

COURSE SYLLABUS

OT511: Old Testament Theology I: Pentateuch and Former Prophets

Course Lecturer: Richard E. Averbeck, PhD

About This Course



This course was originally created through the Institute of Theological Studies in association with the Evangelical Seminary Deans' Council. There are nearly 100 evangelical seminaries of various denominations represented within the council and many continue to use the ITS courses to supplement their curriculum. The lecturers were selected primarily by the Deans' Council as highly recognized scholars in their particular fields of study.

Course Description

Welcome to *Old Testament Theology I: Pentateuch and Former Prophets*, an online graduate-level course designed to expand your understanding of foundational theological concepts introduced in the Old Testament, which will inform interpretation of all of Scripture.

In this course, Dr. Richard E. Averbeck introduces the content and theology of Genesis through Kings, identifying the foundational themes that emerge and tracing them through the rest of the Bible. The goal of the course is to work through the books section by section focusing on major passages and their theological connections through all of Scripture. Special attention is given throughout the course to the significance of these passages for the church and the Christian life so that you will be keenly aware of the need to go beyond a simplistic and mechanistic reading of the text into a deeply implicational reading, expecting to be both informed and impacted by its message.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Identify various genres of literature in Genesis through Kings and learn to interpret them with credibility.
- Articulate the significance of Genesis 1-11 as the primeval historical and theological foundation for understanding our human experience in the world.
- Understand how the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) lays the historical and especially the theological foundation for the Former Prophets (Joshua-Kings) and for the rest of the Bible.
- Understand how the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets fit together within the canon, and how they contribute to our understanding of faith experience in ancient Israel.

- Value the ways in which Ancient Near Eastern literature can inform our reading of Scripture.
- Become familiar with the history recorded in Genesis through Kings and its relationship to the history of the surrounding Ancient Near Eastern world.
- Trace the overall historical progression of God's covenantal redemptive program from Genesis through Revelation.
- Value all of the above goals as crucial to an ongoing study of the whole canon of Scripture as well as foundational to the way we live our Christian lives and pursue our ministries.

Course Lecturer



Richard E. Averbeck, PhD

Education:

- Annenberg Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, PhD
- Grace Theological Seminary, MDiv and MA
- Calvary Bible College, BA

Teaching Career:

- Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Dallas Theological Seminary (1990-1994)
- Chairman of the Old Testament Department, Grace Theological Seminary (1980-1990)
- Visiting lecturer at the Lutheran School of Theology in Copenhagen and Åarhus, Denmark
- Preached and taught in China, across Germany, and West Africa
- Expertise in Old Testament Law, Near Eastern Studies, and Semitic languages

Other Career Highlights:

- Member of the Evangelical Theological Society, the Institute for Biblical Research, the American Oriental Society, and the Society of Biblical Literature
- Director of the Spiritual Formation Forum
- Licensed therapist in Wisconsin, having studied under his friend and colleague, the world renowned counselor and Christian psychologist, Dr. Larry Crabb

Publications:

- Numerous articles for *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*, *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, *The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*, and *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity*
- Extensive contributions to *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* and *The Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*
- Entries for *The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology; Faith Tradition, and History*; and *Cracking Old Testament Codes*
- Chief editor and major contributor to the *Life and Culture in Ancient Near East*

Course Texts

Required:

Dyrness, William. *Themes in Old Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

Sandy, D. Brent & Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds., *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

Walton, John H. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Revised and Expanded. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

Recommended, but not required:

Alexander, T. Desmond and David W. Baker, editors, *Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 1: Pentateuch*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.

Howard, David M., Jr. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody, 1993.

Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

Textbooks can be ordered through our online store at CUGN.org, through your local bookstore, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Course Requirements

- 1. Time:** The student must complete the course requirements within a 6-month period unless the particular institution requires the completion of all work within the framework of the semester or quarter. During this time, the student is expected to devote a minimum of 120 hours to the completion of the course.
- 2. Lectures and Reflection Questions:** Listen carefully to all 24 lectures by Dr. Averbeck and work through the accompanying reflection questions. Through this process you will be introduced to Dr. Averbeck's approach to biblical theology and to the content of the theology itself. It is recommended that you listen actively with Bible in hand to look up references when necessary. Your goal here is to acquire a working knowledge of the contents of Genesis-Kings and to listen for what God wants to say to you personally and to the Church corporately. The theology contained in this part of the OT is foundational to all of Scripture and, therefore, to the Christian faith.

