This course introduces and surveys the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Through a close reading of this foundational narrative, we will gain fresh insight into the multiple perspectives it offers on the nature of God, the destiny of humanity, and the history of salvation. By studying and applying the Documentary Hypothesis, the dominant modern theory concerning the formation of the Pentateuch, we will sharpen our ability to appreciate both the individual authorial voices that inhabit the Pentateuch as well as the theological effect of their combination. In so doing, we will reflect on the implications of this compositional paradigm for our understanding of the Church’s teaching concerning the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture.

Learning Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to
- identify how any given Pentateuchal passage (such as one encountered in a lectionary or catechetical text) relates to the “big story” of which it forms a part
- understand the Documentary Hypothesis by directly examining the evidence on which it based
- ground your personal spiritual and theological formation in an attentive and responsible engagement with Sacred Scripture
- deepen your understanding of Catholic biblical hermeneutics by applying the teaching of Dei Verbum (Vatican II’s Constitution on Divine Revelation) to particular features of the Pentateuch

Coursework: In addition to assigned readings and online lectures, you will complete
- a weekly reflection paper: at the end of each week of class, you will submit a theological reflection on a topic designated by the facilitator; the first eleven reflections will be formative in scope; that is, their topic will be designed to help you explore one aspect of a larger topic that will follow us throughout the semester. Formative reflection papers will be short (no more than 2-4 pages in length). In the final week of class, you will submit a more substantial, summative reflection paper on one of these larger topics. The summative paper may incorporate relevant portions of revised earlier papers, so you will not necessarily be starting from scratch. The summative paper will be approximately 8-10 pages in length.
- a weekly discussion activity: an interactive discussion (conducted either by teleconference or through an online forum) will accompany each module of this course. Basic discussion prompts are provided in the course schedule given below; more detailed instructions/explanations will be communicated by the facilitator in advance of the discussion date.

Required texts:
Richard Elliott Friedman. The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View Into the Five Books of Moses. San Francisco: Harper, 2003. [a color-coded translation of the Pentateuch, indicating the different sources according to the classical Documentary Hypothesis]

Austin Flannery. Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents. Northport: Costello, 1996. [or use Vatican website for translation of Dei Verbum; the link to Dei Verbum on the Vatican website is listed as a separate resource.]
COURSE DESCRIPTION: PENTATEUCH

COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE 1: Orientation
• **Assigned Readings:**
  o Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*
  o Friedman, “Introduction” (pp. 1-6)
  o Friedman, “Collection of Evidence” (pp. 7-31)
• **Discussion (telephone):** We will cover the overview of the course and the required activities of the students as well as interaction with the facilitator.
• **Formative Reflection Paper:** How should the Documentary Hypothesis affect the way we understand and explain to others the doctrine of Scripture’s divine inspiration? Be sure to reference and discuss relevant teachings from Chapter III of *Dei Verbum* (Articles 11-13).

MODULE 2: The Primeval History
• **Assigned Readings:**
  o Genesis 2-11 (J)
  o Near Eastern mythological texts (see below)
• **Discussion (online):**
  o Analyze YHWH as a character: What are his main personality traits? What emotions does he manifest? What seem to be his objectives?
  o Evaluate the overall development of humanity’s relationship with YHWH: by the time we reach the end of Genesis 11, have relations improved, deteriorated or stayed the same?
• **Formative Reflection Paper:** Identify parallels between the Yahwist’s primeval history and other Near Eastern myths. Can these parallels help illuminate the intentions of the sacred author (cf. *Dei Verbum* 12)? Choose one of the following to report on:
  o Atrahasis, Gilgamesh and the Flood story (Genesis 6-8)
  o Enuma Elish and the Tower of Babel story (Genesis 11)

MODULE 3: The Story of Abram
• **Assigned Readings:**
  o Genesis 12-22 (JE)
• **Discussion (online):**
  o How does the story of Abram and Sarai reverse the pattern of human-divine relations in the primeval history?
  o What do you think is the point of the Sodom and Gomorrah story? Does reading Genesis 19 as a “type scene” alongside Judges 19 provide any clues?
• **Formative Reflection Paper:** Compare YHWH with Elohim: Do they have identical or different personality traits? Do they manifest identical or different emotions? Do they share the same objectives or not? What is the theological effect of combining J and E into one narrative? Does it lead to a richer or a more problematic portrayal of God?

MODULE 4: The Children of Abraham
• **Assigned Readings:**
  o Genesis 24-50 (JE)
COURSE DESCRIPTION: PENTATEUCH

- **Discussion (online):**
  - What do you think J and E’s portrayals of Jacob are supposed to tell us about Israel’s “national” character?
  - How is Judah’s character transformation from selfish villain to selfless hero in Genesis 37-44 to be explained?
- **Formative Reflection Paper:** What can the stories of Jacob, Joseph and his brothers teach us about divine providence? To what extent do the sacred authors portray God as unilaterally controlling the outcome of events? To what extent do outcomes hinge on human choices? What is the theological effect of combining J and E into one narrative? Does it lead to a richer or a more problematic portrayal of the relationship between human and divine agency?

