

(subject to minor revision prior to the beginning of term)

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Tuesdays 9:30-12:30pm | Rm 147

## A. Course Description

An introduction to the study and interpretation of the Pentateuch, inclusive of historical, literary, as well as Jewish and Christian theological readings. This course shall consider both what the Pentateuch, and its traditions, might have meant to its earliest readers, especially in its final, likely post-exilic form, as well as what it means when read within the Christian canon of Scripture.

## B. Course Goals

This course will assist students to grow in the following knowledge, skills, and attitudes:

### Knowledge

- deep acquaintance with the varied themes, concerns, and theological emphases of the Pentateuch
- appreciation for the importance of the Pentateuch in the Church's theological tradition
- familiarity with the methods of study and on-going discussions taking place in critical scholarship regarding the Pentateuch

### Skills

- ability to read the Pentateuch well as Christian Scripture, which requires:
  - attention to the plain sense of the text as recovered through close reading and historical investigation
  - attention to the appropriation of Pentateuchal traditions in the canon of Scripture
  - attention to the theological substance of the Pentateuch and its reception in the Church
  - ability to make effective use of the Pentateuch both in the promotion of the gospel and in the building up of the saints

### Attitudes

- the cultivation of a generous Catholic approach to the study and interpretation of Scripture, that is, one which is guided by the major Church documents on scriptural interpretation and the Living Tradition of the Church and one which is informed by ecumenical biblical scholarship
- the cultivation of a practice of reading Scripture which is consonant with the fundamental command articulated by Jesus in the Gospels, to love God and neighbour

## C. Required Resources

Students should acquire the following text *prior* to the first class. It is available on Amazon (for less) and Indigo (for more).

- Mann, Thomas W. *The Book of the Torah: Second Edition*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013.

## **D. Course Evaluation**

### **1. Participation, 15%**

Students' active participation in class is essential. They should arrive to class having completed the assigned readings and ready to contribute by asking and answering questions and sharing insights derived therefrom.

### **2. Problems of the Pentateuch, 20%**

Students will read multiple brief scholarly introductions to the Pentateuch (a list will be supplied) and then write an essay in which they discuss and detail the sorts of characteristics which have led modern scholars to conclude that the Pentateuch is a composite work, that is, one which combines traditions from various pre-existing oral and written sources from diverse times and places.

1500 words. Due Jan 30<sup>th</sup>

### **3. Reading the Pentateuch, 25%**

Students will write an essay on a text from the Pentateuch of their own choosing. The essay will be an investigation into the literal sense of the text, as can be uncovered through historical and literary investigation into the setting of the text in the ancient world and in the Pentateuch itself. Students will consult at least three modern full-length critical commentaries in their preparation (a bibliography will be supplied).

1500 words. Due between Feb 27<sup>th</sup> and March 19<sup>th</sup>

### **4. Christian Reception of the Pentateuch, 25%**

Students will choose a text from the Pentateuch which has been prominent in Christian reception of the Torah for the way in which it was understood to point prophetically to Christ. They should provide examples of this reading of the particular passage in question, which may include not only textual traditions but also artistic works, and attempt to elucidate the logic of the prophetic connection made: does the Christian interpretation build upon a literal interpretation of the text, a symbolic interpretation (e.g., allegorical or typological), and/or upon divergent text traditions (such as that of the Septuagint or the Vulgate)? They should also consider whether non-Christian Jewish readings of the text may have informed early Christian interpretation (see, e.g., Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*).

1500 words. Due April 2<sup>nd</sup>

### **5. Final Exam, 15%**

The final exam will be an oral evaluation conducted over a Zoom meeting: students will be quizzed on the basic literary structure of the Pentateuch, the location of key episodes and

texts, and major scholarly theories and contributions to the interpretation of the Pentateuch as discussed in class and the readings.

**E. Course Schedule** (readings other than those of the Bible and Mann, *Torah*, will be supplied through the course website on OWL)

Date	Topic and Biblical Text	Additional Reading
1. January 9	Intro; historical study, source criticism; Christian reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gary A. Anderson, "Was Adam Jewish, Was Eve Mary?" in <i>The Genesis of Perfection</i></li> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 1-12</li> <li>Christopher A. Rollston, "Who wrote the Torah according to the Torah?" at TheTorah.com</li> </ul>
2. January 16	Primeval history: the ANE, Creation, and Fall Gen 1:1-12:3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 13-27</li> <li><i>Enuma Elish</i>/"The Epic of Creation"</li> <li>Mark S. Smith, "Before Human Sin and Evil" <i>CBQ</i></li> </ul>
3. January 23	Primeval history: Fallout Gen 1:1-12:3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 27-41</li> <li><i>Atrahasis</i></li> </ul>
4. January 30	Patriarchal history: The Abraham Cycle Gen 11:27-25:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 41-64</li> <li>Eric Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar" in <i>Mimesis</i></li> </ul>
5. February 6	Patriarchal history: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph Gen 25:19-50:26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 64-94</li> <li>Gary A. Anderson, "Joseph and the Passion of our Lord" in</li> </ul>
6. February 13	Out from Egypt: Exodus 1:1-15:21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 95-116</li> <li>Ziony Zevit "Invoking Creation" on TheTorah.com</li> <li>Gary Rendsburg, "Reading the Plagues in their Egyptian Context" on TheTorah.com</li> </ul>
Reading Week		
7. February 27	Revelation at Sinai: Exodus 15:22-31:18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 117-129</li> <li>James Kugel, "A Covenant with God," in <i>How to Read the Bible</i></li> <li>Eve Levavi-Feinstein, "Giving Your Firstborn Son to God," on TheTorah.com</li> </ul>
8. March 5	Sin and Sanctuary: Exodus 32-40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 129-135</li> <li>Gary A. Anderson, "God Doesn't Break Bad in the Old Testament" on ChurchLifeJournal.nd.edu</li> </ul>
9. March 12	Leviticus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 136-156</li> <li>Schwartz, "Yom ha-Kipporim" on TheTorah.com</li> </ul>

10. March 19	Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 157-176</li> </ul>
11. March 26	Deuteronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 177-195</li> <li>• Jon D. Levenson, “The Shema and the Commandment to Love God in its Ancient Contexts” on TheTorah.com</li> </ul>
12. April 2	Deuteronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mann, <i>Torah</i>, 196-201</li> </ul>