<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE: THO 3160</th>
<th>TITLE: Pentateuch and Historical Books</th>
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<td>CREDITS: 3 cr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TERM: Winter 2010</td>
<td>PROFESSOR: Yvan Mathieu</td>
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| DESCRIPTION | After addressing a few introductory questions (What is the Bible? What is the difference between Old and New Testament? What is exegesis? Diachronic and synchronic approaches), we will read a few chosen texts from the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible): Prehistory (Gen 1-11), Abraham (Gen 12:1-25:11), the Exodus event (Ex 1:1-15:21), the Sinai Covenant (Ex 19-24). We shall conclude with a brief survey of the deuteronomistic history (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings). We will address the major questions raised by exegetes regarding the composition of the Pentateuch. |

| OBJECTIVES | – Introduce students to the Bible, to its different parts and to the need for a critical reading.  
– Introduce students to the different exegetical methods so that they will be able to apply them to a given text.  
– Understand certain difficult texts of the Pentateuch that have an incidence upon our choices in life as believers today.  
– Discover that the Old Testament is essential to a correct understanding of the New Testament. It is a not an optional reading for Christians. |

| WORKLOAD | – Three short papers (4 pages each). Each paper is worth 20 % of the final mark.  
– Due dates: beginning of the fourth class  
beginning of the eight class  
beginning of the twelfth class  
– Final exam (oral or written) |

| EVALUATION | Papers: 60 % (3 x 20 %)  
Final exam: 40 % |

| REQUIRED TEXTS | An annotated edition of the Bible |

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Gn 1 – 9


Gn 1 – 6


Gn 1 – 5


Gn 1–4


Gn 1–3


Gn 1 – 2


**Gen 1:26-3:24**


**The creation narrative: Gen 1:1-2:4a**


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1:1-15


1:1-10


1:1-5


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**1:1-2**


**1:2-10**

1:2
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1:3-4

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Gen 2 – 12

Gen 2 – 11

Gen 2 – 8

Gen 2 – 6

Gen 2 – 4

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2:4b-7


2:4b


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The descendants of Adam and Eve: Gen 4:1-26


A. Cain and Abel: Gen 4:1-16


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B. The descendants of Cain: Gen 4:17-24


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**C. The descendants of Seth: Gen 4:25-26**


**Gen 5 – 7**

**The Patriarchs before the Flood: Gen 5:1-32**


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5:1

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Gen 6:1-13

Gen 6:1-12

Gen 6:1-6

The sons of God and the daughters of men: Gen 6:1-4


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The descendants of Terah: Gen 11:31 – 12:5

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12:18


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**Abraham and Sarah in Gerar: Gen 20:1-18**


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**20:13**


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**Birth of Isaac and Expulsion of Hagar: Gen 21:1-7.8-21**


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Chapter III: Moses

1. The Book of Exodus


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1. Revelation of the Divine Name: Ex 3:3-15


Ex 15


3. The Sinai Covenant


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4. The Book of Leviticus

5. The Book of Numbers

6. Sojournings in the Wilderness

The Book of Deuteronomy

Dt 34:7

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Jos 15:13-19

The Book of Judges

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1 S 1:1-28

1 S 4-6

1 S 25:1-42


1 K 19:3-18

2 K 2:23-25

2 K 3:4-27

David
Hypotheses regarding the composition of the Pentateuch

1. Traditional hypothesis: Moses is the author of the first five books of the Bible

In the Jewish tradition, that Moses is recognized as the author of the first five books of the Bible is found

1) the Hebrew Bible,
2) extra-biblical Jewish literature
3) and the New Testament.

However, a close reading of the Pentateuch raises a few questions with regard to that hypothesis:

- There are discontinuities, a lack of order.

 Gen 20:1;

*From there* Abraham journeyed toward the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur.

 Ex 19:25

19:25 So Moses went down to the people and told them
20:1 Then God spoke all these words:
20:2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;

- There are repetitions that contradict one another (See Gen 1:1-2:4a; 2:4b-25).

- However, despite these differences, there are literary constants with regard to vocabulary, style, and theology

- There are some anomalies.

 Deut 34:5: Moses describing his own death

“Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD’S command.”

 Gen 12:6: the remark about the Canaanites cannot be from Moses;

“Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.

