



# The Pentateuch

**Dates of class meetings: TBD (Saturdays)**

**Times of class meetings: 9:00am-4:00pm**

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## **Course Description:**

This course leads students through a detailed reading of the first five books of the Bible with a view to its theological, historical, and literary interpretation and significance. In order to equip students for interpreting these foundational books we will take into account critical matters & methodologies, ancient Near Eastern parallels and the canonical context of the books as the first scriptures in the canon. Matters of authorship, origin, sources used in its compilation, unity and complexity, structure and themes will be discussed. We will also focus on several questions throughout our study: How does Genesis 1–11 function as an introduction to the Pentateuchal narratives? What is the significance of the roles of Abraham and Moses in salvation history? What does the Pentateuch teach us about God's Covenant(s) with humans? How did biblical laws function for ancient Israelites? What is the value of Old Testament law for Christians today? What is the role of ritual for ancient Israel? What can we learn theologically from the ritual sacrifices in the Pentateuch? How does Deuteronomy function as the conclusion to the Pentateuch but the introduction to the historical books? These questions will be explored in an effort to underscore the continuing relevance of the Pentateuch for Christian theology.

**Specializations:** Biblical Studies and Pastoral Studies

**Doctor of Practical Theology** students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.



### **Course Objectives:**

#### **Knowing**

- To have a thorough knowledge of the contents and message of the Pentateuch
- To gain familiarity with the assumptions, methods and conclusions of modern critical scholarship on the Pentateuch
- To gain an appreciation of priestly ritual texts and their theological worth
- To gain an introductory knowledge of relevant Ancient Near Eastern Literature: One will read English translations of the most important extra-biblical documents for a proper understanding of the Pentateuch within its ancient Near Eastern context.

#### **Being**

- To embrace the contemporary relevance of the Pentateuch for the Church today
- To embrace the origins of Israel as the beginnings of the Christian story
- To grow closer to God through study of the Pentateuch

#### **Doing**

- To be able to discuss the relation of Genesis 1-11 to ancient Near Eastern mythology and modern science
- To be able to discuss the role of Law in ancient Israelite society and its relevance for Christians today
- To be able to discuss the role of ritual in ancient Israelite society and its relevance for Christians today
- To be able to interpret the Pentateuch in its original context
- To be able to apply the message of the Pentateuch to contemporary audiences

#### **Required Texts:**

- T. Desmond Alexander. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995).
- Michael L. Morales. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 37. Downers Grove, IL: IVP 2015.
- *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (The IVP Bible Dictionary Series). IVP Academic, 2002.

#### **Textbook Purchase**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

### Course Evaluation

*The assignments and their weights are as follows:*

**5% - Readings:** Students are required to read the Pentateuch, the Alexander and Morales textbooks in their entirety and assigned readings from the Dictionary of the Pentateuch and elsewhere and report this with an email to pevans@mcmaster.ca by **Dec 11**

**20% - Student Presentations:** Students will work with 1-2 other students (dependent upon class size) to complete this assignment. Students will prepare a presentation on an assigned topic informed by relevant secondary literature.

- While taking into account critical scholarship and academic readings, the presentation will be aimed at a popular audience at the level of the average church go-er. The format of the presentation is up to the students. Students are encouraged to employ video, PowerPoint, activities, artwork, music or other creative avenues in which to communicate in their presentation.
- Students must hand-in a detailed lesson plan to the professor at the beginning of class on the day of their presentation. This lesson plan should indicate the specific responsibilities of each student in both preparation for and execution of the presentation.
- Dates and groupings for these presentations will be decided on the first day of class

**30% - Critical Book Review Assignment (8 pages).** Due **Oct 16, 2019**. After reading the Morales textbook (*Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*) students will critically review the work in one paper. This review will present its content, provide a critique and finally give a response that outlines both theological and personal implications. See “Book Review Guidelines” below.

**5% - Statement and Bibliography. Due Nov 9, 2019.**

In preparation for the major assignment students will write a one-paragraph statement of their project and an annotated bibliography consisting of *at least 12 items* of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books and *at least 3 articles* from refereed journals). By way of **supplement** to these 12 sources, a student may use a **maximum of 2** internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of these internet resources.

