

Fall, 2002

REL/JSP 516

Torah/Pentateuch

Thursdays 1:00-3:30 p.m. in HL 504

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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:** Required
- Blenkinsopp, J. *The Pentateuch: an Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*. ABRL. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
 - Levenson, Jon D. *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993.
 - Watts, J. W. *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch*. Biblical Seminar 59. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

- 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:

Day	Topic	Texts
Aug 26	Introductions	
Sep 2	<i>Labor Day</i>	No Class
Sep 9	Torah/Pentateuch	<i>Primary:</i> Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (<i>Hebrew:</i> Genesis 1:1-5; 2:7-9) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, <i>Pentateuch</i> , vii-30
Sep 16	<i>Yom Kippur</i>	No Class
The Problem of Law & History		
Sep 23	Law and the history of religion	<i>Primary:</i> Exodus 19-24 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Exodus 20:1-17) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, 183-228; Watts, 11-31 <i>Book Reports:</i> Wellhausen, McCarthy, Paul, Perlitt
Sep 30	Law and narrative <i>Guest:</i> Prof. Calum Carmichael, Cornell University	<i>Primary:</i> Genesis 37-50, Exodus 21-23 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Genesis 32:22-32) <i>Secondary:</i> Carmichael
Oct 7	Law and theology	<i>Primary:</i> Leviticus 16-19 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Leviticus 19:9-22) <i>Secondary:</i> Levenson, 1-32 <i>Book Reports:</i> Childs, Crüsemann; Sperling, Knight, Noll
The Problem of Literature & History		
Oct 14	Authorship & composition	<i>Primary:</i> Genesis 12-50 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Genesis 22:1-19) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, 98-133 <i>Book Reports:</i> Rendtorff, Van Seters (1975), Blum, Thompson, von Rad, Schmid, Smend; Nicholson
Oct 21	Ancient literary parallels	<i>Primary:</i> Genesis 1-11; Gilgamesh XI (<i>Hebrew:</i> Genesis 3:1-19) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, 54-97; <i>Book Reports:</i> Tigay (1985), Van Seters (1983), Levinson

		(1994)
Oct 28	History, legend, and myth	<i>Primary:</i> Exodus 1-18 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Exodus 3:1-15) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, 134-78; Levenson, 127-159. <i>Book Reports:</i> Van Seters (1994), Smith,
The Problem of Interpretation		
Nov 4	Interpreting the gaps	<i>Primary:</i> Exodus 25-40 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Exodus 34:1-17) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, 31-53; Watts, 61-88. <i>Book Reports:</i> Sternberg, Polzin, Carr, Mann, Nohrnberg, Clines, Sailhamer
Nov 11	The politics of biblical interpretation	<i>Primary:</i> Deuteronomy 12-26 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Deuteronomy 12:1-16) <i>Secondary:</i> Levenson, 62-126 <i>Book Reports:</i> Levinson (1997), Olsen, Weinfeld, Whybray; Harrison, Reventlow, Sugirtharajah
The Problem of Scripture		
Nov 18	Temple, prophets and texts	<i>Primary:</i> Leviticus 1-15 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Leviticus 1:1-17) <i>Secondary:</i> Blenkinsopp, 229-243, Watts, 131-61 <i>Book Reports:</i> Friedman, Knohl, Watts (2001)
Nov 25	<i>Thanksgiving</i> AAR/SBL in Toronto	No Class If you are in Toronto, check out:
Dec 2	The Rhetoric of Torah	<i>Primary:</i> Deuteronomy 1-11, 27-34 (<i>Hebrew:</i> Deuteronomy 6:1-15) <i>Secondary:</i> Watts, 32-60, 89-130, 162-67 <i>Book Reports:</i> Patrick, Mullen,
Research Papers		
Dec 9 1-5 pm	Meet at Jim's house	<i>Paper presentations</i>
Dec 17		<i>Research Papers Due in 501 HL</i>

Course Bibliography: [Commentaries](#), [Critical Studies](#), [More Studies](#), [Histories of Interpretation](#)

Commentaries:

- Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 1-11, 12-36, 37-50*. 3 vols. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984-86.
- Gunkel, Hermann. *Genesis*. 5th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922. Reprinted and Trans. by M. Biddle. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997.
- Rad, Gerhard von. *Genesis*. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster,
- Wenham, Gordon. *Genesis 1-15, 16-50*. WBC 1-2. Dallas: Nelson/Word, 19??.
- Childs, B. S. *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*. OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974.
- Houtman, Cornelis. *Exodus*. HCOT. Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1999.
- Propp, William E. *Exodus 1-18*. AB 2. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- Milgrom, J. *Leviticus 1-16, Leviticus 17-22, Leviticus 23-27*. AB 3. New York: Doubleday, 1991,

2000, 2001.

