



BLST 610 Pentateuch: The Way of the Torah Fall 2025

Professor: Dr. Keith Bodner
Email: kbodner@briercrest.ca
Phone: (506) 858-8970 Ext. 137
Course Dates: November 3-7, 2025
Online Modular

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.

SEMINARY-WIDE OUTCOMES

Students will graduate:

1. Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
2. Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.
3. Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigour), and strength (vocation).

COURSE OUTCOMES

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, and articulate the importance of these books within a larger biblical theology.
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, Fourth Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

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>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

SELECTED 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 (**November 3, 2025**). 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) as a PDF file (**10%**).

Mid-Course Assignments:

2. End of course reflections: on Friday (**November 7, 2025**) afternoon there will be an “end of course reflection,” providing an opportunity to creatively engage with six questions from our class discussions (**10%**).

Post-Course Assignments:

3. Creative Responses: *The Workshop* (55%). 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 **January 2, 2026**.

4. Research and Reflection essay: (25%). 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 **January 2, 2026**. 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, such as *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), or L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2015).

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.

Modular Course Schedules

Modular 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

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996

Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.

Arnold, Bill. *Encountering the Book of Genesis: A Study of Its Content and Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.

Baden, Joel S. *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Biddle, Mark E. *Deuteronomy*. Macon, GA.: Smyth & Helwys, 2003.

Brichto, Herbert Chanan. *The Names of God: Poetic Readings in Biblical Beginnings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Brueggemann, Walter. "The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," pp. 675-981 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 6, edited by L. E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

Brueggemann, Walter and Tod Linafelt, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, Second Edition. Louisville: WJKP, 2012.

- Carr, David M. *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- Collins, John J. *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Curtis, Adrian. *Oxford Bible Atlas*, Fourth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Davies, G. I. "Introduction to the Pentateuch," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, edited by John Barton and John Muddiman. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001.
- Davies, John A. *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6*. JSOTSup 395; London: T & T Clark, 2004.
- Davies, Gordon F. *Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1-2*. JSOTSup 135; Sheffield, Sheffield, Academic Press, 1992.
- Day, John. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. JSOTSup 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Dozeman, Thomas, editor, *Methods for Exodus*. Methods in Biblical Interpretation; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Duguid, Iain. *Numbers: God's Presence in the Wilderness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006).
- Fishbane, M. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Freedman, David Noel, editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 volumes. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Fretheim, Terence E. "Numbers," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, edited by John Barton and John Muddiman. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001.
- Friedman, Richard Elliot. *Commentary on the Torah, with a New English Translation*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001
- Galvin, Garrett. *Egypt as a Place of Refuge*. FAT II/51; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Gane, Roy. *Leviticus, Numbers*. NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Garrett, Duane A. *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authority of the First Book of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.
- Gorospe, Athena E. *Narrative and Identity: An Ethical Reading of Exodus 4*. BIS 86; Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Gorman, Frank H., Jr. *Divine Presence and Community: A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*. ITT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

- Greifenhagen, F. V. *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity*. JSOTSup 361; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.
- Hamilton, Victor. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Hamilton, Victor. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch : Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982.
- Heard, R. Christopher. *Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity in Genesis 12-36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah*. Atlanta: SBL, 2000.
- Hendel, Ronald. Editor, *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010
- Hendel, Ronald S. *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Hess, Richard. *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11*. Alter Orient und Altes Testament 234. Kevelaer / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Berker / Neukirchener, 1993.
- House, Paul R. *Leviticus/Numbers*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999.
- Houston, Walter. "Leviticus," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, edited by John Barton and John Muddiman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Leveen, Adriane. *Memory and Tradition in the Book of Numbers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Mathews, Kenneth A. *Genesis 1-11:26*. NAC 1A. Nashville: Broadman, 1996.
- Mays, James L. *The Book of Leviticus, the Book of Numbers*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977.
- Meyers, Carol. *Exodus*. The New Cambridge Bible Commentary; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Milgrom, Jacob. *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB; New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Miller, Patrick D. *Deuteronomy*. Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1990.

- Moberly, R. W. L. *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*. OTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2015).
- Morales, L. Michael. *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption* (IVP Academic 2020).
- Olson, Dennis. *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading* (Minneapolis; Fortress: 1994).
- Polzin, Robert. *Moses and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1993).
- Rad, Gerhard von. *Deuteronomy*. OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.
- Rad, Gerhard von. *Genesis: A Commentary*. OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972.
- Radner, Ephraim. *Leviticus*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Rooker, Mark F. *Leviticus*. NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000.
- Ross, Allen P. *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Sherwood, Stephen K. *Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002.
- Smith, Christopher R. "The Literary Structure of Leviticus." *JSTOT* 70 (1996) 17-32
- Sonnet, J. P. *The Book within the Book: Writing in Deuteronomy*. BIS 14; Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Speiser, E. A. *Genesis*. Anchor Bible 1A. Garden City: Doubleday, 1964.
- Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Tigay, J. H. *Deuteronomy*. JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1996).
- Watts, James W. *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Watts, James W. *Understanding the Pentateuch as Scripture*. Hoboken, NJ; John Wiley & Sons, 2017.
- Wenham, Gordon. *Genesis 1-15*. Waco: Word, 1987.
- Wenham, Gordon. *Genesis 16-50*. Dallas: Word, 1994.

Wilcox, M. "‘Upon the Tree’—Deut 21:22-23 in the New Testament," *JBL* 96 (1977) 85-99.

Work, Telford. *Deuteronomy*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.

Wright, Christopher J. *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.