

CH161-01
ORIENTATION TO THE OLDER TESTAMENT:
PENTATEUCH AND FORMER PROPHETS
FALL TERM, 2007
TWIN CITIES SECTION
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
Prof. Richard D. Weis

SYLLABUS

COURSE ASSUMPTIONS

In constructing this course of study for us I have made a number of assumptions of which you should be aware. They are certainly not the only positions one might take on such matters, but since they are the ones I have taken in deciding about the course, knowing them might help you navigate the course.

CONCERNING COURSE PARTICIPANTS

Some of the assumptions I make are about the students who participate in this course.

1. ***You are self-motivated learners*** who will take responsibility for your own learning within the structures of the course.
2. ***Already, before the start of the course, you have your own particular way -- your own habits -- of reading, studying and interpreting the Bible.*** You are formed in a certain way in this part of your life. Your way of interpreting the Hebrew Bible may differ from the approaches you will learn in this course. This is neither bad nor good; it's just a reality. There are many different approaches to interpreting the Bible, some better than others, but some neither better nor worse, just different. ***The main point is that, when we set about learning an approach to interpreting the Bible, we are to some extent talking about transforming ourselves; we are talking about changing existing habits, or learning new ones.*** In some way our relation to the Bible will be reshaped; it will be opened up to new meanings and new depth of understanding. This is a fruitful process, but it is also a struggle.
3. ***After this course the primary way in which you will use what you learn here in an integrated manner will be the interpretation of specific passages of the Hebrew Bible.*** Moreover, that integrated practice of interpretation will be at least somewhat different for each one of you, because you are different individuals, who participate in a variety of faith communities and other communities of accountability. Thus the course, so far as is possible for an introductory course, ought not give you a pre-packaged integration of its components, or at least ought not present any such integration as universally valid. Moreover, ***so far as possible, the course ought to emphasize integration of its materials around the act of interpreting individual passages.***
4. ***You will need space to process and integrate your learnings in this course.*** So far as possible, I have tried to create space within the course for some of this. That may not be sufficient, however. Thus, so far as possible, I am glad to be available for individual conversation if that would be helpful in the processing and integrating of your learnings in the course. You should assume, however, that a certain amount of this work is something you need to do on your own. You would do well to anticipate this during the life of the course. ***Moreover, you should assume that the processing and integrating will go on well past the end of the course.***
5. ***You do not know Hebrew.*** Thus most of you have done, and will do, your interpretation of and with the Hebrew Bible on the basis of English translations.

6. ***Learning the content of the English Bible for the books of the Hebrew Bible is your responsibility.*** While I do not expect that you have acquired such knowledge before coming to seminary, this course cannot give up its function (from a time when one could expect that) to take over the role of teaching you such content. You can quickly obtain a very basic level of such knowledge by using the Bible Tutor software you will find on-line at Luther Seminary. (See the URL in the list of supplementary readings for the course.)

CONCERNING THE HEBREW BIBLE AND ITS INTERPRETATION

Some of the assumptions I make are about the subject matter of the course, the Hebrew Bible, and why and how we read it.

