

# BRIERCREST

## BLST 610 Pentateuch: The Way of the Torah Winter 2021

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Course Dates: March 1-5, 2021

3 Credit Hours

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the five books of the Pentateuch. Attention will be given to different genres found in these books, their ancient Near Eastern context, and preaching and teaching these texts in the church.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To acquire a broad knowledge of the Bible's first five books in terms of content, themes, and theological purposes for its composition.
2. To understand this sweeping and expansive collection as a sophisticated and highly nuanced work of theology, with all its attendant complexities.
3. To perform competent exegesis of selected chapters with sufficient literary appreciation and theological depth.
4. To study the words of the Torah with a sense of humility and awe, and recognize some of the various ways these words have been received over the centuries.
5. To take preliminary steps toward disseminating the messages of these narratives, poems, laws, and lyrics to various audiences in the academic world and the church.

### COURSE TEXTS

1. Keith Bodner, *An Ark on the Nile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). **Please note:** this book is available as an "ebook" from the Briercrest library, although only one reader at a time can access the copy.
2. T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch, Third Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

Any other course materials will be provided as handouts or electronically.

We should also bring a copy of the Bible – ideally two different reliable translations – for each lecture.

*Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.*

*These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.*

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

## OUTLINE OF TOPICS

- Creation, stewardship, deluge, and the astonishing Abrahamic promise
- The travails of Isaac and the ventures of Jacob
- Joseph and his brothers: fracture and restoration
- Slavery in Egypt and the birth of a child
- Rescue and a journey to the mountain of the covenant
- Construction of the sanctuary and the theology of sacrifice in Leviticus
- Numbers and the crises of the wilderness
- The words of Deuteronomy as conclusion and introduction
- Toward a biblical theology of the Pentateuch

## ASSIGNMENTS

### *Pre-Course Assignments:*

1. Write a two-page single-spaced report on our first course textbook (*An Ark on the Nile*) and a three-page single-spaced report on our second textbook (*From Paradise to the Promised Land*) due prior to the start of our course on Monday morning (**March 1, 2021**). These reports will discuss the content of the two textbooks, and provide a summary of what the student has learned. Please email the report to the professor ([kbodner@briercrest.ca](mailto:kbodner@briercrest.ca)) as a PDF file (10%).

### *Mid-Course Assignments:*

2. End of course reflections: on Friday (**March 5, 2021**) afternoon there will be an “end of course reflection,” providing an opportunity to respond to six questions from our class discussions (20%).

### *Post-Course Assignments:*

3. Creative Responses: *The Workshop* (50%). Over the course of our week together we will work through a series of interactive questions (for example, “For an ancient audience, what are the most controversial elements in the opening sentence of Genesis 1?” or “Briefly outline the Documentary Hypothesis and recent critiques of this method of interpretation”). The student will provide a written response of approximately 300 words to each question, and the entire workshop should be emailed to the professor as a PDF file not later than **April 30, 2021**.

4. Research and Reflection essay: (20%). This is a standard 2000 word paper, single-spaced in Chicago format to be emailed to the professor as a PDF file no later than **April 30, 2021**. Since contemporary Bible readers are less familiar—and some high-profile preachers of late have been dismissive toward—the last three books of the Pentateuch, the topic ideally should be related to Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy. Sample topics might include: “Why is so much of Leviticus concerned with sacrifice, and how should such rituals be interpreted?”; “What is the significance of Leviticus for contemporary Christian life?”; “Why should Christians bother with the book of Numbers, and what are the primary messages?”; “Discuss the ‘spy narrative’ of Numbers 13-14 and its importance for the Pentateuch as a whole”; “How does the book of Deuteronomy both summarize

the Torah and anticipate the next books to come?"; "After studying the dramatic monologue of Deuteronomy, what is the significance of Moses' death outside of the promised land?" Alternatively, a critical response can be written to an important recent study, *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah as Christian Scripture*, edited by Richard S. Briggs and Joel N. Lohr (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

## SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

### ***Attendance Policy***

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

### ***Modular Courses***

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

### ***Online Courses***

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

### ***Semester-Based Courses***

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

### ***Course Schedules***

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

### ***Assignment Submission***

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week

after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

### ***Return of Graded Assignments***

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

### ***Academic Honesty***

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

### ***Academic Accommodations***

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Director of the Academic Resource Centre in person (L234 in the Library), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email ([academicresourcecentre@briercrest.ca](mailto:academicresourcecentre@briercrest.ca)). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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