

OTHB 9406 The Pentateuch as Narrative

Division of Biblical Studies

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Mission Statement

The mission of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries

Seminar Description

The work of the seminar will consist of a study of the Pentateuch as a whole with particular emphasis on its narrative nature. Reading, review, and discussion of significant literature reflecting the development and application of newer literary critical approaches in the study of the Pentateuch up to the present time will set the stage for more direct work with the biblical materials. Reading and interpretation of the text itself will major on the use of principles that emphasize and clarify the literary nature of the materials, while also comparing and contrasting this approach with various other methodological approaches. Comprehensive research papers on key Pentateuchal concepts, again with a focus on literary nature and methodology, will complete the study.

Student Learning Objectives

Knowledge

Students who successfully complete the seminar will have:

- A. Become acquainted with the key literature reflecting the development of modern literary analysis of the Pentateuch
- B. Learned the key conceptual developments involved in the history of the study of the Pentateuch and how they are related to current trends in interpretation
- C. Examined various methods, both old and new, for reading and interpreting the Pentateuch and the OT
- D. Been exposed to an interpretation of the entire Pentateuch from a holistic perspective

Attitudes

Students who successfully complete the seminar will have

- A. Accepted the importance of reading and interpreting the Pentateuch according to the genre of the materials that make it up
- B. Embraced the value of including literary analysis in interpretation of the Pentateuch
- C. Seen the value and challenge of differing perspectives on reading and interpreting the Pentateuch

Skills

Students who successfully complete the seminar will

- A. Be able to describe, discuss, and evaluate the basic history of the

development of modern critical study of the Pentateuch

B. Be able to articulate a clear methodology for narrative analysis of the Pentateuch

D. Be able to use the method for narrative analysis in interpretation of the books of the Pentateuch

E. Be able to develop teaching plans for the books of the Pentateuch, including writing a course description, learning objectives, requirements, projected course schedule, and selected bibliography

Seminar Requirements

A. Read closely all required texts and be prepared to discuss their content in Seminar meetings:

See seminar schedule for listing of texts as well as other required readings from other selected sources

B. Prepare detailed, written reviews on Pentateuchal literature, summary study guides on broad Pentateuchal texts, and close textual studies on selected pericopes

C. Lead extended discussion of Pentateuchal texts, their interpretation, and the corresponding literature, with particular focus on their narrative nature

D. Produce a clear and usable written methodology of narrative analysis/interpretation

E. Prepare a comprehensive research paper on an assigned subject, present findings, and defend conclusions

F. Prepare a teaching plan for one of the Pentateuchal books which includes a course description, learning objectives, requirements, projected course schedule, and selected bibliography

G. Write a summary history of the critical study of the Pentateuch with emphasis on the development of newer literary approaches

H. Demonstrate in all work (reading, research, written and oral presentations, dialogue and discussion) the high quality expected of doctoral level studies

Seminar Evaluation

A.	Book Reviews (Written and oral components)	10%
B.	Summary History of Critical Study	10%
C.	Narrative Methodology	10%
D.	Study Guide (Written and oral components)	15%
E.	Textual Study (Written and oral components)	20%
F.	Research paper (Written and oral components)	30%
G.	Teaching Plan	05%

Seminar Attendance

Students are expected to be in attendance at every regularly scheduled seminar meeting

Seminar Schedule and Assignments

- January 19 Introduction to the Seminar; Assignments; Requirements; Guidelines
- 26 Review of Literature: Readings and Reviews
- (All) 1969 Muilenburg, James. "Form Criticism and Beyond." JBL 88 (1969): 1-18.
- (All) 1970 Rauber, D. F. "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth." JBL 1970: 27-37.
- (1) (1979) Bar-Efrat, Shimon. Narrative Art in the Bible. Eng ed. 1989
- (2) 1981 Alter, Robert. The Art of Biblical Narrative
- (3) 1983 Berlin, Adele. Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative (Rev. ed. 1994)
- February 2 Review of Literature: Readings and Reviews
- (All) 1985 Sternberg, Meir. The Poetics of Biblical Narrative (In addition to reading the book, record summary information from at least two scholarly reviews)
- (4) 1988 Mann, Thomas W. The Book of the Torah
- (5) 1994 Gunn, David M. and Danna Nolan Fewell. Narrative in the Hebrew Bible
- 9 Review of Literature: Readings and Reviews
- (1) 1996 Fretheim, Terence E. The Pentateuch
- (2) 1999 Fokkelman, J. P. Reading Biblical Narrative
- (3) 2001 Amit, Yairah. Reading Biblical Narratives
- 16 Mardi Gras Day: No Meeting
- 23 Review of Literature: Readings and Reviews
- (4) 2002 Alexander, T. Desmond. From Paradise to the Promised Land. Rev. ed.
- (5) 2006 Schnittjer, Gary Edward. The Torah Story
- (All) 2009 Sailhamer, John H. The Meaning of the Pentateuch
- March 9 Narrative and Narrative Methodology; Rough draft of methodology paper due
Genesis Study Guide Presentation
- 15-19 Spring Break
- 23 Exodus Study Guide Presentation
Leviticus Study Guide Presentation
- 30 Numbers Study Guide Presentation
Deuteronomy Study Guide Presentation
Textual Studies assigned for the April 6th are due for handout at the beginning of this session, those assigned for the 13th are due for handout on the 6th, etc.