1. ***The Hebrew Bible has some degree of authority for you and for your faith community.*** For me, that authority is expressed in the traditional language that the Hebrew Bible is the Word of God. This is not a statement of fact; it is a statement of faith. In relation to the Bible's authority, however, the key issue is not whether the Bible has authority, but rather ***what is the nature of the Bible's authority, and thus how should we relate to it in order to learn from it (or: how does the Hebrew Bible function for us as the Word of God in our time, and how do we relate to it in order to understand well what God would say to us today).*** As far as the course is concerned, my operating assumption is that a variety of views about the nature and degree of the authority of the Hebrew Bible will be legitimately present among us.
2. We read the Bible (including the Hebrew Bible) because we want to know who God is for us, who we are, what the world is, where God is present and active in our life and world, who God calls us to be, and what God calls us to do. In other words, we read the Bible not out of antiquarian interest, but because it somehow helps us understand contemporary life. ***Thus our primary interest in reading the Bible is to use it to interpret our life and our world*** in order to find where God is already present and active in our life and world. Therefore ***the act of Biblical interpretation is always contextual***, that is, it always concerns itself, whether openly or in a hidden way, with the understanding of a particular human situation to which the interpreter or interpreting community has some relation.
3. It is patently obvious that the world of the Bible (including the Hebrew Bible) is quite different from our world - socially, economically, culturally, politically, religiously. Thus the meaning of a Biblical passage is not necessarily obvious, nor is the most helpful connection between a Biblical passage and our world always obvious. Thus ***the Bible requires interpretation in its own right (exegesis) if we are to use it as effectively as possible in understanding our life and world.***
4. ***The Bible itself (including the Hebrew Bible) is contextual.*** How one might express a rationale for that will differ depending on one's understanding of the nature of the Bible's authority. However we formulate that, it is clear that the Hebrew Bible is expressed not only in languages spoken in its day -- Hebrew and Aramaic, but in the cultural and theological idioms of ancient Israel, and addresses the social, economic, political and religious situations in Palestine of the 12th through 2nd centuries before the Common Era. That Biblical texts were -- at their origin -- concerned with articulating the meaning of the reality of their particular contexts offers a useful basis for making insightful connections between Biblical texts and the reality of our contexts. ***The course is based in the assumption that we hear the Bible most helpfully and clearly when we listen to it in terms of the cultural and theological idiom in which it speaks, and in terms of the way it addressed the times in which it came to expression.*** Our understanding of how it articulated the meaning of reality in those contexts serves as a clue for how it helps us articulate the meaning of reality in our context. At the same time it is important to recognize that this kind of historical reconstruction is, even when grounded as carefully as possible in the data of the past, essentially an act of imagination.
5. Because the Bible is meant to communicate to human beings, ***it uses typical human language that communicates its meaning in the conventional ways of human literature and rhetoric.*** Indeed, the Bible is full of powerful and beautiful literature and rhetoric. Thus we hear it most helpfully and clearly when we read it with sensitivity and alertness to how it "works" as literature and rhetoric.
6. ***The interpretation of a Biblical text, and the interpretation of current reality by means of a Biblical text are always the responsibility of particular human individuals and/or communities.*** These individuals and com-

munities each have their particular history, experience of life, points of view, formation as persons and communities. Individual interpreters are often members of a variety of communities of identity and accountability, and communities are often composed of a variety of individuals who are linked to a range of other communities. This has two immediate implications for Biblical interpretation:

- ***Any given act of Biblical interpretation contains an irreducible element of subjectivity.*** This cannot be avoided without removing the human beings who interpret (resulting in no interpretation), or without removing their God-given humanity. This element of subjectivity is a great strength -- since it enables a particular interpreter to see possibilities for meaning in a text and in life that no one else sees, and also a great limitation -- since it keeps that same interpreter from seeing other possibilities.
 - ***Because a diversity of individuals and communities interpret the Bible and life, there is a diversity of interpretations.*** Traditionally, this has been seen as a problem. If, however, each interpreter has something that they have seen that others may not have seen, then a variety of interpretations may not be a problem so much as a resource for greater insight. ***Thus our interpreting ought not assume that a single text has a single “right” meaning, but rather contains a potential conversation among a variety of possible meanings.***
7. Because we come to the Bible to see something we do not now see so clearly, namely, God's presence and action in our lives and world today, we want to go about reading and interpreting the Hebrew Bible in such a way that we allow it to show us things we do not already know. We want to be wary of the ways the subjectivity of interpretation can limit us, leading to interpretations that are mere reflections of ourselves, our points of view, our interests and our theologies. ***We want to be able to hear the Bible's own voice in dialogue with us, rather than co-opting the Bible's authority to affirm what we want to say.*** The two most crucial aids in achieving this goal are: 1) the disciplined application of techniques of analysis and reflection to the Biblical text, the modern situation, and the interpreter's life; 2) interpretation in community, where our interpretation is in critical dialogue with other interpretations.
8. ***Crucial to Biblical interpretation is the observation, respect and comprehension of difference.*** This may be difference between different parts or elements within a Biblical passage, or difference between two or more passages, or difference between the world of the text and our world, or difference among interpretations, or difference among modes of interpretation, or difference among interpreters and interpreting communities. The differences, of course, occur in a context of continuity, else there would be no meaningful interaction. The continuity establishes a kinship or relation that makes interaction possible. The differences, however, are what give insight, and so ought not be ignored or glossed over. ***The observation, respect and comprehension of difference are at the core of this course.***

