

## Associated Canadian Theological Schools of Trinity Western University

### THS 631A: Biblical Theology of Suffering

Instructor: Rick Love, Ph.D.  
Summer - 2019  
3 credit hours  
Prerequisites: BIE 500; THS 540

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Course Dates: Apr 29 – Aug 31, 2019  
Class days and times: July 8-12, 2019  
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

#### I. Course Description

How does the Word of God help us when life is full of pain and trouble? Is our suffering caused by sin? by Satan? Is it part of God's plan? How does God desire for us to respond when we suffer? In this course we will explore the teachings of Scripture to understand God's perspective on these and related questions.

#### II. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, each student should:

- A. Interpret and apply Biblical texts in reference to the theme of suffering (as evidenced in the worksheets, class discussion and paper).
- B. Grow in their knowledge of what the Bible as a whole says about suffering, including, but not limited to, such themes as: God's sovereignty, God's goodness, God's justice, the fall, sin, Satan, sickness and health, lament, death, grief, salvation, hell and heaven, retribution, pain, temptation and testing, comfort, poverty, oppression, rewards and punishment, and eschatological blessing (as evidenced in the worksheets, class discussion and paper).
- C. Apply the message of the Bible, especially as it relates to the theme of suffering, to contemporary church and society (as evidenced in the worksheets, class discussion and paper).

D. Explain to others, in a variety of ways, what the Bible says about suffering.

E. Demonstrate passion, zeal, and love for God, His Word, His Church, and the world.

### **III. Course Textbooks**

Carson, D. A. *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990, 2006.

Kreeft, Peter. *Making Sense Out of Suffering*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1986.

Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Yancey, Philip. *Where is God When it Hurts?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977.

### **IV. Course Assignments**

A. Reading and reading report (25%): Due August 15

Students will read:

1. D. A. Carson's *How Long, O Lord*

and either

2.a. Peter Kreeft's *Making Sense Out of Suffering*, OR

2.b. C. S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain*, OR

2.c. Philip Yancey's *Where is God When it Hurts?*

Students will record and rank the ten (10) most important ideas from each of the two books read (include page numbers). State the reasons why you view these ideas as most significant and discuss the significance of these ideas for your own ministry. Conclude by stating five (5) questions which you think informed non-Christian readers of these books might ask the authors. Compose questions that the authors have not already addressed in the books read. The reading report should be approximately six to eight (6-8) pages. Include an email address at the beginning of the document to simplify the return of electronically submitted assignments. File names for all assignments must include your name followed by the name of the assignment (e.g., "TrudeauJustinReadingReport.docx").

B. Worksheets (10 x 5% each = 50%)

On the course web site students will find ten worksheets that will guide them in the study of what the Bible says about various aspects of suffering and assist them in reflecting on the significance of this for church and society. Students will answer all of the questions on each worksheet and submit their answers to all of the worksheets in one document submitted electronically to the instructor through the course web site. Your grade for these worksheets will be based on: 1) the quality of your answer to each question and 2) your skill in following the worksheet directions. **When referring to a biblical text (or an idea found within a biblical text) it is important to cite its reference.** Include an email address at the beginning of the document to simplify the return of electronically submitted assignments. File names for all assignments must include your name and the name of the assignment (e.g., “TrudeauJustinWorksheets.docx”). The worksheets are due August 15<sup>th</sup>, but **it is recommended that students work on the worksheet questions before the class meets during the week of July 8-12 in order to participate well during our in-class discussions of the worksheet questions.**

C. Paper (25%): Due August 15<sup>th</sup>

In consultation with the professor, each student will write an 8-10 page biblical and theological analysis of a case study of an example of suffering. Analyze the case study in light of what you learn through your reading for the course, class discussion, and worksheets. Conclude with a discussion of the significance of your case study for contemporary church and society. Include an email address at the beginning of the document to simplify the return of electronically submitted assignments. File names for all assignments must include your name followed by the name of the assignment (e.g., “TrudeauJustinPaper.docx”).

### **Grading Scale**

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	Superior	4.30
A	Excellent	4.00
A-	Very Good	3.70
B+	Proficient	3.30
B	Good	3.00
B-	Average	2.70
C+	Adequate	2.30
C	Acceptable	2.00
C-	Needs Work	1.70
F	Below Standard	0.00

## V. Miscellaneous Notes/Policies

1. All assignments will be submitted electronically through the course website in three files: one for the course worksheets, one for the reading report, one for the paper.

## VI. Course Outline

Apr 29 - July 7: Answer the Worksheet Questions (to prepare for in-class discussion)

July 8-12: In-Class Learning Activities

Introduction

Retributive suffering

Job & innocent suffering

Satan & suffering

God & human suffering

Suffering, meaninglessness, faith, & eternity

Sickness & natural disasters

Prayer in times of suffering

The suffering of God in Christ

Suffering for Christ & the gospel (the necessity and benefits of Christian suffering)

Christian responses to suffering (with an emphasis on Christian responses to poverty)

Summary & Conclusion

July 9 – August 15: Complete Course Assignments

## VII. Bibliography

Beker, J. Christiaan. *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

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

Braaten, Carl E. and Robert W. Jenson. *Sin, Death, and the Devil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Brown, Sally A. and Patrick D. Miller, ed. *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Burkle, Howard R. *God, Suffering and Belief*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977.