April due	6	Narrative and Narrative Methodology: Final methodology paper Textual Study Presentation 1
	13	Textual Study Presentations 2 and 3
	20	Textual Study Presentations 4 and 5 Research Papers assigned for the May 4 are to be in seminar members' hands no later than April 27 and those assigned for May 11 are to be handed out at the beginning of the seminar session on May 4
May	4	Research Paper Presentations 1 and 2
	11	Research Paper Presentations 3, 4, and 5

Selected Bibliography

- Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Pp. 1-102.
- Clines, David J. A. *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. 1997
- Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*.
- Klitsner, Judy. *Subversive Sequels in the Bible: How Biblical Stories Mine and Undermine Each Other*.
- Kuhn, Karl Allen. *The Heart of Biblical Narrative: Rediscovering Biblical Appeal to the Emotions*.
- Laffey, Alice L. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective*. Pp. i-70.
- Longman, Tremper, III. "Literary Approaches and Interpretation." *NIDOTTE* 1:103-124.
- Ryken, Leland and Tremper Longman, III. *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*.
- Sailhamer, John H. *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation*
- Satterthwaite, Philip E. "Narrative Criticism: The Theological Implications of Narrative Techniques." *NIDOTTE* 1:125-33.
- Schultz, Richard. "Integrating Old Testament Theology and Exegesis: Literary, Thematic, and Canonical Issues." *NIDOTTE* 1:185-205.
- Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*
- Van Seters, John. *The Pentateuch: A Social-Science Commentary*.
- Vogt, Peter T. *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook*. *Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis*.
- Whybray, R. N. *The Making of the Pentateuch*. 1994.

Guidelines for Written Work

Secondary Literature

- A. Reviews shall include the following components:
 1. Basic bibliographical information

2. A concise summary of the contents of the work according to its major divisions
 3. If the work presents, demonstrates, or uses a narrative approach, include a statement of the methodology used in the work (name it and describe its form/shape, application/use). This information will provide part of the basis for writing a final, more comprehensive, statement on narrative methodology
 4. Practical pointers to help others to read the work more efficiently (e. g. page references to key statements or sections, indications of obvious slant, etc.)
 5. An assessment of the work's significance and its place in the broader field of critical study of the Pentateuch
 6. A reflection of the substance of any significant scholarly reviews
 7. The review shall be 5-6 single-spaced pages with no title page
- B. Reviewers shall provide copies for the professor and each seminar member no later than the beginning of the session in which they are to present (earlier would be better).
- C. Reviewers shall not read their reviews but shall give an oral report of findings with reference to the review and shall field questions from the professor and seminar members regarding the methodology of the study and the content of the material reviewed, as well as its significance for Pentateuchal studies.

Biblical Literature

Students will be assigned one of the Pentateuchal books as a focus and will prepare both the Study Guide and the Textual Study based on broad and narrow sections in that book. Each student will choose those sections in consultation with the professor

- A. Study Guides
1. All students will read the biblical text and the pertinent materials from any and all seminar resources which address the text under consideration.
 2. All students will choose one comprehensive commentary on each of the five books. The student who has been assigned responsibility for leading the discussion on a given section will use this commentary and others as resources to prepare the guide according to the directions below. The students who are not leading will read their commentaries on the book under consideration (know the issues covered in the Introduction, the basic approach to studying the book, the author's treatment of crucial passages in the book, and how the treatment compares to a narrative treatment).
 3. The student charged with leading the discussion will provide a written outline/study guide of the material for each participant before or at the beginning of the session.
 4. The guides should be in outline form and should:
 - a. help to point the participants to the most significant results of a narrative approach
 - b. reflect comparison and contrast of narrative approaches and interpretations in any and all seminar resources which address the text under consideration (plus sources such as Alter's Five Books of Moses, The Schocken Bible, The Jewish Study Bible, etc. Most of these kinds of sources will be selective in their treatment)