COURSE AIM & OBJECTIVES

This course aims to equip you for life-long learning of and about the Hebrew Bible, and to strengthen your ability as an interpreter of and with the Hebrew Bible in and on behalf of contemporary communities of faith.

As essential components of achieving this aim the course seeks to assist you in achieving the following outcomes:

1. You will be familiar with an overall framework for appropriating the Hebrew Bible in relation to contemporary life, and for analyzing that interpretive conversation (*assessed via reflection and exegesis papers*);
2. You will have basic knowledge of the following subjects essential to approaches of interpretation that have some regard for the cultural, historical and/or literary specificity of the Hebrew Bible (*assessed via final exam, and en passant in exegesis papers and reporting out from small groups*):
 - the geographic, material, and social/cultural/political contexts of the emergence and life of ancient Israel,
 - the history, society, culture, religion, and theologies of ancient Israel,

- the shape, themes, and history of the great narrative cycles known as the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History;
3. You will be able to apply that knowledge to understand Biblical texts in light of their own idioms and contexts (*assessed in exegesis papers and reporting out from small groups*);
 4. You will be able to engage in the close reading of narrative texts in the Hebrew Bible (*assessed in exegesis papers*);
 5. You will have a rudimentary understanding of the dynamics of Hebrew poetry (*assessed via final exam*);
 6. You will have a rudimentary understanding of the dynamics of Biblical laws (*assessed via final exam*).

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The **FIRST EXPECTATION** is that we all will ***approach the Biblical text and the work of this class with open minds***. The point in taking any class is to learn and grow. This can only happen if we are open to new approaches and perspectives.

The **SECOND EXPECTATION** is that you ***will be present in class and prepared*** by having done the week's assignments. Note that material covered in lectures is mostly not repeated in the readings and vice-versa. Therefore I consider attendance in assigning course grades. In general, if you miss more than two class sessions, it will affect your grade.

The **THIRD EXPECTATION** is that you ***will be a regular, responsible and constructive participant in your small discussion group***. Note that this includes required postings in response to a weekly question on your small group's discussion forum on the course web page. I may ask small groups to come to a collective self-evaluation during the last class session, which I will take into account in grading each group's members for the course, or I may simply rely on the Moodle postings to gain a picture of your participation.

The **FOURTH EXPECTATION** is that you will ***do the written assignments*** that provide for individualized response and feedback. These are:

1. A reflection paper of no more than 3 pages describing formative moments and/or forces in your life, and reflecting on how they have affected the way you read the Bible. Due in class on September 18. Graded P/NC.
2. A reflection paper of no more than 3 pages responding to these four questions: 1) What causes the diversity of approaches to interpreting the Bible encountered in the readings assigned from Day & Pressler and Sugirtharajah?; 2) In what ways is this diversity a good thing or a bad thing? Why is that so?; 3) Where do you fit into this diversity?; 4) How should we handle such a diversity of approaches in interpreting the Bible? Why do you take the approach you do? Due in class on September 25.
3. An exegesis paper of not more than 4 pages on Genesis 18:1-15, using the techniques for reconstructive reading described in Weis, pp. 1-9. NOTE: The function of this paper is for you to learn for yourself specific skills of textual analysis. The use of commentaries is absolutely prohibited. Due in class October 30. Written instructions will be passed out in class on October 16.
4. A reflection paper of no more than 3 pages addressing a question or questions posed about the differing interpretations of Exodus in the assigned readings. Due in class November 13. The specific questions for the paper will be passed out in class on November 6.
5. An exegesis paper of not more than 4 pages on Exodus 15:1b-18, using the techniques for reconstructive reading described in Weis, pp. 1-9. NOTE: The function of this paper is for you to learn for yourself specific skills of textual analysis. The use of commentaries is absolutely prohibited. Due in class November 20. Written instructions will be passed out in class on November 13.

