PURPOSE: This course is an introduction to content, critical problems, and theology of the Pentateuch. It is based on the scholarly study of the Pentateuch followed by a detailed study of selected passages from Genesis through Deuteronomy. In our work in this course, we shall develop an understanding of the history of ancient Israel in its ancient Near East context reflected in the Pentateuch. We also will build skills in the critical ability to do basic interpretation of a text in Pentateuch. Lastly, we will focus on principal theological motifs of the Pentateuch as expressed in its text. We will then explore our own perspectives on the content, themes, and theology of Pentateuch using postcolonial hermeneutic as a reading strategy. This perspective allows us to explore the Pentateuch as metanarratives composed by the center for interpreting the empire in order to cope with an instance of imperial colonialism. Viewing the text through this lens will also help us to see how the Pentateuch create an ethnic/national identity and legitimates local powers. This course also focuses on aspects of the present, emphasizing the actual context in which the biblical text has been used to promote, both as a tool of domination and as a resource for resistance to, the unjust excesses of empire.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify major events, locations and peoples in the history of ancient Israel and the ancient Near East reflected in the Pentateuch and comment on their significance.

2. Identify and discuss the content, principal theological motifs of various literary traditions, and critical issues of various books of the Pentateuch.

3. Compare the literature of the Pentateuch to similar literature from the ancient Near East.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with the major resources for critical study of the Hebrew Bible: concordances, dictionaries, etc.

5. Define and describe the use of the basic critical methods, like source and form criticism used in exegesis.


**TEXTS**

Bible (modern critical translation required; Oxford Annotated or HarperCollins New Revised Standard Version suggested)


**EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

1. Attendance as specified by VST requirements; reading all required assignments before class, participation in class discussions, and preparation of in-class discussion exercises. Evaluative criteria: comments and questions show adequate preparation, an understanding of the assigned readings and exercises, and a readiness to apply readings to interpretive questions and insights.
2. Tutorial: Students are required to work with tutors assigned to this course during the afternoon sessions (2pm-5pm) and complete assigned activities.

3. Exegetical Paper: students will prepare and submit an exegetical paper in which they present an interpretation of a selected passage from the Pentateuch. In the exegesis students must: situate the passage within its literary context in the Pentateuch, showing how the passage builds upon what precedes it and how it contributes to what follows it; identify and discuss the meaning of key terms in the passage; (in the case of a narrative) discuss the major developments in the plot of the narrative; (in the case of legal material) discuss the significance of the law in the context of the covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel (as well as its potential contemporary relevance, if any); using postcolonial criticism, identify and discuss significant questions and issues that arise in the interpretation of the passage; discuss significant theological issues explored by the passage.

4. Journal: students write a short daily journal which describes the main points of my lecture and some reflection of its relevance to their own life and ministry. Keep your response short (200-300 words for each).

5. Audit students are required to do all the reading and participate in the class discussions and exercises.

6. Certificate students are required to do all the reading, participate in the class discussions, do the exercises and write the journal entries.

CALENDAR

**July 13**  Introduction, course description; ways to read a text

READ:

- Ducther-Walls, *Reading the Historical Books*, pp. 1-35.


**July 14**  Creation Theology; Genesis 3-11 – Theology, Narrative Methods

READ:

- Coogan, pp. 27-59
- Bible: Genesis 1-11

DUE: Journal entries 1-2

TUTORIAL: Creation Stories Exercise, narrative/literary method exercise

**July 15**  Ancestors—stories and theology, historical-critical method

READ:

- Coogan, pp. 63-79
- Bible: Genesis 12-13, 15-18, 21-22 (Abraham); 24, 26 (Isaac); 27-30, 32-33 (Jacob); 37, 39, 41, 43-46:7 (Joseph)

DUE: Journal entry 3

TUTORIAL: Learn to apply historical-critical method

**July 16**  Exodus and Sinai

READ:

- Coogan, pp. 80-148
- Dube, pp. 57-83.
- Alice Laffey, “Leviticus” in Gossai, pp. 27-56.
- Dora Mbuwayesango, “Numbers,” in Gossai, pp. 70-87.
- Bible: Exodus 1-5, 11-15, 19-24, 26; Lev. 1-3, 19, 23; Num. 9-10

DUE: Journal entry 4
TUTORIAL: Historical-Critical methods exercise

July 17  Deuteronomy

READ:

- Coogan: 149-161
- Kare Berge, “The Empire, the Local, and its Mediators: Deuteronomy” in Gossai, pp. 88-105.
- Bible: Deut. 1-7, 11-12, 17-18, 24

DUE: Journal entries 5

TUTORIAL: Reading a text in the book of Pentateuch using postcolonial optic