



## **THTH8303: The Problem of Evil and Suffering**

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
Professional Doctoral Seminar / T&H Division  
September 5-7, 2023

**James K. Dew Jr., Ph.D., Ph.D.**  
President  
Professor of Christian Philosophy  
Frost Building  
jdew@nobts.edu

**Chris Shaffer, Ph.D.**  
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy  
Assistant Professor of Theology  
Frost Building  
cshaffer@nobts.edu

*Note 1: Any time you email the professor make sure to copy both professors and Jordan Faison ([jfaison@nobts.edu](mailto:jfaison@nobts.edu)) in on the email and make sure you include the course number.*

*Note 2: You are certainly able to take this seminar remotely, but if at all possible, students are encouraged to come to campus for each session.*

### **Seminary Mission Statement**

NOBTS prepares servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

### **Course Description**

This course exposes students to classical and contemporary treatments of the so-called problem of evil and explores their significance for the Christian worldview and ministry in the local church. Issues addressed include the nature of evil and suffering, 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, and an assortment of philosophical and apologetic responses to the problem at hand.

### **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 instructors operate 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.

## Learning Objectives

1. Students will become familiar with issues related to evil and the Christian concept of God.
2. Students will explore the practical significance of this topic for pastoral ministry, apologetics, and evangelism.
3. Students will apply what they learn to specific ministry tasks and reflect on the value of this kind of study for everyday ministry.
4. Students will train individuals in their ministry context how to address concerns related to the problem of pain and suffering.

## Teaching Methodology

Students will approach issues related to the problem of evil through assigned readings in philosophy and apologetics, seminar lectures, group discussion, class presentations, and the completion of a ministry project related to the course content.

## Course Texts (Required)

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

Meister, Chad, and James K. Dew, Jr., eds., *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017.

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

## Ministry Book Review Texts (Sign Up on GoogleDocs)

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

Carson, D. A. *How Long 'O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

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

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.

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

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

Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Can God Be Trusted? Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

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

### Pre-seminar Assignments (Due September 1, 2023)

1. Each student will read Jeremy Evans's *The Problem of Evil* and Jamie Dew's *God and the Problem of Evil* and write two-page (single-spaced) summaries of each book. **Students are encouraged to read this Evans first, Dew's book second.**
2. Each student will read Jamie Dew's *God and Evil* and choose the view that is closest to their own in order to write a reflection and application of that view to their life and ministry. Reflect on an example of the problem of evil that you have experienced with someone in your ministry and explain how your chosen view would inform the way you counsel, comfort, and encourage facing this evil. If you would adjust this view, how would you do so?
3. Each student will read and review a book from a pre-approved list of texts that relate the **problem of pain/suffering/evil/grief to practical ministry**. The review should include **(1)** a bibliography entry, **(2)** a 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)** a concise summary of the book's contents, **(5)** a thorough critical analysis of the book, and **(6)** a conclusion with a recommendation or dismissal. The reviews should be between **4-6 single-spaced pages** and should conform to **Turabian** style. Because book reviews are primarily about one source, use **parenthetical citations** for the primary text and footnotes only for external sources.

### In-seminar Assignments

1. Students will develop and deliver presentations based on the view they chose from Jamie Dew's *God and Evil*. You will (1) summarize the view, and (2) explain how it impacts your current ministry. Your presentation should include discussion questions for the class to answer in class.
2. Students will develop and deliver presentations based on the ministry text they reviewed. They will (1) summarize the argument of the book, (2) address points of practical concern for ministry in the local church, and (3) relate the content of the book to Christian apologetic and evangelistic ministry.
3. Students are expected to participate in classroom discussion and to read **all required materials** prior to class attendance.

### Post-seminar Assignments (Due October 23, 2023)

1. Each student will write a 7-10 page **personal reflection paper** summarizing his or her views on the problem of evil and suffering.
2. Each student will have an **evangelistic encounter** with a non-believer struggling with questions related to evil and suffering and write a 2-3 page **reflection of their experience**.
3. Each student will prepare *and* preach/teach an apologetic **sermon manuscript/ Bible-study manuscript** (5-6 pages) related to the problem of evil, suffering, and grief. Students will also include a brief written reflection describing their experience and the reception of and response to their message.

### Course Evaluation

Attendance and Participation	5%
Evans & Dew Chapter Summaries	10%
<i>God and Evil</i> Reflection, and Application	10%
Ministry Book Review	20%
In-class Presentations	15%
Personal Reflection Paper	10%
Sermon Manuscript and Reflection	20%
Evangelistic Encounter Reflection	10%

### Additional Bibliography

- Adams, Marilyn McCord. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- . “Problems of Evil: More Advice to Christian Philosophers.” *Faith and Philosophy* 5 (1988): 121-43.
- . “Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil.” In *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, 248-67.
- . “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.
- . “Plantinga on the Problem of Evil.” In *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985, 225-55.

