Rationale for the course

This course in the M. Div. (M.A.) program introduces to the literary genres, the development and the interpretation of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch and Biblical Wisdom Literature. Presenting the first five books of the Bible through the lens of an ecology of the land of the Bible, Israel/Palestine, this course describes the biblical tradition against the background of the mostly semi-arid landscapes. Waterways and access to fresh water were essential for Israel’s experience of their God. In most parts of this biblical landscape the annual precipitation from Yahweh, the giver of rain (Gen 2:5) would provide the basis for agriculture and secure the survival of its inhabitants. We consider how, for instance, the matriarchal and patriarchal narrative traditions of bedouins, dependent on wells and waterways, and Israel’s journey through the desert mirror Israel’s fundamental need for water.

The course outlines the material of the Pentateuch in four parts: 1 Genesis (Primeval history, Patriarchs); 2 The middle books of the Pentateuch: Exodus-Leviticus-Numbers (themes: Exodus, Sinai, the Covenant and the law); 3 Deuteronomy. It briefly introduces to Wisdom Literature/Psalms (Job, Proverbs, Psalms).

As students prepare for ministry, this course seeks to read texts from the Pentateuch and to engage with them in a pluralistic world. We will consider how to build on traditional Protestant/Lutheran hermeneutics and on contextual (gender, queer, feminist, post-holocaust, latinx, African American, womanist) approaches to scripture. We will specifically develop strategies how in today’s worldwide shortages of fresh water, Israel’s fundamental reliance on Yahweh as provider of rain and as Israel’s leader through the desert can ground our theology and our preaching.

Outcomes

This course enables the student to understand his religious heritage in the form of the scripture of the Old Testament (Competency M. Div. # 2; MA # 2; MAM # 2). It enables the student to become aware of the cultural contexts of the biblical texts (Competency M. Div. #5; MA # 4; MAM # 5).

Textbooks:
Required:

**Recommended:**

*Further recommended bibliography will be included in the syllabus.*