- c. note interpretive approaches of comprehensive commentaries which differ from or contrast with a narrative approach, including comment on matters of strong debate
 - d. offer summary statements on the significance of the text along with an assessment of the value of the various approaches for studying that particular text as well as the Pentateuch in general
 - e. a bibliography of the most recent, significant materials on the book of the Pentateuch from which the text under consideration comes, particularly commentaries
5. Study leaders shall not read their guides but shall use them as working tools to lead the discussion. However, they probably should have a fuller set of notes beyond their guide, from which they can draw during the session.

B. Textual Studies

Textual Studies will include:

- 1. Textual criticism necessary to establish the text
- 2. Thorough grammatical and syntactical analysis
- 3. In-depth historical, literary, and theological analysis, considering and comparing all pertinent methodologies and their results, but with particular attention to the text's literary nature and narrative quality
- 4. Translation
- 5. Interpretation and application
- 6. The form of this paper will not be crucial. No cover page is needed, and no bibliography beyond footnote information is necessary. Footnotes are required, and the content should reflect the same quality as described for the Research Paper.
- 7. Papers are due in final form one week prior to presentation date and are to be distributed to the professor and all seminar members at the beginning of the seminar meeting the week before presentation.
- 8. Students shall not read their papers, but they shall lead the seminar in a discussion of the most important aspects of their treatment of the text as well as their findings and conclusions.
- 9. These papers should be 16 to 20 pages double-spaced (or 10 pages, single-spaced with double-spacing between paragraphs).

Research Papers

- A. Research papers are to be written according to The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies, Hendrickson, 1999.
- B. Unless special permission is given, papers will be a minimum of 35 pages and a maximum of 40 pages (or 20 pages single-spaced with double-spacing between paragraphs), exclusive of Appendices, Selected Bibliography, etc.
- C. The first step required for producing the research paper is the submission of a statement of the problem for research and the statement of subproblems which are the component parts of that research (Paul D. Leedy, Practical Research: Planning and Design, latest ed.). The professor will provide individual guidance to aid students in

forming acceptable statements. Note that this exercise is preliminary; your finished paper *will not* reflect the problem-sub-problem format.

D. Papers shall reflect comprehensive research, broad and varied reading, in-depth analysis, and crystallization of findings and conclusions on the assigned subject. In addition, the work should reflect good grammar and style, as well as clear argument and logical development.

E. All papers will be rooted in thorough study of the Hebrew texts in the Pentateuch related to the subject

F. Bibliographies should include as comprehensive a listing as possible of sources related to the subject of the paper. Think in terms of giving your readers the best start possible for studying the subject for themselves. Listing of multiple works of a general nature not necessarily helpful to the work is not needed (e. g. Introductions to the OT).

G. For key sources in your investigation and crucial for your understanding and conclusions, provide a 3-5 line annotation within the bibliography itself.

H. Papers are due in final form one week prior to presentation date and are to be distributed to the professor and all seminar members at the beginning of the seminar meeting the week before presentation.

I. Students shall not read their papers, but they shall give an oral report of their findings with appropriate reference to the papers' content. Students also must be prepared to field questions related to their work.

Students also should give conscious consideration to research and writing aimed at presentation and/or publication. The professor will provide consultation regarding logistics of locating avenues for exploring these possibilities.

J. Possible Paper Topics

1. Liberation Exegesis/Theology and the Pentateuch
2. The Bible as Literature, Old Testament Narrative Interpretation, and the Issue of Historicity/Fiction with Specific Reference to the Pentateuch
3. Liturgical Elements in the Pentateuch and their Significance for Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation
4. Feminist Hermeneutics and Interpretation of the Pentateuch
5. **דבר**, Commands of Destruction, God as Character and the Character of God: Implications from Newer Literary Analysis?
6. Newer Literary Analysis and a Pluralistic Culture: Intersections in Reading and Interpreting the Pentateuch?
7. Selected Thematic Study

Students may suggest other topics that the professor may consider in consultation with individual students, but the focus of this particular requirement is a study which has as its foundation consideration of the Pentateuch as a whole.