- For your annotated bibliography each item should have a couple sentences explaining the author’s thesis and what evidence or arguments she / he uses to support it. Make sure you show that you have read and understood the article or book.
- ALL TOPICS MUST BE APPROVED BY YOUR PROFESSOR

**40% - Major Assignment. Due Dec 7, 2019.** All major assignment papers must be double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font (footnotes=10pt). The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs, and at least 3 academic articles) each drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See “Paper Evaluation” below.

### A. Major Assignment for Biblical Studies Specializations:

There are two (2) options for Biblical Studies: Choose only one (1) of the following:

- i: **Research paper:** 12-15 pages double-spaced. This is especially recommended if you are planning to go on to a research degree or write a thesis in OT (or if you have a particular topic in mind that you wish to write on). The topic of this research must be related to the Pentateuch and approved by the professor.
- ii. **Theological Theme Paper:** 12 pages double-spaced. In this option you will choose one biblical-theological theme (e.g., social justice, atonement, covenant, etc.) found in the Pentateuch, and write a paper that succinctly traces this theme throughout the entire Pentateuch. This paper will note the diversity represented in the different books but also note continuity. Finally, the paper will discuss how this theme is picked up in the rest of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) and reflect on how the theology of the Pentateuch functions for the later writers. A rough outline of the paper should be:
  - i. **Introduction** stating the theme and its significance in the Pentateuch
  - ii. **Discerning the Theme:** Analyze passages that evince your chosen theme and noting diversity and continuity with other passages and reflecting theologically on this theme
  - iii. **Scriptural connections.** Note other biblical texts that pick up on and develop this biblical theological theme. How does the OT function for these writers?
  - iv. **Application for today.** How is this theme relevant for Christians today? How does the Pentateuch function for Christian theology today? How might you communicate this theme in a contemporary setting?

### B. Major Assignment for Pastoral Studies Specializations:

There are three (3) options for Pastoral Studies Specializations. Choose only one (1) of the following:

- i: **Theological Theme Paper:** *as described above (A.ii)*
- ii: **Sermon on the Pentateuch (oral presentation).** 20-25 minute video-taped sermon submitted on CD/DVD/USB drive or uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo.
 

Beginning with your chosen text, this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be delivered orally but include a written paper with an outline. The paper may be a combination of sentence, bullets/point form, paragraphs (it need not be a complete essay of the words you preach). This paper should be grammatically correct and include appropriate citation of sources employed.
- iii: **Sermon on the Pentateuch (written).** 12 pages double-spaced. Beginning with the text of the Pentateuch this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be an original written composition but written with an aim to oral delivery. The submitted text should include an outline of the sermon at the beginning. The sermon must be written as it would be spoken and must *not* be in point form etc. but be a full written manuscript. It is expected it will conform to MDC style guide and be grammatically correct and acknowledge its sources appropriately..

### Class schedule

DATE	
SEPTEMBER 14	<b>IN CLASS:</b> THE BOOK OF GENESIS
OCTOBER 5	<b>IN CLASS:</b> THE BOOK OF EXODUS
OCTOBER 16	<b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> BOOK REVIEW DUE
NOVEMBER 1	<b>IN CLASS:</b> THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS-NUMBERS
NOVEMBER 9	<b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> STATEMENT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
NOVEMBER 30	<b>IN CLASS:</b> THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY
DECEMBER 7	<b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> MAJOR ASSIGNMENT DUE
DECEMBER 11	<b>ASSIGNMENT:</b> READING REPORT DUE

### Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All assignments must be in electronic format only (PDF format) —no hardcopies— and emailed to [pevans@mcmaster.ca](mailto:pevans@mcmaster.ca). Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., [evans.researchpaper.pdf](#)). To avoid late marks papers must be received by 11:59pm of the calendar day on which they are due.