6. An exegesis paper of not more than 4 pages on Joshua 2, using the techniques for reconstructive reading described in Weis, pp. 1-9. NOTE: The function of this paper is for you to learn for yourself specific skills of textual analysis. The use of commentaries is absolutely prohibited. Due in class December 4. Written instructions will be passed out in class on November 27.
7. An end-of-course examination (three quarters to one hour) on the varieties of knowledge identified in course objective number 2. A study guide will be distributed one to two weeks in advance of the exam. The exam will be taken in class on December 11

Your papers should be typed, double-spaced, with one inch margins on all sides. In other matters of style and format your papers should follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Seventh edition). This style standard is established by school policy (see *The Student Handbook*).

I expect that you will observe the normal practices of the academic world for acknowledging dependence on the work of others (something none of us can avoid because the subject is too vast). ***Your papers will have bibliographies listing works you consulted*** in writing the paper even if these are only Bible translations or textbooks, and no matter how few or many there are. ***No paper will be accepted without a bibliography!*** Wherever in the paper itself you use information, ideas, opinions, etc. gained from your reading, it is not enough to list the source(s) of that material in the bibliography. ***A footnote identifying the source(s) at the actual point of usage is also necessary. Failure to identify the sources of material that is not your work, but taken over from others, is plagiarism.*** If you hand in work containing plagiarism, I will grade it "F" or "NC", and will not let you replace or make up that paper. Note that the *Masters Student Handbook* (p. 46) shows a possible penalty of dismissal from school in the event of repeated offenses.

CLASS ORGANIZATION

There will be exceptions, but most weeks class will be organized on a tripartite class pattern. ***One hour will be devoted to some all-class activity (e.g., lecture, workshop on exegesis, discussion of readings), one hour will be devoted to small group discussion, and another hour will again be devoted to all-class activity.*** The sequence of the three class segments may vary from week to week, but in general the small group discussion will come in the middle of our work together.

REQUIREMENTS FOR AUDITORS

Auditors are welcome in this class within the limits defined by seminary policy providing they keep faith with the first, second and third expectations for the course, i.e., completion of all reading assignments and participation in class discussions. Auditors will not complete written assignments that are submitted to the instructor for evaluation.

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

I encourage you to contact me any time you have questions, concerns or other matters related to the course that you would like to discuss. This contact can come in person, via telephone, or via e-mail. If the matter is routine and informational, I am happy to respond via e-mail or telephone if that is the most convenient for you. Note that I generally do not access my office e-mail account from home, so please know that any e-mail you send will be opened during the regular work week. ***If you wish to discuss substantive questions, concerns or struggles you are experiencing in the course, I ask that you use the telephone or e-mail to set up a face to face appointment.*** My telephone number is 651-255-6108, and my e-mail address is rweis@unitedseminary.edu.

WEB SUPPORT FOR THE COURSE

This course has a web page. You access this web page by going to <http://mercury.unitedseminary.edu> and logging in. Your login and password are the same as you use to access your seminary e-mail. Once you have logged in the course number and name will appear in your “My Link” listing.

Three forms of supplementary support for this course are available through the course web site, *as well as one required form of participation*. The required form of participation is listed first.

1. Each in-class small group will have a corresponding discussion forum on the web site. Each week I will post a question for discussion during the week. Most likely this will be a question following up some dimension of a week’s class so that you can have an intelligent discussion without having to read the next week’s readings. ***Participation is required for your small group discussion forum.*** The requirements are that each member of the group post a substantive paragraph in response to the question for the week, and make a substantive reply to at least one of their colleagues’ postings. Of course, you are free to continue discussion beyond this; these are just the minimums.
2. All written handouts for the course will be posted to the web site. This includes my exegesis manual.
3. Announcements concerning the course will be posted to the web site, in addition to being made in class.
4. An all-class discussion forum that allow you to post questions, comments, musings and other discussion concerning lectures, readings and assignments. You may use this to continue discussions from class, or to consult with each other as a kind of study group. I will check in on this forum regularly to see if you need a response from me on some point. There is no participation requirement for the all-class forum. Instead you are simply encouraged to make use of this means for deepening your experience of a learning community on what is otherwise a commuter campus.

