegner, Judith Romney. "Leviticus," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 36-44.
8. Adler, Rachel. "Tumah and Taharah: Ends and Beginnings," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*. NY: Schocken Books, 1976, pp. 63-71.
9. Scheering, Linda S. "Double time...double trouble? gender, sin, and Leviticus 12" *The Book of Leviticus*, ed. by Rolf Rendtorff and Robert Kugler. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003, pp. 429-450.
10. Pressler, Carolyn. *The View of Women in Deuteronomistic Family Law*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993, pp. 79-118.
11. Eckhart, Otto. "False Weights in the Scale of Biblical Justice," in *Gender and Law*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, pp. 128-146.
12. Meyers, Carol. "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, eds. Carol Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster Press, 1992, pp. 244-251.
13. Hess, Carol. "Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Texts," in her *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997, pp. 195-205.
14. Nelson, James B. "Sources for Body Theology: Homosexuality as a Test Case," in *Sexuality and the Sacred*, ed. James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994, pp. 374-386.
15. Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Law as Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible." *Semeia* 45, 1989.
16. Miller, Patrick. "What the Scriptures Principally Teach," in *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, ed. by Choon-Leong Seow. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996, pp. 53-63.
17. Lohfink, Norbert. "Poverty in the Laws of the ANE and the Bible." *TS* 52 1999, pp. 34-50.
18. Miller, "The Way of Torah," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 8, 1987, pp. 17-27.
19. Hanson, Paul. "War and Peace in the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation* 38 O 1984, pp. 341-362. (Available through First Search.)
20. Gottwald, Norman. "Holy War," in "Deuteronomy: Analysis and Critique," *Review and Expositor* 61, 1964, pp. 296-310.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE CLASS

1. Attendance at and participation in class.

This course is heavily dependent upon peer-learning; attendance is therefore essential. Absence from three or more sessions jeopardizes the student's ability to complete the course successfully.

2. Reading the assigned materials.

3. Prepared Interpretation of specific Biblical texts.

Most weeks the class will be assigned a particular text which will be the focus of exegetical discussions. All members of the class are expected to prepare their interpretations of that text carefully and to participate in the group discussion.

4. Three short (two- to three-page) papers during the first half of the semester.

- a. A reflection on *your* interpretive context to be posted on the class web page by 5:00 p.m. **February 14** and discussed **February 15**.

- b. An exposition of one of the last six commandments to be posted on the class web page by 5:00 p.m. **February 28**, and discussed in class on **March 1**.
 - c. An exposition of the "focus text" from the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21:12-14), the Deuteronomic Laws (Deuteronomy 17:14-20) **or** the priestly material (Leviticus 11:1-47). The paper must be posted by 5:00 p.m. the day before the class at which the passage will be discussed.
5. **An 8-10 page seminar paper** discussing one of the topics examined during the second half of the semester. The paper should include exegetical discussion of the text and discussion of its theological or ethical ramifications. The seminar papers must be posted by 5 pm the day before that the topic is discussed. The essay writer will lead a discussion of the focus passage on which he or she has written.

PLEASE NOTE

Papers must be **double spaced, computer generated or typed, and properly footnoted**, following **Student Handbook** guidelines. All work in this class is expected to follow the **Inclusive Language Policy** as stated in the Student Handbook. Be sure to note the definition of "**plagiarism**" in the Handbook. **Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and may be grounds for dismissal from the Seminary.** Late papers and makeup exams will be accepted **only with the permission of the instructor and only in cases of emergency.** Unexcused late papers will not be accepted.

CLASS SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY 8

I. Introduction

- A. Course Organization
- B. What is Biblical Law? Why and how do we study it?

FEBRUARY 15

II. Biblical Law in Context

- A. Biblical Law in Christian Tradition
- B. Interpreting from *Our* own contexts

Required Reading

- 1. Patrick, Chapter Two.
- 2. Brown, Chapters 3-8, pp. 45-105.

Recommended Reading

- 1. Patrick, Introduction.
- 2. Brown, Chapters 9-12.

Required Writing—Reflections on Your Own Interpretive Context

Please reflect on how Biblical Law is –or might be-- interpreted in your context. Are you a member of a particular denomination or faith tradition? If so, does your denomination have formal statements or positions concerning the authority of the Older Testament in general or OT law in particular? Does it have a hermeneutical tradition such as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral? In practice, how does your denomination or your particular community of faith treat Biblical Law? At what

points do you agree with your denominational/congregational positions and practices about Biblical interpretation, especially of the legal materials? In what ways do you diverge from those positions and practices?

FEBRUARY 22

III. The Decalogue, Part One

- A. Overview
- B. Exegetical Review: Focus Text: The Sabbath Commandment (Exodus 20:9-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

Required Reading

1. Exodus 19-24, esp. Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
2. Patrick, pp. 35-59.
3. Brown, chapters 14-17, pp. 174-222.
4. Miller, Patrick D. "The Human Sabbath," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, ns 6 no 2, 1985, pp. 81-97.

