



OT550 — Introduction to the Pentateuch

Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary

Allen Park, MI

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor:	Kyle C. Dunham, ThD	Term:	Fall 2016
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Office Hours:	Tuesday–Thursday, 2:00–3:00 PM		

I. WELCOME!

Welcome, students, to OT550 Introduction to the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 4:44 states, “This is the law Moses set before the Israelites” (NIV), while Deuteronomy 33:4 summarizes for the nation of Israel that “Moses delivered to us a law, an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob” (NET). The Hebrew term translated “law” in these passages is transliterated *Torah* and means fundamentally “instruction,” “teaching,” or “doctrine.” The Law constituted Israel as a nation by covenant with Yahweh and provides the narrative for the creation of the world and formation of the nation with her concomitant promises of land, seed, and blessing. Moreover, the Law was viewed as a unit or single book. Already within subsequent traditions of the biblical canon the first five books of the OT are regarded as “the Book of Moses” (2 Chron 25:4; 35:12; Ezra 6:18), “the Law of the LORD” (1 Chron 16:40; 2 Chron 31:3; 35:26; Ezra 7:10), and “the Law of Moses, the servant of God” (Dan 9:44; Mal 4:4). Later Jewish tradition highly revered the Pentateuch, asserting that the Torah existed in heaven before the world began, identifying the Torah with Lady Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22–31 (Sirach 1:1–5, 26; 24:1–8) (see *EnclJud*, s.v. “Torah,” 15:1235), and giving primacy to the translation of the Torah in the Old Greek LXX. Beginning with Jesus’ own reference to “the Book of Moses” (Mark 12:26), the NT and Christian tradition likewise valued the Law as the authoritative Word of God. Throughout the millennia, Jewish and Christian traditions have thus honored the Law / Torah / Pentateuch as the foundation of the OT canon and origin of themes that are prominent throughout Scripture and integral to a right understanding of its content. Our study will investigate this highly significant portion of the Old Testament to sharpen our understanding of these vital books to grasp their significance in the shape of the biblical canon. I look forward to our time together!

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This two credit-hour resident course provides an analysis of the first five books of the Old Testament, including an examination of the books’ authorship, date, unity, and canonical status. Emphasis is also placed upon the unifying motif of the Pentateuch, the creation account, the flood, the origin of the nation of Israel, its religious institution, and the unfolding of its history under Moses.

III. COURSE RATIONALE

As the foundation of the OT canon, the Pentateuch or Torah provides the blueprint for the OT and furnishes a significant lens through which Scripture as a whole is to be interpreted. Given its prominence, the Pentateuch has likewise received the brunt of higher critical attacks seeking to undermine the accuracy and authority of the Bible. Faithful believers of every age have echoed the words affirmed by Princeton OT scholar William Henry Green in 1895: “The faith of all past ages in

respect to the Pentateuch has not been mistaken. It is what it claims to be, and what it has always been believed to be" (*Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, vi). This course seeks to affirm the authenticity, authority, and theological message of the Pentateuch through the investigative methods of special and general introduction, biblical theology, and analysis of literary structure.

IV. LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. The student will become acquainted with key critical issues and be able to defend the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
2. The student will understand the key interpretative problems in the Pentateuch and know the germane conservative solutions to these problems.
3. The student will gain proficiencies in relating the Pentateuch to its ancient Near Eastern milieu.
4. The student will gain an appreciation for the message of the Pentateuch and its theological content.
5. The student will evaluate issues related to structure and theology of the Pentateuch within the OT canon.

V. TEXTBOOKS

Required Textbooks

Currid, John D. *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

Wolf, Herbert. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*. Reprint ed. Chicago: Moody, 2007.

Recommended Textbooks

Alexander, T. D., and David W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003.

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Zuck, Roy, Eugene Merrill, and Darrell Bock, eds. *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody, 1991.

VI. COURSE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The student is allowed two hours of unexcused absences and six hours of excused absences. When the student is absent from 25% of the class, he will automatically be dropped from this course and receive a WF (Withdraw-Failure).

An excused absence is an absence beyond the student's control. In order to have an absence excused, the student must submit to me either a **hard copy** of a **written explanation** or an **email**. In either case, I will respond in a verifiable form to the absence request so that the student will explicitly know whether or not the absence is excused.

Three periods of tardiness will be counted as one unexcused absence.

VII. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following categories comprise the course requirements.