NOTE: Although the lectures are not factored into your course grade, they are foundational to the course, so the Research Paper, Thought Paper and Spiritual Formation Project (see below) all assume you have completed them. In addition, the reflection questions are optional but will help you *process the lecture material in preparation for the Thought Paper and Spiritual Formation Project*.

Purpose: *to accumulate course content through active and careful listening and to cognitively interact with the material and apply it to the Christian life.*

Using the Study Guide: The Study Guide includes twenty-four lessons with lesson overviews, outcomes, outlines, and reflection questions. This is intended to walk you through the course in a systematic and user-friendly way. Note the following:

- **Lecture Outlines:** The lecture outlines contain a detailed teaching manuscript with extensive notes and Scripture references. They serve as both a guide to listening/note-taking and also a

valuable study and reference tool. It is recommended that you read each lecture outline in full prior to listening to the lecture. This will help you follow along more carefully.

- **Reflection Questions:** The reflection questions are not factored into your course grade. However, these questions were written carefully in order to help you process the material and begin to apply it (at least in a preliminary way) to your life of faith. Although you are not required to write answers to every question, it is recommended that you give them considerable thought and reflection. In addition to your notes, they will become a journal of your thoughts and growth in the course.
- **Appendices:** There are two appendices at the end of the Study Guide which present additional and important material not included in the lectures. They discuss in detail the historical, literary background of Deuteronomy (including Dr. Averbeck's outline of the book) and key issues relating to the Law and the Christian life (i.e. Sabbath observance).
- **Scripture Quotations:** Several Scripture passages that are central to the discussion at hand are provided in the right margin¹ with Dr. Averbeck's emphases and amplification. This will help you follow along.

3. Required Reading: Complete the following and submit a **reading log** listing all completed readings:

- Read **Genesis-Kings** and several additional texts *as assigned in each lesson*. You should use a modern translation (not a paraphrase), e.g., RSV, NASB, NKJV, NIV, NRSV, etc.
- Read William Dyrness' *Themes in Old Testament Theology* in its entirety. Although this is an older text (written in 1979), it provides a well-respected summary of important OT themes. Dyrness' work supplements and compliments Dr. Averbeck's work in the lectures.
- Read Sandy and Giese's text, *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, in its entirety. This text is a compilation by several scholars (including Dr. Averbeck) and provides background and perspective on the various genres of the Old Testament, which are crucial for proper interpretation.
- Read **500 additional pages** from the recommended texts, the readings referenced in the lecture outlines or the course bibliography. This is your opportunity to pursue topics of interest. Readings completed for your research paper (see below) may count toward this reading requirement. List all completed readings in your reading log.

NOTE: Walton's text, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, is a valuable reference tool, and the lectures refer to it frequently. However, it may not be used toward the required reading.

Purpose: to supplement the lecture material through active reading of additional works and to pursue student-identified topics of interest.

4. Research Paper: Write an original research paper (**18-20 pages**, double-spaced, excluding footnotes and bibliography) on a theological theme developed from one or more passages in Genesis-Kings (should be approved by your grader/proctor). The paper should be based on and especially focus on the foundational passage(s) in these books but also follow the development of the

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theme through the remainder of the OT into the NT. If you know either of the biblical languages, conduct your exegetical work from these texts. This paper should reflect your ability to do *serious independent research/writing* in the field of OT biblical theology and to *apply that research to ministry and the Christian life.*

In addition to your own exegetical work in the biblical text itself, you should do a bibliographical search to identify and consult at least ten other secondary sources. These could and should include a combination of general reference tools (e.g., Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, word books, etc.), other books that are useful for the topic (e.g., commentaries, historical or theological survey books, specialized books on the topic, etc.), scholarly journal articles, and perhaps even credible Internet sites. Substantial footnotes (or endnotes) and bibliography are expected. Format the paper according to your school or institutional guidelines.

Purpose: to develop exegetical, biblical and theological research and writing skills, to gain an in-depth understanding of one specific theme in OT biblical theology, and to apply that understanding to ministry and the Christian life.

- 5. Thought Paper:** Write a **10 page**, double-spaced “thought paper” reflecting on the content of the course. The paper should be broken down into two main sections: The first section should reflect serious thought about the relevance of Genesis-Kings for the church and the Christian life. The second section should develop the significance of Genesis-Kings for the ministry(ies) in which you are (or will be) engaged with your family, local church, or community. Seek concrete application of the material to the Christian life, the church or ministry wherever possible.