### Policy Concerning Late Papers

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances. (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness any request for extensions will take into account the entire class. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% per day for the first 7 calendar days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. Late assignments receive no critical feedback. All assignments must be received by Dec 11, 2019 in order to avoid a failing grade in the class.

### Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

### Paper Evaluation

**1. The following items are rated according to this scale:**

1 = inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = superior.

Bibliographic consciousness	1	2	3	4	5
Range and Use of Sources	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity in Defining Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Strength of Argument	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of Exegetical Issues	1	2	3	4	5
Accuracy of Data and Assertions	1	2	3	4	5
Analysis /Critical Thinking	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction (Thesis Statement /Clear Issue)	1	2	3	4	5
Development of Thesis (focus)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/coherence of ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

**II. The following need attention if so indicated**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language  | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay   | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention          | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide                          |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

### Critical Book Review Guideline

I. The Book Review of Morales *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?* should roughly follow this format:

Summary of Content:	2-3 Pages
Critique of Content	2-3 Pages
<u>Personal Reflection</u>	<u>2-3 Pages</u>
<u>Total=no more than 8 pages! Pages 9ff will not be read</u>	

*The following items are rated according to the following scale:*

1 = poor/inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good/more than adequate; 4 = very good;  
5 = excellent/superior.

Summary of Content (noted key concepts etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of Critique (evidence of critical thought)	1	2	3	4	5
Reflective Thought (theological depth, sensitivity)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

### II. The following need attention if checked

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language  | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay   | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention          | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide                          |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |



### Selected Bibliography

- Arnold, Bill T. and Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002.
- Bandstra, Barry L. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. 2nd ed. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1999.
- Bell, Catherine M. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Bergen, Wesley J. *Reading Ritual: Leviticus in Postmodern Culture*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series. London: T&T Clark International, 2005.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004.
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- Campbell, Antony, and Mark O'Brien. *Rethinking the Pentateuch: Prolegomena to the Theology of Ancient Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.
- Clines, David J. A. *The Theme of the Pentateuch*. 2nd ed. JSOTSup 10. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996.
- Day, John. "Dragon and Sea, God's Conflict With." *ABD* 2:228-230.
- De Witt, Dale S. "The Historical Background of Genesis 11:1-9: Babel or Ur?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22 (1979):15-26.
- Dozeman, Thomas B., Konrad Schmid, and Thomas Römer. *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch: Identifying Literary Works in Genesis Through Kings*. Ancient Israel and Its Literature 8. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011.
- Evans, Paul S. "Creation, Progress and Calling: Genesis 1-11 as Social Commentary." *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 13 (2011): 67-100.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva Simone. "Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for our Understanding of Genesis 1-9." *Biblical Archaeologist* 40 (1977):147-155.
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- Landy, Francis. "The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979) 513-528.
- Lewis, Jack P. "The Offering of Abel (Gen 4:4): A History of Interpretation." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (1994) 481-496.
- Merrill, Eugene H. "The Peoples of the Old Testament According to Genesis 10." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1997) 3-22.
- Moberly, R. W. L., *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*. Old Testament Theology. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Ramsey, George W. "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988) 24-35.
- Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Walton, John. "The Antediluvian Section of the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5." *Biblical Archaeologist* 44 (1981) 207-208.
- Whybray, R. N. *Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*. JSOTSup 53. Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1987.

### Commentaries

#### **Genesis**

- Alter, Robert, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997
- Blocher, Henri, *In the Beginning. The opening chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston Leicester, England and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1984.
- Hamilton, Victor. *The Book of Genesis*. 2 vols. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 1995.
- Kidner, Derek. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*. The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1977.

Kline, Meredith G. "Genesis." in *The New Bible Commentary*, 3rd rev. ed., D. Guthrie, ed., 79-114; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1970.

Sarna, Nahum M. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok, The JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia, New York, Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.

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Wenham, Gordon. *Genesis*. 2 vols. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1987, 1994.

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## **Exodus**

Childs, Brevard S. *Exodus, a Commentary*. Old Testament Library. London: SCM, 1974.

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### **Leviticus**

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