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OT 520 Foundations for Old Testament Study

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OT 520 FOUNDATIONS FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Fall Semester, 1999

Instructor: Bill T. Arnold

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the historical and critical issues in Old Testament studies. Primarily utilizes the Pentateuch to explain and illustrate these.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. Cognitive Objectives:

At the end of the course the student should be able to

1. Apply adequate interpretive techniques to the Old Testament in general, and the Pentateuch in particular.
2. Arrange the events of the Pentateuch in relative chronological order.
3. Relate the events of the Old Testament to the salient features of ancient Near Eastern history.
4. State the general content of each book of the Pentateuch.
5. Identify the various literary forms used in the Pentateuch.
6. Identify and trace key theological motifs as they run through the Pentateuch.
7. Analyze and critique the current scholarly positions on such critical matters as the authorship, date and unity of the Pentateuch.
8. Apply the Pentateuch to Christian life and ministry.

B. Affective Objectives:

At the end of the course the student should

1. Appreciate the unique message of each book of the Pentateuch.
2. Desire to do further study in each book of the Pentateuch and the Old Testament in general.
3. Allow the principles of the Old Testament to enrich one's relationship with God and strengthen one's resolve to grow more into the likeness of the One who inspired it.
4. Share the information and insight gleaned from the study of the Pentateuch with others.

III. COURSE PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance

Each student will take responsibility for his or her attendance. Students will be asked to report the number of absences on the final exam, indicating those that are excused due to illness or emergency. Attendance only affects the student evaluation if the grade is marginal. Students who abuse this procedure will be counseled with privately, with grade reduction and/or assignment of extra work possible.

B. Required Readings

Readings from the following required texts are listed in part VI below. Information from these readings will enhance the student's comprehension of the lecture and research topics, so it is expected they will be read systematically during the process of the semester. A report on their completion will be submitted as part of the final examination.

1. LaSor, W. S., David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.
2. Walton, John H., and Victor H. Matthews. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.
3. Alexander, T. Desmond. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995.
4. Whybray, R. Norman. *Introduction to the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.

C. Examinations

There will be two examinations. The mid-term will be on October 21 and the final December 16 at 6:00 PM. These exams will be essay type questions, and the student will be expected to use blue books for both exams. Study guides are provided in V below.

D. Term Paper

During the semester, the student will write a brief paper of no more than 2500 words (approximately 10-12 pages) on the topic of his or her choice from the list below. The paper should conform to "Chicago Manual Style," chapter 7 in *Form and Style*, by Slade, Campbell, and Ballou (available in the bookstore). The student should make sure his or her name is clearly visible on the first page of the paper along with the SPO number. The paper should be stapled in the upper left corner with no bindings or folders of any kind. The paper is due at the beginning of class on December 9. There will be a penalty for late papers (one-third letter grade after the beginning of class on December 9 and a whole letter grade after December 13).

The student should read a minimum of 500 additional pages in the process of researching his or her topic. At the end of the bibliography, the student should indicate the amount read from each source along with the total read for the research project, excluding the textbooks required in III.B above and Web sites on the topic. The preliminary bibliography for most of these topics is available in David R. Bauer, *Biblical Resources for Ministry* (2nd ed.; Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1995).

The following list of topics is partial. Other topics may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

- The geography of Mesopotamia (or Syria-Palestine, or Egypt) and its significance for Old Testament Studies
- The history of writing, including the development of the alphabet.
- Survey of the Semitic languages.
- The Atrahasis Epic, the Enuma Elish and comparisons with Genesis.
- Survey some aspect (religion, socio-political structure, etc.) of one of the following: Sumerians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Hurrians.
- Survey one of the following archaeological periods with special reference to the biblical connections: Middle Bronze, Late Bronze, Iron I, Iron II, Iron III.
- Unique features of the patriarchal narratives, and the questions concerning the dating of the Patriarchs.
- The nature of patriarchal religion.
- Some aspect of Hebrew religion (tabernacle/temple, sacrifice, festivals, law, etc.) as compared with a similar aspect in another ancient Near Eastern culture, or as detailed in the Pentateuch.
- Origins of Yahwism.
- History of Monotheism
- A theological theme of the Pentateuch (holiness, sin, atonement, righteousness, etc.).
- The poor and the oppressed in the Pentateuch.
- The unique understanding of history in the Old Testament compared to other cultures of the ancient Near East.
- Nature and role of holy war in the Old Testament.
- Canon and Old Testament textual criticism.
- Survey the history of Source Criticism in the nineteenth century.
- History and methods of Form Criticism.
- Methods of Tradition Criticism.
- Biographical sketch of one of the following: J. Wellhausen, H. Gunkel, G. von Rad, M. Noth, W. F. Albright.

