Department of Theology

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2014
Instructor: Dr. Brian Sigmon
Course #: THEO 2010
Section: 101
Course Title: Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament Selected Books
Topic: The Pentateuch

Description:

The Pentateuch, or Torah, is arguably the most important set of texts within the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. The books of the Pentateuch contain some of the most well-known and theologically significant biblical narratives, including the creation of the world, God’s call of Abraham and his descendants, and the journey out of Egypt led by Moses. In doing so, these texts provide a compelling account of Israel’s origins and their relationship with God and the rest of humankind.

In this course, students will explore the books that make up the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—as well as the historical, literary, and theological significance of the collection as a whole. These texts will first be studied in their historical contexts, giving students a deeper understanding of their original meaning in the life and culture of ancient Israel. Students will also develop a sense of the long and complicated history of the Pentateuch’s authorship, and understand the significance of this process for reading the biblical books. At the same time, class readings and discussions will invite the students to reflect on the Pentateuch from a theological perspective, exploring its significance for contemporary life and faith.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Recall the basic narrative contained within the Pentateuch, including its main characters and events.

- Describe the relationship between the Pentateuch and the history of ancient Israel, especially the various time periods in which the Pentateuch’s texts were written.

- Read the books of the Bible carefully and critically.

- Understand the importance of studying the Pentateuch and other religious literature.