This paper is to reflect your own *independent thinking and synthesis* of the course reading and lectures. It is a “thought paper”, **not a research paper**, so footnotes and bibliography are not necessary unless you wish to include them for your own purposes. Always tie your thoughts to specific Scripture passages from which you make your point of application to theology, life, and ministry (especially something in Genesis-Kings, but also extending through the rest of the OT and into the NT).

Purpose: to synthesize the course content and apply it to ministry and the Christian life.

6. Spiritual Formation Project

RATIONALE: Ministry preparation and the Christian life require more than academic exercises. Learners also need personal, spiritual formation, which involves theological reflection and critical thinking on their current practices and assumptions. This process occurs as learners engage in self-reflection and interaction in a community of learning. With this in mind, CUGN includes in all courses a capstone project addressing these issues and facilitating interaction beyond the formal learning environment (ATS schools, note Standards 3.2.1.3; 4.1.1; 10.3.3.3).

Write a **five-to-six page reflective essay** and **interview a mentor**, discussing the spiritual impact of this course on your life. Identify your mentor early in the course, and submit the essay to your grader when you take the final exam. This last project should not be a summary of course content, but an application of course principles. Complete the following:

A. Personal Reflection and Evaluation: Reflect on the course – To integrate your academic studies with your walk of faith, reflect on the content of the course and evaluate your life in light of what you learned.

- i. Follow these steps in your reflection:

Step 1: What one theme, principle, or concept in the course is the most significant to you personally? Why is it significant?

Step 2: What portion(s) of the course brought this theme/principle/concept to light?

Step 3: Think about your past. Why is it vital now for you to deal with and apply this theme/principle/concept?

Step 4: How should this affect your thoughts and actions, and what specific steps should you take to concretely apply what you have learned?

- ii. Write your answers to the above questions in full paragraph form. (Recommended length for this reflection: approximately three pages)
- iii. Give a copy of this reflection to your mentor (see #2).

B. Community Reflection and Interaction: Interview a mentor – Since the Holy Spirit uses the input of others to guide and form His people, interview a mentor according to the following guidelines:

- i. Who should you interview? (1-3 are required; 4-6 are recommended)
1. Someone with whom you have a reasonably close relationship.
 2. Someone who is a mature Christian ministry leader (i.e. a pastor).
 3. Someone who is not your grader or a family member.
 4. Someone who values the spiritual formation process.
 5. Someone who is familiar with and values the subject of the course.
 6. Someone who has experience using the content of the course in ministry.

NOTE: Identify your mentor early in the course, and give him/her the page entitled “Guidelines for Mentors.”

- ii. Focus of the interview – Your interview should focus on the issues and questions you raise in your essay. For example:
- What feedback can your mentor give in response to your essay?
 - In light of the course content, are the conclusions you made appropriate? Why or why not?

- What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications might he/she suggest from his/her own life and ministry?

NOTE: Conduct this interview either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc). Suggested length: 45 minutes.

C. Synthesis and Application: Draw your final conclusions – Having reflected on the course and the discussion with your mentor, synthesize what you have learned in these three sections:

- Section 1: Begin your essay with the personal reflection from #1 above. This should be exactly what you gave your mentor for the interview.
- Section 2: Comment on your interview, explaining what you discussed and the insights you gained from your mentor. Include the following:
 - What were the mentor’s comments regarding your essay?
 - What advice did he/she give?
 - How did his/her comments expand or correct your application of the course?
 - Include the person’s name, occupation, and the length of the interview.
- Section 3: Conclude with a synthesis of what you have learned. Answer the following:
 - If your mentor corrected any thoughts in your “Personal Reflection and Evaluation”, how do you feel about these corrections? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - Synthesizing your thoughts from section one and your mentor’s insight in section two, what final conclusions have you reached? How is this different from section one?
 - In light of the interview and further reflection, what additional, specific changes need to occur in your life and what concrete steps will you take to implement them?

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Your effort in this assignment will determine its benefit. If by the end of this course you have not yet reflected critically on your life in light of what you have studied, allow this assignment to guide you in that process. The instructor for this course will not score your essay based on the amount of spiritual fruit you describe; so do not exaggerate (or trivialize) what you have learned. The primary grading criteria is that you have thoughtfully considered the principles of the course and realistically sought to apply them to your life. If you have done this and met the minimal requirements (as noted above), you will earn the full points for this assignment.

Note on confidentiality: Perhaps the Holy Spirit is dealing with you in some very personal areas of your life. Because of this, your grader will keep your essay entirely confidential and either return or discard it.

Purpose: to stimulate reflection and interaction on course principles in order to enhance personal spiritual formation.