*At that time the Canaanites were in the land.*”

 Num 12:3 speaks of Moses using the third person.

“Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth.”However, a close reading of the Pentateuch raises a few questions with regard to that hypothesis:

Because of these observations, some authors, among them Richard Simon (1638-1712) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), have questioned this traditional hypothesis and have proposed other hypotheses.

2. The four great critical hypotheses with regard to the composition of the Pentateuch
1. **The old documentary hypothesis.** Jean Astruc (1684-1766), a Protestant (Huguenot) converted to Catholicism and personal physician to Louis XV, thought that the Book of Genesis contains two parallel narratives, one which names God Elohim (A) and one which names God Yahweh (B). However, Astruc believed Moses to be the one who composed these two narratives. This hypothesis suffers from two limitations: it is founded only on the Book of Genesis and it does not answer all the critical questions raised with regard to the traditional hypothesis.

2. **The fragmentary hypothesis** (Alexander Geddes [1737-1802], a catholic priest of Scottish origin, and Johannes Severin Vater [1771-1826]). These authors reject the thesis that sources exist that would provide parallel stories. Rather they think the text is a collection of fragments with absolutely no organic links among them. This hypothesis fails to explain the parallels that exist in the text or the close relationship among many of the so-called fragments. Just like the preceding hypothesis, the fragmentary hypothesis is based only on a reading of the Book of Genesis.

3. **The complementary hypothesis** (Heinrich Ewald [1803-1875]). This professor of Göttingen studied not only the Book of Genesis but also the Hexateuch, the first six books of the Bible, including the conquest of the promised land in the Book of Joshua. The basic source for these six books would be a fundamental plot (*Grundschrift*) characterized by the name ‘Elohim.’ This involves a very precise style and a marked vocabulary. This basic plot has probably incorporated older elements, such as the Decalogue (Ex 20:2-17) and the Code of the Covenant (Ex 20:22-23:19). However, this *Grundschrift* can be compared to the spine to which other complements were later attached to form the skeleton of the actual Hexateuch. But according to what criteria do we decide whether this text belongs to the fundamental plot or to the complements?

4. **The new documentary hypothesis** (Julius Wellhausen [1844-1918]). The Pentateuch as we know it is a compilation of four written documents: the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomist (D) and the Priestly Source (P). J, E and P are parallel documents which were edited into the first four books of the Bible. D is limited to the Book of Deuteronomy. It is difficult to distinguish between J and E in the final text.
The Pentateuch as we know it is a compilation of four written documents: the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomist (D) and the Priestly Source (P). J, E and P are parallel documents which were edited into the first four books of the Bible. D is limited to the Book of Deuteronomy. It is difficult to distinguish between J and E in the final text.

Two examples:

Determine if a text belongs to JEDP: Gen 1 - 2
Determine the geographic origin of a written tradition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Historical circumstances</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>≈ 1000-900</td>
<td>David and Salomon kings in Jerusalem</td>
<td>Yahwist (J)</td>
<td>The royal court of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈ 900-800</td>
<td>Division between Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom (Israel and Juda)</td>
<td>Elohist (E)</td>
<td>The royal court of Israel in Samaria (Northern Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈ 750</td>
<td>721: Destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians</td>
<td>JE (fusion of the two documents)</td>
<td>Southern Kingdom Juda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈ 620</td>
<td>Josiah’s reform Discovery of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 22)</td>
<td>Deuteronomist (D) (Deut 12-26)</td>
<td>Southern Kingdom Juda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈ 550</td>
<td>586-536: Exile in Babylon</td>
<td>JED (fusion of the three documents)</td>
<td>Babylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈ 500</td>
<td>538: Proclamation of Cyrus: Return to Jerusalem 515: consecration of the second Temple</td>
<td>Priestly Source (Priestercodex P)</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≈ 400</td>
<td>445:Nehemiah 400: Ezra religious reform</td>
<td>Final redaction of the Pentateuch</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
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Now his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock near Shechem.
And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” He answered, “Here I am.”
So he said to him, “Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me.” So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

Evaluation of Wellhausen’s system

1. It is a literary system based on the philosophy of the history of religions established by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). According to this school, humanity went from an original pure religion to a corrupt priestly legalism. This philosophy rejects anything that is supernatural. This system can be seen as destroying tradition and faith.