**MODULE 5: The Exodus**
- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Exodus 1-18 (JE)
- **Discussion (telephone):**
  - Summative theological discussion of J and E (What sort of God is YHWH/Elohim?)
  - Exodus as dramatic climax of J and E (Cain/Abel theme, fear theme)
- **Formative Reflection Paper:** How should the violence attributed to God by the Pentateuchal authors be handled theologically and pastorally?

**MODULE 6: Sinai/Horeb**
- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Exodus 19-34 (JE)
- **Discussion (online):**
  - How might we account for the story of the Golden Calf, given its striking similarities with much later events narrated in 1 Kings 12?
  - How do the two versions of the Decalogue (in Exodus 20 and 34) differ from each other? What is the theological effect of their coexistence within the same narrative?
- **Formative Reflection Paper:** How can the Covenant Code (Exodus 21-23) help us to understand and apply the Ten Commandments? Does the Pentateuchal interpretation of the Decalogue align with that of the Catechism (Articles 2052-2557) or not?

**MODULE 7: In the Wilderness**
- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Numbers 10-24 (JE)
- **Discussion (online):**
  - How do the events of Israel’s wilderness journey highlight Moses’ unique leadership role?
  - Moses argues with God and wins (Numbers 14). Is his argument valid? Why or why not?
- **Formative Reflection Paper:** If Balaam’s threefold blessing of Israel (Numbers 22-24) represents the climax of RJE’s “salvation history,” what does salvation look like? What

Revised 7/14/2014
does it consist of and how does it relate back to the beginning (Genesis 2-3) and turning point (Genesis 12) of that history?

MODULE 8: Creation and Covenants

**Assigned Readings:**
- Genesis-Exodus (P) [selections]
  - The Priestly Creation Story (Genesis 1:1-2:3)
  - The Noachic Covenant (Genesis 6-9)
  - The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17)
  - The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 24, 31, 40)
  - Aaronid Authority (Numbers 16-18, 25)
- **Discussion (online):**
  - What is the theological effect of God’s making a covenant with Abraham on three occasions (Genesis 15, 17 and 22)?
  - What is the theological effect of setting the Yahwist and Priestly narratives side by side and reading them together? Does it alter the significance of what happens?
    - Choose one of the following:
      - Creation stories (Genesis 1-3)
      - Flood stories (Genesis 6-9)
- **Formative Reflection Paper:** Compare the Priestly God with that of J and E: Do they have identical or different personality traits? Do they manifest identical or different emotions? Do they share the same objectives or not? What is the theological effect of combining P and RJE into one narrative? Does it lead to a richer or a more problematic portrayal of God?

MODULE 9: The Tabernacle

**Assigned Readings:**
- Leviticus 1-16 (P) [selections]
  - The guilt offering (Leviticus 5:14-6:7)
  - The death of Aaron’s sons (Leviticus 10)
  - The food laws (Leviticus 11)
  - The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)
- **Discussion (online):**
  - What can the protocol for the guilt offering (Leviticus 5:14-6:7) teach us about the Priestly author’s understanding of forgiveness?
  - How do the categories of animals listed in Leviticus 11 relate back to the Priestly creation story?
- **Formative Reflection Paper:** Analyze the Priestly author’s theology of atonement. What assumptions about sin is it based upon?

MODULE 10: The Holiness Code

**Assigned Readings:**
- Leviticus 17-26 (H) [selections]
  - The disposition blood (Leviticus 17)
  - Sexual prohibitions (Leviticus 18)
  - Blasphemy (Leviticus 24)
COURSE DESCRIPTION: PENTATEUCH

- The Jubilee (Leviticus 25)

**Discussion (online):**
- Which holiness laws apply to resident aliens as well as to Israelites? Why do you think these laws (and not others) are incumbent upon all who would live in the promised land? Does the Priestly author have a concept of the “common good?”

**Formative Reflection Paper:** To what extent are the Church’s “pro-life” teachings rooted in the Priestly concept of holiness? Choose one of the following to reflect on:
- Leviticus 18 and sexual ethics
- Leviticus 24 and capital punishment
- Leviticus 25 and economic justice

**MODULE 11: Remembering the Covenant**

**Assigned Readings:**
- Deuteronomy 5 (the Decalogue)
- Deuteronomy 6 (the Shema)
- Deuteronomy 7 (destruction of the Canaanites)
- Deuteronomy 10-11, 30 (warnings & exhortations)

**Discussion (telephone):**
- Summative theological discussion (How do the Pentateuchal authors portray God?)

**Formative Reflection Paper:**
- Does the covenantal understanding of God’s love for Israel and of Israel’s love for God (i.e., love as defined by and conditional upon obedience to commands) stand in tension with the notion of a God of unconditional love?

**MODULE 12: Reimagining the Covenant**

**Assigned Readings:**
- Deuteronomy 12 (sacrifice)
- Deuteronomy 16 (liturgical calendar)
- Deuteronomy 17 (law and order)
- Deuteronomy 18 (Levites and prophets)

**Summative Reflection Paper:** Write a summative theological reflection on one of the following topics:
- Pentateuchal theology (what the Pentateuch reveals about God)
- Pentateuchal anthropology (what the Pentateuch reveals about human nature and destiny)
- Pentateuchal pneumatology (what the Pentateuch reveals about the inspiration & inerrancy of Scripture)

Revised 7/14/2014