DUE DATES AND LATE WORK

If you are unable to hand a paper in on campus, the paper will count as on time if it is postmarked or e-mailed no later than the due date. Papers will be accepted after their due dates. However, I may exercise the discretion to lower a late paper’s grade if I think the delay was egregious or resulted in your benefiting from class work your colleagues who handed papers in on time could not access.

If you miss the final exam, you may make it up. However, the exam must be taken before the end of the academic term unless your case qualifies for an extension (see below). For assignments late beyond the end of the course, see below.

SEMINARY POLICY ON EXTENSIONS

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session. The student’s performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in which case a formal petition for extension must be approved by the instructor by the end of the final class session. Extensions (of course work) beyond the end of the semester will be approved only under extraordinary circumstances. Each instructor will include this policy on each course syllabus as well as the criteria by which she or he will grant such an extraordinary exception. In this course extensions ordinarily will be granted only when the need for additional time arises from a significant life change that materially alters the time a student can give to course work (e.g., serious illness, family crisis, change in job hours).

In the event such an exception is approved, the instructor shall file the extension form with the Registrar by the date grades are due. The Student Review Committee shall monitor extensions. If no extension is filed, a final grade will be submitted.

An extension may be granted for a period not to exceed six months from the end of the term. If the work is not completed by the date petitioned, a final grade will be submitted. Any renewal of an extension must be approved by the instructor and filed with the Registrar prior to the due date on the original petition. No extension or its renewal will exceed six months from the end of the term in question.

SEMINARY POLICY ON THE USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Exclusive language is any form of communication which demeans, discounts, or ignores the experiences and full humanity of a group of people on the basis of gender, race, ethnic group, class, age, sexual orientation, or differing abilities and hence fosters oppression and injustice. Language shapes relationships between persons and shapes the self-image of persons. UTS seeks to affirm the human community in all its diversity. In a tradition of seeking justice as an educational community and while embracing the diversity of faith traditions, UTS strongly encourages all of its members to use language in writing and speech that is inclusive in regard to gender, race, ethnic group, class, age, sexual orientation, or differing abilities.

Implications:

1. Sexually inclusive language refers to human beings either in ways which are not gender-specific (e.g. “humankind,” “chairperson,” etc.) or which use balanced male and female terms (e.g. “she or he,” “all men and women,” etc.).
2. Nonsexist language is a broader category that refers to:
 - Language about God as well as well as about human beings, either using non-gender specific references for God or using pronouns and personal or non-personal images for God which reflect male/female balance; and
 - Language about human beings that acknowledges the full equality of women and men rather than reinforcing assumptions of male superiority and social privilege and/or reinforcing gender stereotypes (e.g. “pastor” rather than “woman pastor,” “nurse” rather than “male nurse,” “flight attendant” rather than “stewardess,” etc.).
3. Racially and ethnically inclusive language rejects the equating of color with virtue and does not equate darkness with negative qualities or lightness with positive qualities. It also rejects the use of or construction of “otherness” in language that connotes superiority of the dominant group.
4. Inclusive language also rejects the identification of single physical characteristics with a whole person, particularly in the case of physical or mental limitations, and instead strives to name the personhood first (e.g., “person who is blind” instead of “the blind person”).
5. Inclusive language rejects sexuality-specific language in general reference to relationships (e.g. “partner” is a more inclusive term than “husband” or “wife”).
6. Likewise, inclusive language referring to age, class, and other categories acknowledges the full humanity of persons and does not use terms which identify only singular characteristics of a person or group. (e.g. people who are homeless)

Further elaboration of this policy and suggestions and resources for its implementation may be found on reserve in the library in the folder marked “Inclusive Language.” You may also find these resources helpful:

Clanton, Jann Aldredge. *In Whose Image?* New York: Crossroad, 1990.

