

## **PHL 790 The Problem of Suffering**

**Fall 2008**

**Henry W. Spaulding II, Ph.D.**

[Hspaulding@nts.edu](mailto:Hspaulding@nts.edu)

816-268-5493

### **Course Description**

This course is a study of the problem of evil and suffering within the human predicament, with special emphasis on the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral dimensions of the issue.

**As a result of taking this course the student should be able to:** a) define the problem of evil and suffering as it relates to the Christian faith, b) offer a response to the problem of evil that is cogent and reflective of Biblical, theological, and philosophical literature, and c) discuss the problem of evil using both ancient and contemporary sources.

### **Texts**

Stephen T. Davis, ed., *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1987.

David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2006.

N.T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006.

Rowan Williams, *Writing in the Dust: After September 11*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.

### **Requirements**

Philosophical essays: Two philosophical essays will be required. Each essay will be worth 100 points. Each essay should be 10 pages, double-spaced. Criteria for evaluation: clarity of the description – 35 pts, strength of the critical analysis – 30 pts, reflection upon class lecture and assigned reading – 25 pts, and quality of writing – 10 pts.

Research paper. Each student will write a research paper on a topic approved by the professor. The topic must reflect a theme associated with the problem of suffering. This paper should be 15 pages, double-spaced.

Criteria for evaluation: grasp of issues – 70 pts, use of appropriate primary and secondary sources – 30pts, integration of material treated in class – 25 pts, clarity of argument, grammatical issue – 15 pts. Total points - - 140 points.

Participation. The quality of this class is dependent upon the active participation of each member of the class. A student can participate in class in three ways: a) comments/question made in class, b) blackboard discussion, and c) suffering forum. This assignment will be 100 points. Criteria for evaluation: Degree of insight in questions/comments – 50 pts; Connection of comments/questions to assigned reading – 25 pts; and Spread of comments/questions over the semester – 25 points. All participation must be completed by **December 5 @ 11:59pm.**

### **Academic Policies**

1. All work will be due no later than **December 5 @ 11:59pm.**
2. All work submitted late will be reduced by 20%.
3. All work must be submitted through the assignments function of Blackboard set up for this class.
4. All grades are open to reasonable and respectful review.
5. It is expected that all work turned in for this class reflect the labors of the person whose name appears on the paper. If there is any evidence to the contrary of this the student will receive a zero for the assignment. This includes any cheating an examination.

### **Grade Scale**

A	440-396
B	395-352
C	351-308
D	307-264
F	263-000

### **Class Schedule - - Wednesday: 9-12:35**

#### **September 3 and 10**

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

#### **September 17**

No Class

#### **September 24**

A Theodicy of Protest  
Davis, 1-37

#### **October 1**

An Irenaean Theodicy  
Davis, 38-72

#### **October 8**

Freewill and Evil  
Davis, 73-107

**October 15**

Process Theodicy

Davis, 108-144

Theism without Theodicy

Davis, 145-180

**October 22**

Reading and Research Week

**October 29 – Philosophical essay 1 is due**

*Lament for a Son*

**November 5**

*The Doors of the Sea*

**November 12**

*Evil and the Justice of God*

Suffering Forum: Your participation in this event is required and will be part of your participation grade.

**November 19 (Research paper is due)**

*Writing in the Dust*

**November 26**

Thanksgiving Break

**December 3**

A Hellish Society: Evil, Violence, Nihilism, and the Other City in John Milbank

Davis, 181-209

**Philosophical essay 2 is due December 10 by 11:00am.**

**Selected Resources**

Buber, Martin, *Good and Evil*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

Buttrick, George A., *God, Pain, and Evil*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966.

Farley, Edward, *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.

- Hartshorne, Charles, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism*. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1964.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. Great Britain: Collins and World/Fount Paperbacks, 1968.
- Howard-Snyder, D., *The Evidential Argument for Evil*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Kushner, Harold, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* New York: Avon Books, 1981.
- Larrimore, Mark, ed., *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
- Leibniz, G. F. W., *Theodicy*, ed. A Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952.
- Lewis, C.S., *A Grief Observed*. New York: The Seabury Press Co., 1963.
- Lewis, C.S., *Surprised by Joy*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1955.
- Mackie, J.L., *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- MacLeish, J.B. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956.
- Plantinga, Alvin, *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974.
- Soelle, Dorothee, *Suffering*. Translated by Everett R. Kalin. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Tilley, Terrence, *The Evils of Theodicy*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000.
- Yancey, Philip, *Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud*. New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Where is God When it Hurts*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.