Recommended Reading

1. Childs, Brevard. *Exodus* (OTL). *Loc. cit.*
2. Miller, Patrick. *Deuteronomy* (Int.). *Loc. cit.*
3. Harrelson, pp. 3-77, esp. pp. 51-77.
4. Harrelson, Walter. *The Ten Commandments for Today*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.
5. Miller, Patrick D. *The God You Have. Politics, Religion, and the First Commandment*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.

MARCH 1

IV. The Decalogue, Part II

- A. The Fourth - Tenth Commandments
- B. The Decalogue and Contemporary Ethics

Required Reading

1. Review Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
2. Review Patrick, pp. 35-59.
3. Brown, Chapters 18, 20, 22 and 23 (We will read chapters 19 and 21 later in the course.).
4. Each student is expected to read secondary sources about the particular commandment which she or he is exegeting.

Recommended Reading

1. Harrelson, pp.
2. Brenner, Athalya. "The Decalogue, Am I An Addressee?" in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, pp. 255-258.
3. Bailey, Wilma Ann. "You Shall not Kill" or "You Shall Not Murder"? Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005.

Required Writing

After completing the general assignment, each student will write a brief (two- to three-page) exposition of one of the commandments to be posted on the class web

page by 5:00 p.m. February 28.

MARCH 8

V. The Book of Covenant

- A. Overview
- B. Focus Text: Exodus 21:12-14

Required Reading

1. Exodus 20:23 - 23:19.
2. Patrick, pp. 63-96.
3. Hanson, "The Theological Significance of Contradiction Within the Book of the Covenant," in *Canon and Authority: Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. George Coats and Burke Long. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977, pp. 110-131.

MARCH 15

VI. Deuteronomic Law

- A. Overview
- B. Focus Text: Deuteronomy 16:18 - 18:22, esp. 17:14-20

Required Reading

1. Deuteronomy 12-26.
2. Patrick, pp. 97-141.
3. Miller, *Deuteronomy, Interpretation*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1990, pp. 1-17.
4. Lohfink, "Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Office," in his *Great Themes From the Old Testament*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982, pp. 55-75.

Recommended Reading

1. Braulik, George. "Deuteronomy and Human Rights," in his *The Theology of Deuteronomy*. Richmond Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1994, pp.131-150.
2. McBride, S. Dean. "Polity of the Covenant People: The Book of Deuteronomy." *Interpretation 41*, 1987, pp. 229-244.
3. Brueggemann, Walter. *Deuteronomy (AOTC)*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002, *loc. cit.*

MARCH 22 - READING WEEK - CLASSES DO NOT MEET

MARCH 29

VII. The Priestly Laws

- A. Overview
- B. Focus text: Leviticus 11

Required Reading

1. Leviticus 17:1 - 26:46 and Leviticus 11.
2. Patrick, *OTL*, pp. 145-186.
3. Milgrom, Jacob. "Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System." *Interpretation 17*, 1963, pp. 288-301.
4. Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the Concepts of Pollution And Taboo*. ARK, 1984, pp. 41-57.

Recommended Reading

1. Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Pollution, Purification and Purgation on Biblical Israel," in *The Word of the Lord Shall go Forth*, pp. 399-414
2. Milgrom, Jacob. "Israel's Sanctuary and the Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray." RB 83, 1976, pp. 390-399. (Reprinted in his *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983, pp. 75-84.)

APRIL 5

VIII. Women and Biblical Law, Part 1

- A. Overview
- B. Purity, Childbirth and Menstruation Video: "In Her Own Time," Barbara Myerhoff

Required Reading

1. Leviticus 12; 15 (esp. vv. 19-30).
2. Wegner, Judith Romney. "Leviticus," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 36-44.
3. Adler, Rachel, "Tumah and Taharah: Ends and Beginnings," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*. NY: Schocken Books, 1976, pp. 63-71.
4. Scheering, Linda S., "Double time...double trouble? gender, sin, and Leviticus 12" *The Book of Leviticus*, ed. by Rolf Rendtorff and Robert Kugler. Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2003, pp. 429-450.

APRIL 12

IX. Women and Biblical Law, Part 2.

- A. Reading Strategies for Problematic Texts
- B. Focus Texts: Deuteronomy 21:10-21; 22:13-29; 24:1-4; 25:5-12 (esp. 22:13-29)

Required Reading

1. Pressler. *The View of Women in Deuteronomical Family Law*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993, pp. 79-118.
2. Eckhart, Otto. "False Weights in the Scale of Biblical Justice," in *Gender and Law*, pp. 128-146.
3. Meyers, Carol. "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," In *The Women's Bible Commentary*, eds. Carol Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster Press, 1992, pp. 244-251.
4. Hess, Carol. "Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Texts," in her *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997, pp. 195-205.
5. Student Essay.

