

# The Problem of Evil

PHIL 6305 Defend the Faith Conference

Jan. 4-8, 2016 • NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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**“But as for me, afflicted and in pain—  
may your salvation, God, protect me.”**

PSALM 69:29 (NIV)

## Seminary Mission Statement

Our mission is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

## Core Value and Key Competency

The primary core value of the Seminary addressed in this course is Doctrinal Integrity. The primary key competency in ministry addressed is Christian Theological Heritage. The core value for the 2015-16 academic year is mission focus.

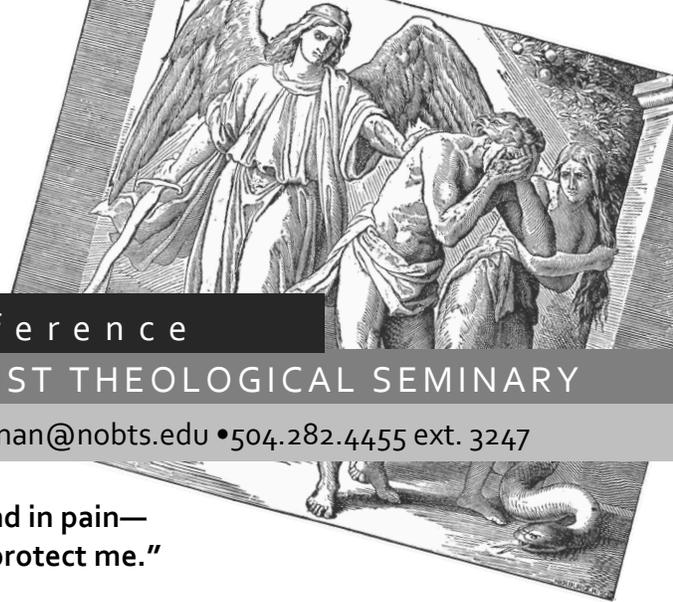
## Course Description

This course introduces students to contemporary philosophical issues related to the Christian concept of God and the problem of evil. Issues addressed include the nature of evil, the cause of evil, the intelligibility and coherence of the Christian concept of God in light of evil, solutions offered by various world religions to the problem of evil, as well as representative solutions offered by a selection of contemporary philosophers addressing this topic. The thrust of the course will focus upon personal reading, research, and writing.

## Statement on Biblical Authority

In order to develop competent ministry leaders for the twenty-first century church and academy, students in this course will be exposed to important works in theology and philosophy from a wide array of worldviews, including the influential works of many prominent non-Christian and non-evangelical philosophers and theologians. Students are expected to become familiar with and demonstrate advanced, biblically guided critical engagement with the works of these thinkers.

The course instructor operates under the assumption that the Bible is the inspired, totally true and trustworthy Word of God which is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) provides the confessional framework in which the instructor leads the course.



## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will read broadly on God and evil as understood and studied in contemporary philosophy of religion.
2. Students will become familiar with issues related to evil and the Christian concept of God.
3. Each student will demonstrate an understanding of an issue related to the subject by writing a research paper on a selected topic.

## Course Texts (Required)

Evans, Jeremy. *The Problem of Evil: The Challenge to Essential Christian Beliefs*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013.

## Optional Book Review Texts

Bergmann, Michael, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea, *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Boyd, Gregory. *Moving Beyond Pat Answers to the Problem of Evil*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.

———. *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001.

Claypool, John. *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler: How to Handle Grief*. Waco: Word, 1974.

Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.

Davies, Horton. *The Vigilant God: Providence in the Thought of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Barth*. New York: Peter Lang, 1992.

Geivett, R. Douglas. *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problem of Evil*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Grief and Pain in the Plan of God*. UK: Christian Focus, 2004.

Kremer, Elmar J. and Michael J. Latzer. *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy*. Toronto Studies in Philosophy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Lewis, C. S. *A Grief Observed*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001.

———. *The Problem of Pain*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001.

Phillips, D. Z. *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

- Plantinga, Alvin. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Can God Be Trusted? Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Thomas, Heath A., Jeremy Evans, and Paul Copan, *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.
- Van Inwagen, Peter. *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Wright, N. T. *Evil and the Justice of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.
- Yancey, Philip. *Disappointment with God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Ziglar, Zig. *Confessions of a Grieving Christian*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004.

## Course Schedule and Assignments

The course will utilize reading assignments, a reading report, a research paper, and a personal perspective paper.

1. ***Lecture Attendance***. Students are required to attend all plenary sessions as well as one breakout presentation for each breakout session, and listen to audio recordings of all breakout sessions they cannot physically attend.
2. ***Book Reviews***. Each student is required to review **2 books** related to the study of the problem of evil. They need to be books listed by the instructor as *suggested* texts. Students may review the **required text by Jeremy Evans** as well. The reviews should include: (1) some biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. The reviews should be 5-7 double-spaced pages and follow Turabian form. **The book reviews are due Saturday, February 27, 2016.**

Both reviews should include (1) a bibliographic entry, (2) brief biographical data about the author(s) (e.g., his or her position, degrees, research interests, and books), (3) an assessment of the main purpose and/or thesis of the book, (4) an overview of the author's assumptions, method, sources, logic, and style; (5) a concise summary of the book's contents, (6) a thorough critical analysis of the book, and (7) a conclusion with a recommendation or dismissal. The reviews should be between 4-6 pages in length (12-pt. Times New Roman) and should conform to Turabian or SBL style guides. Because book reviews are primarily about one source, use parenthetical citations for the primary text and *footnotes only for external sources*.

