Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile


Rationale
This course introduces students to the Pentateuch and Wisdom Literature in the Hebrew Bible. This includes in the Pentateuch Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and in the Wisdom unit Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. The word Torah is the Hebrew word for the Pentateuch. It also means “instruction,” providing the rationale for joining the Pentateuch and Wisdom literature in one course. This course will introduce basic elements of the historical critical method, but will also attend to feminist, post-colonial, and interfaith issues. The course recognizes that these biblical books are canonical in both Judaism and Christianity. Students are expected to learn what the texts meant in their original contexts and what they might mean for the church and world today.

Outcomes (Learners will be able to):
1. Read the Old Testament historically, by analyzing the literary forms and genres in the Pentateuch and Wisdom literature and their theological foci. Analyze the texts historically within the social reality in ancient Israel from the 13th century through the Persian period (Learning outcomes M. Div. #2, 3; MATS #2, 3; MAM #2,3).
2. Describe and analyze the motifs and the theologies of the various writers (Learning outcome M. Div. #2, 3, 4; MATS #2,3,4; MAM #2,3,4).
3. Understand how the methodology of literary analysis has developed in 250 years of critical biblical scholarship (Learning outcomes M. Div. #2; MATS #2; MAM #2).
4. Use biblical commentaries and other standard reference works to understand major scholarly insights; demonstrate methodological skills in Old Testament interpretation and use methodological tools (Learning outcomes M. Div. #2; MATS #2; MAM #2).
5. Describe selected models of the interpretation of the Old Testament in Christianity: in Israelite and Jewish antiquity, during the Reformation, and in 19th/21st-century Lutheran/Protestant theology (Learning outcomes M. Div. #2,3; MATS #2,3; MAM #2,3).
6. Communicate the ideas, contents and concepts of the Old Testament in preaching and teaching in a contemporary parish setting (Learning outcome M. Div. #5; MATS #4; MAM #5).
7. Explain the biblical text from the perspective of contextual approaches: e.g., feminist/gender, post-holocaust, liberation theology (Learning outcome M. Div. #4,5; MATS #3,4; MAM #4,5).

Strategies
1. Lecture and class discussion.
2. Reporting on contemporary histories of Israel, exegetical monographs, articles, and commentaries.
3. Writing a critical review of a recent monograph.
4. Learning the history of the interpretation of the Bible.
5. Individual and group study based on a 40+ page syllabus and study guide.
6. Encouraging student exploring and questioning of the biblical text.
7. Use of professor’s website (The Old Testament and the Ancient Near East) and of resources posted on Jenzabar.

Assessment

1. Mid-term and final examinations.
2. Quizzes on the history of Israel
3. Quality of classroom discussion and contributions to the class’s learning.
4. Student evaluation at the end of the course (online)
5. Critical Evaluation of student exegetical papers.

Required Textbook