



McMaster Divinity
College

The Pentateuch

OT 6XP6

Dates of class meetings: Sept 14, Oct 5, Nov 1 and Nov 30 (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.



Course Objectives:

Knowing

- To have a thorough knowledge of the contents and message of the Pentateuch
- To have a thorough knowledge of modern critical scholarship on the Pentateuch
- To have a thorough knowledge of the use of ritual studies in the study of the Pentateuch

Being

- To embrace the contemporary relevance of the Pentateuch for the Church today
- To appreciate the Pentateuch as the origin story of the people of God and its relevance for Christian identity today
- To grow closer to God through study of the Pentateuch

Doing

- To be able to employ the best academic resources in the study of the Pentateuch
- To be able to use ritual studies critically to study priestly texts of the Pentateuch
- To be able to interpret the Pentateuch in its original context
- To articulate the biblical theological message of the Pentateuch

Required Texts:

- *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (The IVP Bible Dictionary Series). IVP Academic, 2002.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Whybray, R. N. *Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*. JSOTSup 53. Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1987.
- 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.

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. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Evaluation

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

20% - Student Presentations: Students will lead the class on two occasions for **one hour**, making a presentation on an assigned topic, informed by relevant secondary literature, and then leading class discussion.

- Students must hand-in a detailed lesson plan to the professor at the beginning of class on the day of their presentation.

30% - Ritual Studies Research Paper. 20 pages. Due Oct 5, 2019. Beginning with a particular Pentateuchal text, this paper will draw on insights from ritual studies and critically assess both the text and method, relating it to the broader field of biblical studies. This paper will give the student's own critical analysis of the methodology and demonstrate a way to employ it within this paper.

40% - Research paper: 20-25 pages. Due Nov 9. No extensions will be given. Papers must be double-spaced, using 12pt Times New Roman font throughout (footnotes should be 10pt Times New Roman font). The bibliography must contain at least 20 items of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books) including *at least* 3 articles from peer reviewed / refereed journals. *By way of supplement* to these 20 sources, a student may use a *maximum* of 2 internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of the sources chosen. These secondary sources do not include primary sources Each source listed must be drawn on in the paper and evidenced in the footnotes etc. Research Topic must be approved by your professor.

10% - Reflection Paper on Hermeneutical Implications. 5 pages. Due Dec 7, 2019. For this paper students write a reflection on implications and biblical theological significance of the the research covered in the course for a student's view of the Pentateuch as scripture.

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. 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.

Selected Bibliography

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- 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.
- Gane, Roy. *Ritual Dynamic Structure*. Piscataway: Gorgias, 2004.
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Ramsey, George W. "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988) 24-35.

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Commentaries

Genesis

Alter, Robert, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997

Bloch, Henri, *In the Beginning. The opening chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston. Leicester, England and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1984.

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