A few questions to consider while reading these monographs: What is the main purpose or thesis of this book? To whom is this book written? Did the author(s) fulfill his or her purpose? What are some of the author's working assumptions (e.g., his or her denominational background, field of research, or view of Scripture)? Does the author provide strong biblical, philosophical, and historical support for his or her positions? Are there any points of contact between this book/writer and other texts read during the course of the semester? How might the content of this book affect ministry in the local church or ministry within your particular calling? Are there any ideas that changed your

particular way of thinking on the subject matter at hand? Would you recommend this book to someone else?

- **A papers (93-100)** clearly state the book's thesis, successfully and succinctly outline its argument in its own terms, demonstrate advanced critical engagement with the argument and content of the book, make clear and well structured arguments, and exhibit a proficient grasp of grammar, spelling, and style.
  - **B papers (85-92)** clearly state the book's thesis, show an attempt to understand the book on its own terms and critically reflect on the issues at hand, make arguments, and show sufficiency in grammar, spelling, and style.
  - **C papers (77-84)** state the book's thesis, present the content of the book, raise preliminary critical questions for further evaluation, limit evaluation to approval or disapproval of the author's arguments, and make repeated mistakes in grammar, spelling, and style.
  - **D (70-76) and F (0-69) papers** lack evidence of grasping the book's thesis and content, limit evaluation to preformed judgments without serious consideration of the book's ideas, contain major grammatical, spelling, and stylistic errors, and demonstrate little or no attempt to proofread.
3. ***Formal Research Paper.*** Students will prepare a 15-20 page (double-spaced) research paper on an approved theme in relation to the problem of evil. Basic guidelines regarding the research paper are as follows:
- **Exhaustive:** Research should be exhaustive. The bibliography should contain *at least* 12 non-electronic sources.
  - **Biblical:** The researcher should demonstrate the use of biblical texts and hermeneutical skill in his or her evaluation of the issue.
  - **Organization:** The organization and structure of the paper should grow out of the research and should be the best possible means for explicating the topic.
  - **Implications:** The researcher should be able to demonstrate the “so what” of their research topic as far as it pertains to evangelical faith, practice, and evangelism.
  - **Form and style:** Careful attention should be given to all matters of subdivisions, paragraphing, quoted matter, footnotes, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, word usage, bibliography, etc. Papers (15-20 pages) should be double-spaced, in Turabian format, in Times New Roman 12 pt font, and should contain a bibliography and an NOBTS title page.
  - **Critical evaluation:** Critical evaluation—not just superficial treatment of the sources—and accurate exposition of the topic should characterize your paper. It goes without saying that “critical evaluation” requires the use of proper logic.

Topics for your papers are listed on the page labeled **Possible Research Topics** down below. **Papers due Saturday, March 26, 2016).**

4. ***Personal Perspective.*** Each student will write a ***Personal Perspective*** on the problem of evil at the end of the seminar and submit it to the professors. The personal perspective should be 3-5

single-spaced pages and deal with the implications of the problem of evil for your life, Christian ministry, and evangelism. The use of first person is permitted here. **Due April 17, 2016.**

5. ***Lecture Summaries.*** Students will write one-page, single-spaced summaries of 6 different sessions related to the Problem of Evil from the Defend the Faith Christian Apologetics Conference. Summaries may be submitted via Blackboard. **Due Friday, April 17, 2016.**

### Course Evaluation

DTF Attendance	10%	
Book Review #1		15%
Book Review #2	15%	
Research Paper	40%	
Personal Perspective	10%	
Lecture Summaries	10%	

### Additional Bibliography

Adams, Marilyn McCord. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.

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———. "Theodicy Without Blame." *Philosophical Topics* 16 (Fall 1988): 215-45.

Adams, Robert M. "Existence, Self-Interest, and the Problem of Evil." *Nous* 13 (1979): 53-65.

———. "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977): 109-17.

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Ahern, M. B. *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Schocken, 1971.

Basinger, David. "Christian Theism and the Free Will Defense." *Sophia* 19 (July 1980): 20-33.

———. "Determinism and Evil: Some Clarifications." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1982): 163-64.

———. "Divine Omniscience and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Journal of Value Inquiry* 16 (1982): 143-48.

- . "Human Freedom and Divine Omnipotence: Some New Thoughts on an Old Problem." *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 491-510.
- . "In What Sense Must God Do His Best? A Response to Hasker." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 18 (1985): 161-64.
- . "Must God Create the Best Possible World? A Response." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1980): 339-42.
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- Davies, Brian. *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Davis, Stephen T. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. Atlanta: Knox, 1981.
- . "Why Did This Happen to Me? The Patient as a Philosopher." *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 65 (1972): 61-67.
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- . "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists." *Nous* 23 (1989): 331-50.
- . "Probabilistic Arguments from Evil." *Religious Studies* 28 (1993): 303-17.
- Ehrman, Bart D. *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.
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- . "Should God Not Have Created Adam?" *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 192-208.
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- . "The Necessity of Gratuitous Evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 23-44.
- . "Providence and Evil: Three Theories." *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 91-105.
- . *The Triumph of Good over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- . *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
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- . "God, Evil, and Mystery." *Religious Studies* 3 (1968): 539-46.
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- . "The Problem of Evil in the First and Last Things." *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968): 591-602.
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- . "God, Satan and Natural Evil." *Sophia* 22 (October 1983): 43-5.
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