Hardesty, Nancy A. *Inclusive Language In the Church.* Atlanta: John Knox, 1987.

Miller, Casey and Swift, Kate. *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*. Second edition. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1989.

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female*. New York: Crossroad, 1987.

Schwartz, Marilyn, and the Task Force on Bias-Free Language of the Association of American University Presses. *Guidelines for Bias-Free Writing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Wren, Brian. *What Language Shall I Borrow?* New York: Crossroad, 1990.

TEXT BOOKS

REQUIRED TEXT BOOKS

A English-language study Bible: either *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Augmented third edition. OR: *The Jewish Study Bible*. Both published by Oxford University Press.

Coogan, Michael D. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. (Referred to below as Coogan.)

McNutt, Paula M. *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville: Westminster John Knox; London: SPCK, 1999. (Referred to below as McNutt.)

Miller, Patrick D. *The Religion of Ancient Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville: Westminster John Knox; London: SPCK, 2000. (Referred to below as Miller.)

Sugirtharajah, R. S., editor. *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Third edition. London: SPCK; Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006. (Referred to below as Sugirtharajah. Readings will be assigned from this book, but not the entire book.)

Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe. *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. (Referred to below as Tiffany & Ringe.)

RECOMMENDED TEXT BOOK

Day, Linda and Carolyn Pressler, editors. *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006. (Referred to below as Day & Pressler. Readings will be assigned from this book, but not the majority of the book; nevertheless purchase may be advisable since I judge the amount of text is too large to legally photocopy.)

ASSIGNED READINGS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS

Weis, Richard D. *A Guide to Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible*. (Referred to above as Weis.)

WORKS AVAILABLE ON RESERVE

(* means that readings will be assigned from this book)

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
- Campbell, Antony F. and Mark A. O'Brien. *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Campbell, Anthony F., and Mark A. O'Brien. *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Felder, Cain Hope, editor. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Fretheim, Terence E. *Deuteronomistic History*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- , *The Pentateuch*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- González, Justo L. *Out of Every Tribe and Nation: Christian Theology at the Ethnic Roundtable*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1992.
- *Goss, Robert E., and Mona West, editors. *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2000. (Referred to below as Goss and West.)
- Laffey, Alice. *The Pentateuch: A Liberation-Critical Reading*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Luther Seminary, *Bible Tutor*. <http://www.bibleutor.com/use30/level1/program/start/bible.htm> An on-line tutorial in the contents of the English Bible.
- Mann, Thomas W. *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.
- McKenzie, Steven L. *How to Read the Bible: History, Prophecy, Literature—Why Modern Readers Need to Know the Difference and What It Means for Faith Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Nelson, Richard D. *The Historical Books*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.
- Newsom, Carol A., and Ringe, Sharon H., editors. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Expanded edition. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1998.
- Pleins, J. David. *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Rofé, Alexander. *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch*. The Biblical Seminar, 58. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Ska, Jean-Louis. *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- Soulen, R. N. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. Second edition. Atlanta: John Knox, 1976.
- Stone, Ken. *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective*. London & New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2005.

COURSE SCHEDULE

ORIENTING OURSELVES TO AND IN THE PROCESS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

SEPTEMBER 11 -- INTRODUCTION TO EACH OTHER, THE COURSE, THE COURSE WEB SITE

Lecture: “Orientation to Interpretation and Questions of Authority”

SEPTEMBER 18 -- INTERPRETATION: A ROAD MAP

Advance Reading: Tiffany & Ringe, pp. 13-125

Assignment Due: Reflection paper of no more than 3 pages describing formative moments and/or forces in your life, and reflecting of how they have affected the way you read the Bible. Graded P/NC.

In-class work: discussing the reading

Small group work: sharing reflection papers

SEPTEMBER 25 -- IDENTIFYING OURSELVES AS READERS

Advance Reading: Day & Pressler, pp. 27-85

Sugirtharajah, pp. 13-82

Assignment due: Reflection paper of no more than 3 pages responding to these four questions: 1) What causes the diversity of approaches to interpreting the Bible encountered in the readings assigned from Day & Pressler and Sugirtharajah?; 2) In what ways is this diversity a good thing or a bad thing? Why is that so?; 3) Where do you fit into this diversity?; 4) How should we handle such a diversity of approaches in interpreting the Bible? Why do you take the approach you do?

