

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Religion: The Problem of Evil  
PHIL9401/APOL9401  
Monday 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Central Time  
HSC???  
Professor: Robert B. Stewart  
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### **Mission Statement**

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to contemporary apologetic, philosophical, theological, and biblical 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. This course will focus upon guided reading, research, and writing.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

At the conclusion of the semester, the student will:

1. Understand issues related to evil and the Christian concept of God, particularly to those which challenge Christian faith, i.e., problems from evil;
2. Be able to respond to analyze the underlying issues related to evil and Christian belief;
3. Each student will demonstrate a thorough understanding of a particular issue related to the subject by writing a research paper on a selected topic;
4. Students will think critically about issues and responses to issues related to evil and Christian faith by responding critically to the papers of other students;
5. Students will summarize their personal thoughts concerning evil and Christian faith by writing a personal perspective on the problem of evil.

## Assignments

**Reading Reports** should be 4 to 6 single-spaced pages in length. The student presenting the reading report should prepare a copy for each student in the seminar and bring it with him or her to class—and be prepared to answer questions related to the material in the reading from other seminar members or the professor. The reading report should include a critique section in which the student critiques the material in the reading assignment. *The student should also pose 3-5 questions to the seminar and then lead in discussion.*

**Research Papers** should be printed and distributed (or electronically submitted via email) to the seminar and professor **1 week prior to the presentation date** in order for each student to have adequate time to read the material. No exceptions as to the due date will be made! If a student doesn't have his or her paper finished on time, the student may fail the course and be removed from the seminar. It is the responsibility of students to have their papers finished on time in order to ensure that the entire seminar has a quality learning experience. Failure to complete assigned work on time hurts every other student as well.

**Formal Responses** should be of 3-4 single-spaced pages in length. The responder should prepare **hard copies** for each classmate and the professor (hard copies or email) and **distribute them in class**. *Responses should also include 3-5 questions to the seminar.*

Each student will write a **Personal Perspective** on the problem of evil by the end of the seminar and present it to the seminar in the final seminar meeting.

## Assignments

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

Reading Reports	30%
Research Paper	35%
Formal Responses	30%
<u>Personal Perspective</u>	<u>5%</u>
	100%

## Required Texts

Chad Meister and James K. Dew, Jr., eds., *God and Evil: The Case for a World Filled with Pain*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.

Justin P. McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

## Recommended Texts

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

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

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

## Seminar Schedule

### August 16

Introduction to the Course

Reading Report #1 **David Gamble, *Meister and Dew*, 7-105**

### August 23

Reading Report #2 **Zach Mabry, *Meister and Dew*, 109-213**

Reading Report #3 **Justin Edgerly, *Meister and Dew*, 214-326**

**Due Dates for Paper Topics**

### August 30\*

Reading Report #4 **David Gamble, *McBrayer & Howard-Snyder*, 3-18; 128-59**

### September 6

Reading Report #5 **Zach Mabry, *McBrayer & Howard-Snyder*, 177-91; 205-21; 251-65**

Reading Report #6 **Justin Edgerly, *McBrayer & Howard-Snyder*, 340-48; 379-95; 468-506**

### September 13

*Initial appointments with Professor to report on research and reading*

### September 20

Reading Report #7 **TBD**

### September 27\*

Reading Report #8 **TBD**

**October 4**

Reading Report #9 **TBD**

**October 11**

*Second appointments with Professor to present outline of paper and working bibliography*

**October 18**

FALL BREAK

**October 25\***

*Research and Appointments (if needed) with Professor*

Paper #1 Distributed to Seminar in Electronic Form by 5:00 p.m. Central Time

**November 1**

Paper Presentation #1, Responses to Paper #1

Paper #2 Distributed to Seminar in Electronic Form by 5:00 p.m. Central Time

**November 8**

Paper Presentation #2, Responses to Paper #2

Paper #3 Distributed to Seminar in Electronic Form by 5:00 p.m. Central Time

**November 15**

ETS & EPS MEETINGS (November 16-18, 2021 in Fort Worth, TX)

**November 22 THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**November 29\***

Paper Presentation #3, Responses to Paper #3

**December 6**

Personal Perspectives on the Problem of Evil Presented and Discussed

## Possible Paper Topics

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  
Evidential Problems of Evil  
Skeptical Theism  
The Hiddenness of God  
Logical Problems of Evil  
Soul-Making Theodicies  
David Hume on Evil  
Evil and the Existence of Hell  
Evil and Universalism  
John Feinberg's Evangelical Theodicy  
David Ray Griffin's Process Theodicy  
William Rowe's Inductive Case against God from Evil  
Augustine of Hippo on Evil and God's Existence  
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  
Buddhism and Suffering  
The Freewill Defense Assessed  
The Question of the Best Possible World and the Problem of Evil  
Protest Responses to the Problem of Evil  
What of Natural Evils?

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- Adams, Robert M. (1977). "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 14: 109–17.
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- Adams, Marilyn McCord and Robert Merrihew Adams, eds. (1990). *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford Readings in Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Audi, Robert, and William J. Wainwright (ed.) (1987). *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bowker, John (1970). *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*. Cambridge: University Press.
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- Evans, Jeremy A. (2013). *The Problem of Evil: The Challenge to Essential Christian Beliefs*. B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics. Nashville: B&H Academics.
- Fairbanks, Daniel J. (2007). *Relics of Eden - The Powerful Evidence of Evolution in Human DNA*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
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- Howard-Snyder, Daniel, ed. (1996). *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
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- Khatchadourian, Haig (1966). "God, Happiness and Evil," *Religious Studies*, 2: 109–19.
- Kvanvig, Jonathan. *The Problem of Hell*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
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### **Skeptical Theism Bibliography**

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