IV. STUDENT EVALUATION

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|----------------------|---|
| Assigned readings | 10% [report to be submitted with final examination] |
| Mid-term examination | 25% |
| Final examination | 30% |
| Term paper | 35% |

V. STUDY GUIDELINES

1. Three ways in which the OT relates to the NT
2. Evidence for the innate authority of the Old Testament
3. Theological significance of Genesis 1
4. Nature of popular fertility cult in the ancient Near East
5. Progression of the patriarchal promises in the Pentateuchal narratives
6. Basic features of Mesopotamian geography; Egyptian geography; Syro-Palestinian geography
7. Semitic groups in Mesopotamian dynasties, Pharaonic rulership in Egypt
8. Definition and importance of the "fertile crescent"
9. Geographical regions of Ancient Israel
10. International highways of the ancient Near Eastern world
11. The biblical world view *vis à vis* that of the ancient Near East
12. Definition and nature of "archaeology"
13. Archaeological ages of the ancient Near East
14. Turning points in the history of Biblical Archaeology
15. Limitations of Biblical Archaeology
16. Salient features of the Early Bronze Age
17. Turning points in Israel's History
18. Approximate dates for the patriarchal age
19. Dates and significant features of Middle Bronze I; Middle Bronze II; Middle Bronze III
20. Historical questions regarding the book of Exodus: historicity, date of the exodus and route of the exodus
21. Israel's use and perception of animal sacrifice *vis à vis* that of the ancient Near East
22. The method modern Christians should use in reading OT law
23. Late Bronze Egypt
24. Problem of literary structure in the Book of Numbers
25. Ethical motivation for obedience in Deuteronomy 5-11
26. Structure of ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties and their significance for OT studies
27. Relationship of Deuteronomy to the OT canon in general
28. Philosophical developments since 1750 and their significance for OT studies
29. Relationship of the various critical approaches to each other
30. OT Textual Criticism
31. Criteria used by source critics for source separation
32. Definitions for the Fragment and Supplement Hypotheses of Pentateuchal origins
33. Development of the Pentateuch according to J. Wellhausen (his assumptions and his classical definitions of the four self-contained sources)
34. Conclusions of J. Wellhausen

35. Alternatives to the Documentary Hypothesis (evidence for authorship of the Pentateuch, demands of the evidence)

VI. SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

- Sept 16 Course syllabus
LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 3-51 and 585-605
Alexander 1-18
- Sept 23 LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 619-687
Alexander 19-32
Walton/Matthews 12-54
- Sept 30 Alexander 33-62
Walton/Matthews 54-81
- Oct 7 LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 52-62
Alexander 63-74
- Oct 14 LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 63-79
Alexander 75-81
Walton/Matthews 82-110
- Oct 21 **MID-TERM EXAMINATION**
- Oct 28 LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 80-110
Alexander 82-142
Walton/Matthews 110-141
- Nov 4 Alexander 143-190
Walton/Matthews 142-176
- Nov 11 Whybray 1-11
Walton/Matthews 177-215
- Nov 18 LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 111-127
Whybray 12-62
Walton/Matthews 216-270
- Dec 2 Whybray 63-106
- Dec 9 **PAPERS DUE**
Whybray 107-143
- Dec 16 **FINAL EXAMINATION**, 6:00-8:50 pm.