In-class work: WORKSHOP: close reading of Biblical narrative
discussing the readings

Small group work: reading Genesis 24 together

ORIENTING OURSELVES TO THE HISTORY AND CULTURE FROM WHICH THE BIBLICAL LITERATURE COMES

OCTOBER 2 -- THE CULTURE AND SOCIETY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL IN CONTEXT I

Advance Reading: McNutt, pp. 1-103

In-class work: LECTURE: “Geographical and Material Contexts of the Hebrew Bible”
discussing the reading

Small group work: reading Judges 5 together

OCTOBER 9 -- THE CULTURE AND SOCIETY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL IN CONTEXT II

Advance Reading: McNutt, pp. 104-212

In-class work: LECTURE: “Ancient Afro-Asiatic Cultures and History”
discussing the reading

Small group work: reading Genesis 32:22-32 together

OCTOBER 16 -- THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT ISRAEL I

Advance Reading: Miller, pp. 1-105

In-class work: LECTURE: “Theological Discourse in the Hebrew Bible”
discussing the reading

Small group work: reading Joshua 24 together

OCTOBER 23 -- READING WEEK -- NO CLASS

OCTOBER 30 -- THE RELIGION OF ANCIENT ISRAEL II

- Advance Reading:** Miller, pp. 106-209
Assignment due: Exegesis paper on Genesis 18:1-15
In-class work: LECTURE: “Theological Streams in the Hebrew Bible”
discussing the reading
Small group work: reading Deuteronomy 12:2-28 together

TRAVELING THROUGH THE LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE: THE PENTATEUCH**NOVEMBER 6 -- THE PENTATEUCH: GENESIS**

- Advance Reading:** Coogan, pp. 1-84
In-class work: LECTURE: “Composition of the Pentateuch”
discussing the reading
Small group work: reading Genesis 1:1-2:4a together

NOVEMBER 13 -- THE PENTATEUCH: EXODUS

- Advance Reading:** Coogan, pp. 85-137
Goss and West, *Take Back the Word*, pp. 71-91
Sugirtharajah, pp. 207-226, 242-276
Assignment due: Reflection paper of no more than 3 pages addressing a question or questions posed about the differing interpretations of Exodus in the assigned readings. The specific question(s) will be handed out in class the previous week.
In-class work: WORKSHOP: close reading of Biblical poetry
discussing the readings
Small group work: reading Exodus 3:1-4:17 together

NOVEMBER 20 – THE PENTATEUCH: LEVITICUS, NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY

- Advance Reading:** Coogan, pp. 138-190
Sugirtharajah, pp. 158-168
Assignment due: Exegesis paper on Exodus 15:1b-18
In-class work: WORKSHOP: close reading of Biblical laws
discussing the reading
Small group work: reading Exodus 20:1-21 and Deuteronomy 5 together

TRAVELING THROUGH THE LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE: THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY**NOVEMBER 27 – THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY: JOSHUA & JUDGES**

- Advance Reading:** Coogan, pp. 191-228
Sugirtharajah, pp. 227-241.
In-class work: LECTURE: “The Appearance of Israel in the Land of Canaan and Its Relation to the Biblical Accounts”
discussing the reading
Small group work: reading Judges 4-5 together

DECEMBER 4 -- THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY: 1 & 2 SAMUEL

- Advance Reading:** Coogan, pp. 231-265
Assignment due: Exegesis paper on Joshua 2
In-class work: LECTURE: “The Deuteronomistic History”
discussing the reading
Small group work: reading 2 Samuel 7 together

DECEMBER 11 – THE DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY: 1 & 2 KINGS

Advance Reading: Coogan, pp. 266-310 (very top), 327-330 (first two lines), 336-345, 349-355, 359-365.

In-class work: FINAL EXAM
discussing the reading

Small group work: reading 1 Kings 17-18 together