2. Wellhausen had an incomplete knowledge of the Ancient Near East. Archaeological discoveries that were made after him showed that Law in the ANE was much older that Wellhausen believed.

3. According to Wellhausen, the historical value of the Pentateuch was void. The stories it contains are seen as legend with no historical roots.

Reactions to Wellhausen

Roman Catholic Reactions

Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange, o.p. (1855-1938)

Founder of the École biblique de Jérusalem, he presented his theory at the Catholic convention of Fribourg in 1897. He published it in his book La méthode historique (1903). He wrote that the historical value of the Bible, nor the tradition, nor the authenticity of the Pentateuch depended upon mosaic authorship.
The Pontifical Biblical Commission

Created in 1902 by Leo XIII, it published a decree in 1906 where it reaffirmed the mosaic character of the Pentateuch, while admitting that Moses might have used some sources and probably did not write everything that is found in the Pentateuch.

Pope Pius XII

In 1943, Pius XII publishes Divino afflante spiritu (Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) where he integrates the discoveries of modern exegesis within the traditional teaching of the Church. These methods have been confirmed by 50 years of exegetical and archaeological work.

This approach was confirmed by Vatican Council II

See Dei Verbum § 12

12. However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words. To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among other things, to "literary forms." For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse. The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.

Reactions of other exegetes

Herman Gunkel (1862-1932) and the Formgeschichte

The school of the history of religion (Religionsgeschichte) wants to go beyond the written documents that are behind the biblical text in order to reach the oral traditions behind those written documents. Gunkel transferred these ideas in the world of exegesis.

Three principles of Religionsgeschichte:

1. One must study a literary unit rather than a word or a verse. The purpose is not to seek the intention of the author, but the Sitz im Leben, the point of insertion in life.

2. The method is a comparative one: one must compare Israel’s literature with the literature of the other surrounding cultures.

3. Religionsgeschichte is not a-religious or lacking faith. But it comes out of an intellectual world characterized by scepticism.

Evaluation: Gunkel believed that the shortest literary units were the most ancient ones. He also believed that it is impossible to find objective historical elements within the biblical stories.
On both accounts, one can disagree with Gunkel.

*Albrecht Alt (1883-1956) and Martin Noth (1902-1968)*

For Gunkel, the patriarchs were no more than folkloric heroes. But for Alt and Noth, they are the founders of Israel’s cult. Therefore, they are indeed historical characters dating from the prehistory of Israel.

One of the limits denounced by catholic exegesis went down.
Martin Noth is well known for his work on the historical books. His major contributions to the study of the Pentateuch are:

- **delimitation of the Pentateuch**
  (tetrateuch rather than hexateuch)
- **The content of P**
  (more narrative than Law)
- **The pre-literary history of the Pentateuch:**
  It was constituted around five major themes:
  1. Getting out of Egypt
  2. Entering into Canaan
  3. Promises to the patriarchs
  4. Leading the people through the wilderness
  5. Revelation at Mount Sinai

*Gerhard Von Rad (1901-1971)*

Von Rad’s project is to go from the Hexateuch in its final form to find it original nucleus. He thinks that that nucleus was preserved in an historical creed (Deut 26:5b-9; 6:20-24; Jos 24:2b-13)

**Deut 26:5b-9**:

4 When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous.
6 When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us,
7 we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.
8 The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders;
9 and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

**Deut 6:20-24**:

20 When your children ask you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?”
21 then you shall say to your children, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.
22 The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household.
23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors.
24 Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case.

**Jos 24:2b-13**:
And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods.

Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac;

and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in its midst; and afterwards I brought you out.

When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your ancestors with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.

When they cried out to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt. Afterwards you lived in the wilderness a long time.

Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan; they fought with you, and I handed them over to you, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you.

Then King Balak son of Zippor of Moab, set out to fight against Israel. He sent and invited Balaam son of Beor to curse you,

but I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he blessed you; so I rescued you out of his hand.

When you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I handed them over to you.

I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove out before you the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow.

I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and towns that you had not built, and you live in them; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards that you did not plant.

At the centre of this creed:

- The exodus
- The gift of the land

Only one mention of the patriarchs:

- The wandering Aramean

Missing:

- *Urgeschichte* (Gen 1 – 11)
- The Sinai events

*Diachronic approach*

*vs*

*Synchronous approach*