The Torah/Pentateuch (the first five books of the Jewish and Christian scriptures) was the first part of the Bible to be regarded as scripture. It has also played a central role in modern debates over the nature of scripture. This seminar will investigate critical issues in the modern study of the Torah/Pentateuch, including its composition, literary form, canonization, and interpretation in modern biblical criticism. The discussions will adjudicate these issues against a close reading of selected parts of the Torah/Pentateuch as well as the whole.

The seminar's goals are to have students:

1. learn to analyze ancient texts in critical and creative ways to evaluate and adjudicate conflicting interpretations;
2. recognize and appreciate the difficulties and possibilities inherent in undertaking a coherent, disciplined study of a religious text, and to become aware of the diversity of perspectives within that study;
3. develop an understanding of the Torah/Pentateuch as a key instance in the diversity of human religious phenomena, and achieve a fluency in interpreting and describing it;
4. understand the role that critical study of the Torah/Pentateuch has played in the development of modern religious thought and academic inquiry.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to be prepared to discuss in class all the required readings. Each student will (1) write a 5-8 page paper analyzing the major interpretive issues in one Pentateuchal text assigned for class discussion and distribute it to the class via e-mail on the Friday before the relevant seminar, and (2) write and distribute in the same way a 5-8 page report on one book from the list of critical studies and the list of histories of interpretation, describing its significance for interpretation of the Torah/Pentateuch and/or the Bible generally.

In addition, Ph.D. students will write a substantive and original research paper on a subject related to the course topic, presenting the class with a summary during the last class meeting. (The finished research papers are due on or before December 17th.) Non-Ph.D. students may choose, instead of the research paper, to write two additional 5-8 page reports (for a total of four papers) on an additional text or book (due on the date for that text or book listed below). Late papers and reports will not be eligible for "A" grades. (Link to more detailed paper instructions.)

Participants in the Hebrew reading "pre-seminar" (12-1 p.m. before the seminar meetings on Mondays) are exempt from writing one of the required 5-8 page reports.
**Textbooks:**

**Recommended:**
- *Tanak* (New Jewish Publication Society Version)
- or *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New Revised Standard Version)

For further resources relevant to the topic of this course, consult the Bibliography below.

**Topics and Readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 26</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>No Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 2</td>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>No Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 9</td>
<td>Torah/Pentateuch</td>
<td><em>Primary:</em> Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Hebrew: Genesis 1:1-5; 2:7-9)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Secondary:</em> Blenkinsopp, <em>Pentateuch</em>, vii-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 16</td>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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**The Problem of Law & History**

| Sep 23 | Law and the history of religion | *Primary:* Exodus 19-24                                              |
|        |                                  | *(Hebrew: Exodus 20:1-17)*                                            |
|        |                                  | *Secondary:* Blenkinsopp, 183-228; Watts, 11-31                       |
|        |                                  | *Book Reports:* Wellhausen, McCarthy, Paul, Perlitt                   |
| Sep 30 | Law and narrative             | *Primary:* Genesis 37-50, Exodus 21-23                               |
|        | *Guest:* Prof. Calum Carmichael, Cornell University | *(Hebrew: Genesis 32:22-32)*                                       |
|        |                                  | *Secondary:* Carmichael                                               |
| Oct 7  | Law and theology             | *Primary:* Leviticus 16-19                                           |
|        |                                  | *(Hebrew: Leviticus 19:9-22)*                                        |
|        |                                  | *Secondary:* Levenson, 1-32                                          |
|        |                                  | *Book Reports:* Childs, Crüsemann; Sperling, Knight, Noll            |

**The Problem of Literature & History**

<p>| Oct 14 | Authorship &amp; composition | <em>Primary:</em> Genesis 12-50                                             |
|        |                          | <em>(Hebrew: Genesis 22:1-19)</em>                                          |
|        |                          | <em>Secondary:</em> Blenkinsopp, 98-133                                      |
|        |                          | <em>Book Reports:</em> Rendtorff, Van Seters (1975), Blum, Thompson, von Rad, Schmid, Smend; Nicholson |
| Oct 21 | Ancient literary parallels | <em>Primary:</em> Genesis 1-11; <em>Gilgamesh XI</em>                              |
|        |                          | <em>(Hebrew: Genesis 3:1-19)</em>                                           |
|        |                          | <em>Secondary:</em> Blenkinsopp, 54-97; <em>Book Reports:</em> Tigay (1985), Van Seters (1983), Levinson |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Book Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>History, legend, and myth</td>
<td>Exodus 1-18</td>
<td>Blenkinsopp, 134-78; Levenson, 127-159.</td>
<td>Van Seters (1994), Smith,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 4</td>
<td>Interpreting the gaps</td>
<td>Exodus 25-40</td>
<td>Blenkinsopp, 31-53; Watts, 61-88.</td>
<td>Sternberg, Polzin, Carr, Mann, Nohrnerg, Clines, Sailhamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 25</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you are in Toronto, check out:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>The Rhetoric of Torah</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 1-11, 27-34</td>
<td>Watts, 32-60, 89-130, 162-67</td>
<td>Patrick, Mullen,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 9</td>
<td>Meet at Jim's house</td>
<td>Paper presentations</td>
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<td>Dec 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research Papers Due in 501 HL</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Course Bibliography:** *Commentaries, Critical Studies, More Studies, Histories of Interpretation*

**Commentaries:**
Critical Studies (possible book reports):

- Clines, D. J. A. The Theme of the Pentateuch. JSOTSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT, 1978.
- Sahlhamer, J. H. The Pentateuch as Narrative: a Biblical-Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids,

**Other critical studies** (not an option for book reports):


### Histories of Interpretation