Recommended Reading

1. Pressler. "Sexual Violence and Deuteronomical Law," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus Through Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, pp. 102-112.
2. Meyers. "The Problem of Patriarchy," in *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Contexts*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 24-46.
3. Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Deuteronomy," *The Women's Bible Commentary*, pp. 52-62.

APRIL 19

X. Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

- A. Sexual Orientation and Pentateuchal Law –Focus Text: Leviticus 18
- B. Sexuality in Biblical Law and Biblical Song

Required Reading

- 1. Leviticus 18.
- 2. Nelson, James, "Sources for Body Theology: Homosexuality as a Test Case," in *Sexuality and the Sacred*, ed. James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994, pp. 374-386.
- 3. Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, "Law as Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible." *Semeia* 45, 1989.
- 5. Miller, Patrick. "What the Scriptures Principally Teach," in *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, ed. By Choon-Leong Seow. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996, pp. 53-63.
- 6. Consult commentaries on Leviticus 18.

APRIL 25—CONVOCATION—CLASSES DO NOT MEET

MAY 3

XI. Slave Laws and the Treatment of the Poor

- A. The Contexts of the Slave Laws
- B. Exegesis of the Slave Laws (Exodus 21:2-11, Deuteronomy 15:1-18)

Required Reading

- 1. Exodus 21:2-11; Deuteronomy 15:1-18. (cf. Code of Hammurabi 17; Leviticus 25; Jeremiah 34).
- 2. Lohfink, Norbert. "Poverty in the Laws of the ANE and the Bible." *TS* 52 1999, pp. 34-50.
- 3. Miller. "The Way of Torah." *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 8, 1987, pp. 17-27.
- 4. Brown. Chapter 21.
- 5. Student Essay.
- 6. To help in your exegesis of the texts, consult **at least two** of the following commentaries on Deuteronomy 15:1-18:

Clifford, Richard. *Deuteronomy*
Mayes, A. D. H. *Deuteronomy*. The New Century Bible
Miller, Patrick. *Deuteronomy - Interpretation*
Olson, *Deuteronomy*, N.I.B.
von Rad, Gerhard. *Deuteronomy*, OTL

Recommended Reading

- 1. Pressler, Carolyn. "Wives and Daughters, Bond and Free: Women and the Slave Laws of Exod. 21:2-11," V. Matthews, B. Levinson, T. Frymer-Kinsky, eds. *Gender and Law in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- 2. Matthews, V. "The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code," in *Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law*, ed. By Bernard M. Levinson. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.

3. Hamilton, Jeffries. *Social Justice in Deuteronomy*. SBLDS, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.
4. Gowan, J. D., "Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament," *Interpretation* 41, 1987, pp. 341-353.
5. Patrick, Dale. "The Rights of the Underprivileged." SBLASB, 1975, pp. 1-6.

MAY 10

XII. Holy War

- A. Old Testament Perspectives on War and Peace: An Overview
- B. The Deuteronomic War Laws (Deuteronomy 20, cf. Deuteronomy 7)

Required Reading

1. Deuteronomy 20 (cf. Deuteronomy 7; 21:10-14; 24:5).
2. Hanson, Paul. "War and Peace in the Hebrew Bible." *Interpretation* 38, O 1984, pp. 341-362. (Available through First Search).
3. Gottwald, Norman. "Holy War," in "Deuteronomy: Analysis and Critique." *Review and Expositor* 61, 1964, pp. 296-310.
4. Review Carol Hess, "Dealing with Difficult Texts."
5. Brown. Chapter 19.
6. To help with your exegesis of Deuteronomy 20, consult **at least one** of the following commentators on Deuteronomy:

Mayes
von Rad
Miller
Clifford

Recommended Reading

1. Niditch, Susan. *War in the Hebrew Bible. A Study in the Ethics of Violence*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
2. von Rad. "Deuteronomy and Holy War," in *Studies in Deuteronomy*. London: SCM Press, 1953, pp. 45-59.
3. Rofe'. "The Laws of Warfare in the Book of Deuteronomy: Their Origins, Intent and Positivity." *JSOT* 32, 1985, pp. 23-44. (Available on First Search)
4. Pressler, Carolyn. "The Bible Tells Me So," "Dealing with Difficult Texts: The OT and War," and "Joshua 6". (Posted on the course web page.)

MAY 17

XIII. STUDENT CHOICE

Given the small size of this seminar, there is an opportunity to tailor it to student needs and interests. I have therefore left one class session open; we will decide together what topic to cover. Some possible suggestions include:

- a second session on any of the topics that are covered in just one week.
- Torah from a Jewish Perspective (depends upon the availability of a guest lecturer).
- Student Presentations (a briefer exegetical paper and an interpretive project would be an appropriate substitute for an 8-10 page essay and leading class discussion).