

**The Problem of Evil PHIL6305**  
**New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary**  
***Defend* Conference**  
**January 2-6, 2017**  
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### **Seminary Mission Statement**

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

### **Course Description**

The 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 the topic of evil. The thrust of the course will focus upon personal reading, research, and writing.

### **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 2016-2017 academic year is Characteristic Excellence.

### **Core Values Addressed**

The course will address the core value of *Doctrinal Integrity* directly and *Spiritual Vitality* indirectly. Reflection on the problem of evil is intimately related to reflection on the nature and existence of God as well as to considering the doctrine of creation. The vitality of one's spiritual life is directly related to the degree of trust one places in God, which derives from one's understanding of God's nature. *Servant Leadership* will be addressed as well in that Christian apologists must model humility.

## 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 Requirements

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

**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.

**Book Reviews.** Each student is required to review **3 books** from the *Suggested Texts* list. 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 7 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, February 24, 2017).**

**Research Paper.** Students will write a 3,500-4,000 word (not including notes or bibliography) 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 in the section *Possible Research Topics*. **Papers due 11 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, March 24, 2017).**

Here is a rough guide to paper grades.

**A Paper:** Demonstrates a *superior* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, and presents very good, clear, and thoughtful arguments, with very few, if any, significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

**B Paper:** Demonstrates a *good* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, presents an argument that exhibits good reasoning, with minimal significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

**C Paper:** Demonstrates an adequate though perhaps limited understanding of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, mixed with a significant number of incorrect claims, presents weak arguments, contains significant grammatical or structural problems.

**D Paper:** Demonstrates significant misunderstandings of factual matters, uses poor logic or fallacious reasoning (if any) to argue points (e.g., merely makes a series of unconnected assertions), fails significantly with respect to technical specifications.

**F Paper:** Failure to submit a paper, a paper that commits plagiarism, or a paper that presents no argumentation.

**Personal Perspective.** Each student will write a *Personal Perspective* on the problem of evil. 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 14 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, April 14, 2017).**

**Greer-Heard Report.** Each student will write a *4-5 page written report* on the March 25, 2017 Greer-Heard Forum featuring Ben Witherington III and Amy-Jill Levine on “Christians, Jews, and Jesus.” **Due 16 weeks after the last day of the Defend Apologetics Conference (Friday, April 28, 2017).**

**Reading Summaries.** Students will write one-page, single-spaced summaries of 12 different sessions from the *Defend* Conference. Summaries may be submitted via Blackboard. **Due 15 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, April 21, 2017).**

## Grading

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale.

## Evaluation

Book Report #1	10%
Book Report #2	10%
Book Report #3	10%
Research Paper	35%
Reading Summaries	10%
Greer-Heard Report	10%
<u>Personal Perspective</u>	<u>15%</u>
	100%

## Required Texts

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

Daniel Howard-Snyder, ed. *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.

## Suggested Texts

Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams, *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford Readings in Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

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

John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

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

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

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O' Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

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

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

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

- Stephen T. Davis, *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. New Edition. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001.
- R. Douglas Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. New York: Dutton, 2013.
- Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer. *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy*. Toronto Studies in Philosophy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Mark Larrimore, *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000.
- C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. New York: Bantam, 1983.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- Michael L. Peterson, *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.
- D. Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.
- Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- William Rowe, *God and the Problem of Evil*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.
- John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Can God Be Trusted: Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Heath A. Thomas, Jeremy Evans, and Paul Copan, *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

### **Possible Paper Topics**

- David Hume's Argument from Evil
- Alvin Plantinga's Freewill Defense
- John Hick's Soul-Building Theodicy
- C. S. Lewis on Evil and Suffering
- Marilyn McCord Adams on Evil, Justice, and the Goodness of God
- J. L. Mackie's Atheistic Argument from Evil
- John Feinberg's Evangelical Theodicy

David Ray Griffin's Process Theodicy

William Rowe's Inductive Case from Evil for the Non-Existence of God

Augustine of Hippo on Evil and God's Existence

The Problem of Evil and the Reality of Hell

Gregory Boyd's Warfare Theodicy

The Problem of Evil in Islam

Marxism and the Problem of Evil

Hinduism and the Problem of Evil

Evil and Suffering in Christian Science

Evil and Suffering in Latter-day Saint Theology

Buddhism and Suffering

Clement of Alexandria on Evil and Suffering

The Freewill Defense Assessed

The Question of the Best Possible World and the Problem of Evil

What of Natural Evils?

### **Bibliography**

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

Bowker, John. *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: University Press, 1970.

Boyd, Gregory. *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.

Crenshaw, Robert. *Theodicy in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.

- Cullmann, Oscar. *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection from the Dead?* New York: Macmillan, 1958.
- Davis, Stephen T., ed. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1981.
- Griffin, David Ray. *Evil Revisited*. Albany: SUNY, 1991.
- . *God, Power and Evil: A Process Theodicy*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Hick, John. *Death and Eternal Life*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
- . *Evil and the God of Love*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978.
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- Kvanvig, Jonathan. *The Problem of Hell*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Lambrecht, Jan and Raymond F. Collins. *God and Hume Suffering*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Larrimore, Mark. *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000.
- Leming, Michael and George Dickinson. *Understanding Death, Dying, and Bereavement*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1997.
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- Moreland, J. P. and Gary Habermas. *Immortality: The Other Side of Death*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.
- Peterson, Michael L. *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.
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- Pittenger, W. Norman. *Last Things in a Process Perspective*. London: Epworth, 1970.
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- Stackhouse, Jr. John G., *Can God Be Trusted: Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
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- Summers, Ray. *The Life Beyond*. Nashville: Broadman, 1959.
- Surin, Kenneth. *Theology and the Problem of Evil*. Malden: Blackwell, 1986.
- Swinburne, Richard. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Van Inwagen, Peter. *The Problem of Evil: The Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St Andrews in 2003*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2006.
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- Yancey, Philip. *Where Is God When It Hurts?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977.