- Levine, Baruch. *Leviticus/Va-yikra*. Philadelphia : Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
- Hartley, John E. *Leviticus*. WBC 3. Dallas: Word, 1992.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Numbers/Ba-midbar*. Philadelphia : Jewish Publication Society, 1990.
- Levine, Baruch. *Numbers 1-20, Numbers 21-36*. AB 4. New York : Doubleday, 1993, 2000.
- Tigay, Jeffrey. *Deuteronomy*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. *Deuteronomy 1-11*. AB . New York: Doubleday, 1991

Critical Studies (possible book reports):

- Blum, E. *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*. BZAW 189. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990.
- Carmichael, C. M. *The Laws of Deuteronomy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974.
- Carr, D. M. *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- Childs, B. S. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.
- Clines, D. J. A. *The Theme of the Pentateuch*. JSOTSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT, 1978.
- Crüsemann, Frank. *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*. Tr. W. Mahnke. Edinburgh/Minneapolis: Clark/Fortress, 1996.
- Friedman, R. E. *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works*. HSM 22. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981.
- Knohl, I. *The Sanctuary of Silence: the Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Levinson, Bernard M. *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Levinson, B. M. (ed.). *Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law: Revision, Interpolation and Development*. JSOTSup 181. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.
- Mann, T. W. *The Book of the Torah: the Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.
- McCarthy, D. J. *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*. 2nd rev. ed. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981.
- Miles, J. *God: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1995.
- Mullen, E. T., Jr. *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch*. SBLSS. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Nohrnberg, J. *Like Unto Moses: the Constituting of an Interruption*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Noth, M. *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (originally published 1948). Trans. B. W. Anderson. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981.
- Olson, D. T. *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading*. OBT. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.
- Patrick, D. *The Rhetoric of Revelation*. OBT. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.
- Paul, S. M. *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970.
- Perlitt, L. *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*. WMANT 36. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969.
- Polzin, R. *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History*. New York: Seabury, 1980.
- Rad, G. von. 'The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch.' *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*. Trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966. Pp. 1-78.
- Rendtorff, R. *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*. Trans. J. J. Scullion. JSOTSup 89. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990.
- Sailhamer, J. H. *The Pentateuch as Narrative: a Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids,

MI: Zondervan, 1992.

- Schmid, H. H. *Der sogennante Jahwist*. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976.
- Smend, R. *Die Erzählung des Hexateuch auf ihre Quellen untersucht*. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1912.
- Smith, Mark S. *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus*. JSOTSup 239. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Sternberg, M. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Thompson, T. L. *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel: I. The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23*. JSOTSup 55. Sheffield: JSOT, 1987.
- Tigay, J. H. "The Evolution of the Pentateuchal Narratives in the Light of the Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic," *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*. Ed. J. H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. Pp. 21-52.
- Van Seters, J. *Abraham in History and Tradition*. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1975.
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- Watts, J. W. (ed.). *Persia and Torah: the Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*. Symposium Series. Atlanta: SBL, 2001.
- Weinfeld, M. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Wellhausen, J. *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973, orig. 1878.
- Whybray, R. N. *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*. JSOTSup 53. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.

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

- Alt, A. 'The Origins of Israelite Law.' Essays on Old Testament History and Religion. Trans. R. A. Wilson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1966. Pp. 81-31. [First published, 1934.]
- Brian Britt, "Moses, Monotheism, and Memory." *Religious Studies Review* 26/4 (2000) 313-17.
- Brooks, R. *Spirit of the Ten Commandments*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.
- Damrosch, D. 'Leviticus.' In R. Alter and F. Kermode (eds.). *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard, 1987. Pp. 66-77.
- Damrosch, D. *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Fretheim, T. E. *The Pentateuch*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Koch, Klaus. 'P - Kein Redaktor'. *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987), pp. 446-67.
- Kraus, F. R. 'Ein zentrales Problem des altmesopotamischen Rechts: Was ist der Codex Hammurabi?' *Genava* 8 (1960) 283-96.
- McEvenue, S. E. *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*. AnBib 50. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971.
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- Mendenhall, G. E. 'Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition.' In E. F. Campbell, Jr. and D. N. Freedman (eds.), *Biblical Archeologist Review* 3. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970. Pp. 25-53.
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- Patrick, D. *Old Testament Law*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985.
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- Wellhausen, J. *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*. 4th ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963, orig. 1876-77.

Histories of Interpretation

- Harrison, Peter. *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001.
- Knight, Douglas A. and Gene M. Tucker, eds. *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*. Philadelphia: Fortress/Chico: Scholars Press, 1985.
- Nicholson, Ernest W. *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.
- Noll, Mark A. *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*. Harper & Row, 1986.
- Reventlow, Henning Graf. *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*. Tr. J. Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- Sperling, S. David. *Students of the Covenant: A History of Jewish Biblical Scholarship in North America*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.
- Sugirtharajah, R.S. *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001.

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