1. **Tests.** There will be two major tests. The first will focus on the material in the syllabus that covers the Introduction and Genesis and the second on Exodus through Deuteronomy. The mid-term will be given on **October 3** and the final exam on **November 14—60% of grade.**

Tests must be taken at the time the exam is officially scheduled, unless the student has an excusable absence. In the event of missing the exam day the student must procure a proctor to administer the exam (e.g., a pastor at the student's church). Because I use a graded system for late penalties, the breakdown is like this: loss of 5% for the first day beyond the exam, 15% for

the second, 20% for the third, 20% for the fourth, 20% for the fifth, and 20% for the sixth. This means that on the seventh day the student will receive a 0 (zero) for his exam. However, this policy is modified if the student has an inexcusable absence. Here is a fuller breakdown:

Excusable Absences. If the student has an excusable absence, the exam must be completed no later than 4:00 P.M. on the following day or whatever day that the student returns to availability in order to avoid any late penalties. After this 4:00 P.M. deadline but no later than 4:00 P.M. on the subsequent day, the student will lose 5% from the exam as a late penalty for the first official day after the exam. If the student then takes the exam after 4:00 P.M. but no later than 4:00 P.M. on the next, he will lose an additional 15% for the second official day after the exam (at this point, his test grade will be reduced by 20%). Then beginning at 4:00 P.M. but no later than 4:00 P.M. on the subsequent day, 20% for that day will be penalized. For each day beyond the 4 P.M. deadline for a given day, the student will be penalized 20% for each of the following days. Whatever late penalty the student receives, this will be subtracted from the earned grade for the test.

Inexcusable Absences. If the student has an inexcusable absence, the late penalties begin accruing for anything after 6:15 P.M. on the prescribed exam day. For example, if the student takes the exam anywhere between 6:16 P.M. of the exam day up through 8:45 P.M. of the same day, he will lose 5% as a late penalty. If the student then takes this exam after 8:45 P.M. on the exam day but no later than 4:00 P.M. on the subsequent day, he will lose an additional 15% for the second day after the exam. After this, the late penalties will accrue and affect the student's exam grade as outlined in the preceding paragraph.

In addition, tardies are unacceptable when a test has been scheduled. A tardy may result in a 5% late penalty for the exam.

2. **Quizzes.** Six quizzes will be administered over assigned reading. Each quiz will have ten questions and will be given on a scheduled day at the beginning of class—**30% of grade**. The rules that applied to absences and tardies for scheduled exam days also apply to scheduled quizzes.

The quiz schedule from Currid is as follows:

Quiz 1	Sept 12	<i>Against the Gods</i>	pp. 6–23
Quiz 2	Sept 19	<i>Against the Gods</i>	pp. 25–46
Quiz 3	Sept 26	<i>Against the Gods</i>	pp. 47–73
Quiz 4	Oct 17	<i>Against the Gods</i>	PP. 75–95
Quiz 5	Oct 24	<i>Against the Gods</i>	pp. 97–119
Quiz 6	Oct 31	<i>Against the Gods</i>	pp. 121–41

3. **Reading Requirements.** The student who completes all the assigned reading in accordance with the reading schedule will receive 98%. If the student's reading total falls short of the requirements, he will have 1% subtracted from 98% for every 25 pages or chapters (if from the Bible) that he is short of the total pages due on the assigned date. A reading report will be submitted to me no later than just prior to the administration of each exam—**10% of grade**.

Reading Schedule:

The following pages/chapters must be read by the time designated below:

- A. Mid-Term Exam (total pages/chapters due by this exam is 294)
 1. Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, 168–86 (19 pp.)
 2. Genesis 1–50 (50 chapters)
 3. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 19–132 (113 pp.)

4. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 13–124 (112 pp.)
- B. Final Exam (total pages/chapters due by this exam is 564)
1. Exodus 1–Deuteronomy 34 (137 chapters)
 2. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 135–464 (329 pp.)
 3. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 125–222 (98 pp.)

4. **Academic Success.** It is the desire of DBTS that all students have academic success. If you are failing to meet the institutional academic standards or seek personal academic development, please see your faculty academic advisor. Assistance can be provided for individual students in study habits, time management, course tutoring, and peer collaboration. If a particular learning disability is verified, the institution will assist in creating acceptable academic options that will meet both student needs and fulfill course objectives.
5. **ADA Policy.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, the law requires that all students with disabilities be given a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Dean of the Seminary at btrainer@dbts.edu.

VIII. COURSE GRADING PROCEDURES

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|-------------|--------------------|
| 1. Exams: | 60% of total grade |
| 2. Quizzes: | 30% of total grade |
| 3. Reading: | 10% of total grade |

The following grading scale and criteria is used in the evaluation of all course work (see the DBTS Catalog for more information):

- 96-100 (4.0 / A) Outstanding work: superior achievement of course objectives
 - 94-95 (3.7 / A-)
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- 92-93 (3.3 / B+) Good work: commendable achievement of course objectives
 - 89-91 (3.0 / B)
 - 87-88 (2.7 / B-)
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- 85-86 (2.3 / C+) Acceptable work: satisfactory achievement of course objectives
 - 81-84 (2.0 / C)
 - 79-80 (1.7 / C-)
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- 77-78 (1.3 / D+) Minimal work: marginal achievement of course objectives
 - 72-76 (1.0 / D)
 - 70-71 (0.7 / D-)
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- 0-69 (0.0 / F) Failure: unacceptable work

IX. COURSE SUPPORT

Course materials can be accessed at www.dbts.edu under the “Populi” icon. If you have questions about this course, either in general or specific, as to how assignments should be completed or anything of a course nature, please contact me by e-mail: kdunham@dbts.edu or by phone (see contact details above).

If you need support for anything related to using Populi or experience any log-in problems, please contact the network administrator by calling the office at (313) 381-0111 or email via info@dbts.edu.