- 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.
- Boyd, Gregory. *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.
- Coughlan, Michael L. "The Free Will Defense and Natural Evil." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 20 (1986): 93-108.
- 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.
- Draper, Paul. "Evil and the Proper Basicity of Belief in God." *Faith and Philosophy* 8 (1991): 135-47.
- . "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.
- Fales, Evan. "Antediluvian Theodicy: Stump on the Fall." *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989): 320-29.
- . "Should God Not Have Created Adam?" *Faith and Philosophy* 9 (1992): 192-208.

- Ferré, Nels. *Evil and the Christian Faith*. New York: Harper, 1947.
- Flew, Antony. "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom." *Hibbert Journal* 53 (January 1955): 135-44.
- Gale, Richard. *On the Nature and Existence of God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Griffin, David Ray. *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- . *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.
- Hartshorne, Charles. "A New Look at the Problem of Evil." In *Current Philosophical Issues: Essays in Honor of Curt John Ducasse*, ed. F. C. Dommeyer. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1966, 201-12.
- Hasker, William. "Must God Do His Best?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16 (1984): 213-24.
- . "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.
- Hick, John. *Evil and the God of Love*. 2d ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.
- . "God, Evil, and Mystery." *Religious Studies* 3 (1968): 539-46.
- . "The Problem of Evil." In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan, 1967, 136-141.
- . "The Problem of Evil in the First and Last Things." *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968): 591-602.
- Howard-Snyder, Daniel. *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Howard-Snyder, Daniel and Paul Moser, eds. *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

- Hume, David. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. New York: Hafner, 1955.
- Kane, G. Stanley. "The Concept of Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil." *Religious Studies* 11 (1975): 49-71.
- . "Evil and Privation." *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 11 (1980): 43-58.
- . "The Failure of the Soul-Making Theodicy." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6 (1975): 1-22.
- . "Soul-Making Theodicy and Eschatology." *Sophia* 14 (July 1975): 24-31.
- Larrimore, Mark, ed. *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.
- Mackie, J. L. "Evil and Omnipotence." *Mind* 64 (1955): 200.
- . "The Problem of Evil." In *The Miracle of Theism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.
- Martin, Michael. *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
- . "God, Satan and Natural Evil." *Sophia* 22 (October 1983): 43-5.
- . "Is Evil Evidence Against the Existence of God?" *Mind* 87 (1978): 429-32.
- Mavrodes, George. "The Problem of Evil." In *Belief in God: A Study in the Epistemology of Religion*. New York: Random House, 1970.
- McCloskey, H. J. *God and Evil*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.
- Peterson, Michael L. "Evil and Inconsistency." *Sophia* 18 (July 1979): 20-27.
- . *Evil and the Christian God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982.
- . "God and Evil in Process Theology." In *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald Nash. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987, 117-39.
- . "God and Evil: Problems of Consistency and Gratitude." *Journal of Value Inquiry* 13 (1979): 305-13.
- , ed. *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.
- . "Recent Work on the Problem of Evil." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983): 321-39.

Peterson, Michael L., William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Pike, Nelson, ed. *God and Evil: Readings on the Theological Problem of Evil*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

———. “Plantinga on Free Will and Evil.” *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 449-73.

Plantinga, Alvin. “Existence, Necessity, and God.” *The New Scholasticism* 50 (1976): 61-72.

———. “The Free Will Defense.” In *Philosophy in America*, ed. Max Black. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965.

———. *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.

———. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.

———. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1974.

———. “Which Worlds Could God Have Created?” *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 539-52.

Reichenbach, Bruce. “The Deductive Argument from Evil.” *Sophia* 20 (April 1981): 25-42.

———. *Evil and a Good God*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982.

Rowe, William L. “The Empirical Argument from Evil.” In *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi and William Wainwright. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, 227-47.

———. “Evil and Theodicy.” *Philosophical Topics* 16 (Fall 1988): 119-32.

———. “Evil and the Theistic Hypothesis” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16 (1984): 95-100.

———, ed. *God and the Problem of Evil*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.

———. *The Philosophy of Religion*. Encino and Belmont, CA: Dickenson, 1978.

———. “Plantinga on Possible Worlds and Evil.” *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 554-55.

———. “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism.” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979): 335-41.

———. “Ruminations about Evil.” *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 69-88.

Stewart, Mellville. *The Greater-Good Defense: An Essay on the Rationality of Faith*. New York: St. Martin's, 1993.



Swinburne, Richard. "Does Theism Need a Theodicy?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1988): 287-311.

———. *The Existence of God*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1979.

———. "Knowledge from Experience, and the Problem of Evil." In *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honor of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William Abraham and Steven Holtzer. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987, 141-67.

———. "Natural Evil." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1978): 295-301.

———. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

———. "A Theodicy of Heaven and Hell." In *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alfred Freddoso. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1983, 37-54.

van Inwagen, Peter. "The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil: A Theodicy." *Philosophical Topics* 16 (Fall 1988): 161-87.

———. *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Walls, Jerry. "The Free Will Defense, Calvinism, Wesley, and the Goodness of God." *Christian Scholar's Review* 13 (January 1983): 19-33.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway. New York: Bantam, 1960.

Yandell, Keith E. *Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971.