Course Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Required Reading	15% of Course Grade
Thought Paper	30% of Course Grade
Research Paper	35% of Course Grade
Spiritual Formation Project	20% of Course Grade

NOTE: Given the amount of thought and work required in the above assignments, **there is no exam for this course.** Your focus should be on quality research, writing, reflection, synthesis and application.

Student Name: _____ Course: _____ Interview
Date/Time: _____

Guidelines for Mentors

(Students, give this sheet to your mentor for the Spiritual Formation Project.)

Thank you for your involvement in this student's CUGN coursework. We believe the Christian life is more than an academic exercise, so we encourage students to critically reflect on their life in light of what they learn and then apply those insights to the daily life of faith.

Therefore, students taking CUGN courses are required to complete a final assignment called the "Spiritual Formation Project." This assignment involves two parts: an essay and an interview:

The ESSAY: After completing their coursework, students reflect on the content of the course, evaluate their lives, and discuss the one theme, principle or concept that is most significant to them and why. Students are to identify specific ways this theme/principle/concept should apply to their lives and what action steps they plan to take in order to make these changes a reality.

The INTERVIEW: After writing this reflection, students give a copy to their mentor and meet with him/her to discuss their thoughts and get feedback. The goal of this interview is to facilitate the student's growth through interaction with a mature believer.

NOTES ON THE INTERVIEW:

- You do not need to be familiar with the course to participate in this interview. You will primarily respond to the thoughts of the student. (However, general knowledge of the subject matter of the course and/or experience applying it to ministry is valuable.)
- Prior to meeting with the student, read his/her "Personal Reflection and Evaluation" and prepare to discuss the following:
 1. What feedback can you give the student in response to his/her essay?
 2. Are the student's conclusions from the course appropriate? Why or why not?
 3. What additional advice, deeper insights or broader applications would you suggest from your own life and ministry?
- Meet with the student either in person (preferred) or over the phone. Do not use electronic communication (i.e. email, instant messenger, etc.).
- Suggested length of the interview: 45 minutes

Thanks again for participating in this project! You have a real opportunity to guide this student in the application process and to help him/her connect academics to life – *a valuable process for all who wish to grow in Christ.*

NOTE: If the student's school makes any changes to this assignment, their requirements should replace those described here.

Course Bibliography

1. General survey and reference books

David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold. *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman III. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Dyrness, William. *Themes in Old Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

Elwell, Walter A., ed. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.

Hill, Andrew E. and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

LaSor, William Sanford, David Alan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Sandy, D. Brent and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., eds. *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

VanGemeren, Willem A., ed. *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Five volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

Walton, John H. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Revised and Expanded; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

2. Pentateuch

Alexander, T. Desmond and David W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 1: Pentateuch*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Alexander, T. Desmond. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.

Livingston, G. Herbert. *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987.

Sailhamer, John H. *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Wenham, Gordon. *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Pentateuch*. Vol. 1. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

3. Former Prophets

Hamilton, Victor P. *Handbook on the Historical Books*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Hoffmeier, James K. *Israel in Egypt : The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Howard, David. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1993.

Long, V. Philips. *The Art of Biblical History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Younger, K. Lawson Jr. "Ancient Conquest Accounts : A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, v. 98. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990.

4. Commentaries

Walton, John H., Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, editors. *The IVP Background Bible Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity Press, 2000.

4.1. Genesis

Ross, Allen P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.

Wenham, Gordon J. "Genesis 1-15 and Genesis 16-50." *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word Books, 1987 and 1994.

4.2. Exodus

Sarna, Nahum M. *Exodus: the Traditional Hebrew text with the New JPS Translation*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991.

4.3. Leviticus

Hartley, John E. "Leviticus." *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word Books, 1992.

Wenham, Gordon J. "The Book of Leviticus." *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

4.4. Numbers

Ashley, Timothy R. "The Book of Numbers." *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

4.5. Deuteronomy

Craigie, Peter C. "The Book of Deuteronomy." *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

Merrill, Eugene H. "Deuteronomy." *New American Comm.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994.

4.6. Joshua

Hess, Richard S. "Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary." *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Howard, David M., Jr. "Joshua." *New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998.

4.7. Judges (and Ruth)

Block, Daniel I. "Judges, Ruth." *New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999.

Younger, K. Lawson, Jr. "Judges and Ruth." *NIV Application Comm.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

4.8. Samuel

Baldwin, Joyce G. "1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary." *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Gordon, Robert P. *1 and 2 Samuel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.

4.9. Kings

Wiseman, Donald J. "1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary." *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.