

Pentateuch and Historical Books (OT1)

[Mercer School for Ministry](#)
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Rev. Dr. Michael Hull
hull.michael@icloud.com

Course Description

The course introduces the Pentateuch and the Historical Books (Former Prophets) including a synopsis of their outlooks, ideologies, and theologies. The course pays close attention to their literary traditions, historical and cultural contexts, and thematic structures. Selected passages from both are exegeted in detail.

Intended Learning Outcome and Objective

The intended learning outcome of this course is that students will broaden their understanding of the Pentateuch and the Historical Books (Former Prophets) by reading them closely (in a number of translations with reference to the original languages) and by reading salient commentary upon them.

The course's objective is for students to become familiar with the Pentateuch and the Historical Books (Former Prophets) so as to strengthen their theological reflection, spirituality, preaching, and pastoral ministry.

The means of instruction is the Socratic method. The course outline (below) indicates both the topics covered and the required reading necessary for active participation in each seminar. Active participation, facilitated by the required reading, is mandatory. The course takes a flipped-classroom approach to seminars, namely, students are expected to come to the seminars having completed the required reading in order to discuss it.

Texts and Study Aids

The principal text is the Holy Bible. The preferred translations are the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1989) and the New International Version of the Bible (2011). There is one required commentary: John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2014). Ryan P. Bonfiglio, *A Study Companion to "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible"* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2014), is highly recommended to assist the student in reading Collins' text.

Course Outline and Evaluation

The course meets for five seminars: February 16, March 16, April 13, May 18, and June 15, 2019 via [Skype](#). Evaluation is measured by writing five short essays of 500 to 750 words and emailing them to the instructor around the time of each seminar, but no later than June 24 for all five. A letter grade, following [Mercer's Academic Policies and Procedures](#) will be allotted for each essay, and an average of the five will constitute the final grade.

1. The Pentateuch: Ancient Near East, Pentateuch, Patriarchs (February 16)

Reading: Collins, 1–107; Bonfiglio, 1–42

Writing: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to as “patriarchs.” The promise that God makes to them, to become a great nation, is built on trust. Choose one of the patriarchs and describe his relationship with God vis-à-vis trusting in God’s promise(s). Feel free to reference the other two as you discuss the one you have chosen. How is his relationship with God built on trust? How does that trust serve as a model for us today?

2. The Pentateuch: Exodus, Sinai, Deuteronomy (March 16)

Reading: Collins, 109–82; Bonfiglio, 43–76

Writing: The question of trust in God’s promises is a prominent theme in Exodus. As Moses leads the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land, they constantly lose heart. How does their faithlessness prefigure ours?

3. Joshua and Judges (April 13)

Reading: Collins, 183–226; Bonfiglio, 77–96

Writing: Joshua was called to replace Moses. What was Joshua’s relationship with God? How did Joshua respond, for good or ill, to God’s call?

4. The Books of Samuel (May 18)

Reading: Collins, 227–58; Bonfiglio, 97–115

Writing: Saul and David had different strengths and weaknesses. Choose the one you prefer among the two. Feel free to reference the other (and Solomon, if you wish) as you discuss the one you prefer. Why do you prefer him?

5. The Books of Kings (June 15)

Reading: Collins, 259–303; Bonfiglio, 117–36

Writing: Compare the prophets Elijah and Elisha as their words and deeds are recounted in the Books of Kings. Does one resonate with you more than the other? Why or why not?