Burnett, Joel S. *Where is God? Divine Absence in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010.

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- Fee, Gordon D. *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*. Costa Mesa: California: The Word for Today, 1979
- Fiddes, Paul S. *The Creative Suffering of God*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.
- Fretheim, Terence E. *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- Garland, G. F. *The Power of God to Heal: All the Accounts of Healing in the Bible Reproduced in their Entirety*. Mamaroneck, New York: Guideform, 1973.
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- Hall, Douglas John. *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986
- Hallman, Joseph M. *The Descent of God: Divine Suffering in History and Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
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- Kreeft, Peter. *Making Sense Out of Suffering*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1986.
- Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Schocken Books, 1981.
- Levenson, Jon D. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.
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- Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1962; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001.

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- McWilliams, Warren. *The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Protestant Theology*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985.
- Milazzo, G. Tom. *The Protest and the Silence: Suffering, Death and Biblical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Morris, Robert Corin. *Suffering and the Courage of God: Exploring How Grace and Suffering Meet*. Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete, 2005.
- Nouwen, Henry. *The Wounded Healer*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company / Image Books, 1979.
- Peterson, Michael L. *Evil and the Christian God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982.
- Plantinga, Alvin J. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Robinson, H. Wheeler. *The Cross in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955.
- Sanders, John. *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2007.
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- Sproul, R. C. *Surprised by Suffering*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1988.
- Swenson, Kristin M. *Living Through Pain: Psalms and the Search for Wholeness*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2005.
- Tambasco, Anthony J. ed. *The Bible on Suffering: Social and Political Implications*. New York / Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2001.
- Thomas, John Christopher. *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
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Vanauken, Sheldon. *A Severe Mercy*. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977.

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Watson, Jeffrey A. *Looking Beyond: A Christian View of Suffering and Death*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1986.

Wilkinson, John. *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice*. Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1980.

Yancey, Philip. *Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.

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### ***Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS***

#### **Web Support – Student Portal** <https://www.twu.ca/students/current-students>

All students within the ACTS consortium have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

#### **Campus Closure**

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147) and on the front page of the University’s website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <https://www.twu.ca/campus-notification> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes that begin after 5:00PM.

#### **Paper Formatting**

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except for in counselling courses, for which APA format is used and for CanIL courses. Please refer to the TWU Citations Style Guides page ([https://www8.twu.ca/library/style\\_guides.html](https://www8.twu.ca/library/style_guides.html)) for information on different styles.

Students are strongly encouraged to use EndNote (available through the library home page <http://libguides.twu.ca/EndNote/https://www.twu.ca/library>) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples: [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html) or <http://www.macmillanlearning.com/catalog/static/bsm/hacker/resdoc/home.htm>. Note that EndNote accommodates several formatting styles, including Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 6th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats – Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> (“Chicago” stands for “Turabian”) or <http://www.citationmachine.net/>

**Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!**

### **Logos Bible Software**

The ACTS consortium has a long-term agreement with Faithlife Corporation that allows the consortium to incorporate software-based biblical studies and research tools into the curriculum. Beginning in Fall 2017, all students who enroll in a degree program will receive a customized edition of Logos Bible Software that includes some of the required textbooks for courses offered at the ACTS consortium.

These students will follow revised degree program templates designed to integrate Logos into seminary programs. If they wish, students who began studies before Fall 2017 may also receive Logos if they transition to the new template for their degree program. If they have not yet taken Research Strategies, they may simply register for the new two-credit Research Strategies course. Students who have already taken the one-credit Research Strategies course will need to take one additional semester hour of course work; ACTS Academic Advising Office staff can assist students in course selection.

Students who receive Logos Bible Software are required to attend an orientation session that will familiarize them with the basic features of the software. ACTS faculty members will integrate Logos into course work and assignments as much as possible to help students use it to full effect.



Students who have received Logos will be able to keep their Logos Bible Software license permanently when they graduate from their program. Students who withdraw from studies will relinquish their Logos license.

### **Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are an important aspect of improving teaching outcomes and for students and faculty professional development. Students are, therefore, invited to complete a course evaluation. Professors will schedule time for students to fill out online course evaluations (20-30 minutes) on their personal laptops or a collegium computer during the last scheduled class of the semester. Students who are absent that day, or who are otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation during the last class, may still do so prior to the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

### **Research Ethics**

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by any member of the TWU university community (including projects done by students who are part of the ACTS consortium to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <https://www.twu.ca/research/research-services/research-ethics>

Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Director's office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

### **Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is a core value of the ACTS consortium. All participants in this learning community are required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. The ACTS consortium uses the TWU Student Handbook as its guide for students. Details concerning the policy on plagiarism can be found in the 2017-18 Student Handbook (pp. 46-49) and at <https://www.twu.ca/student-handbook>. Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage ([www.actsseminaries.com](http://www.actsseminaries.com)) at the following link: <http://www.actsseminaries.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ACTS-Catalogue-2014-15-Final-14-10-03.pdf>.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. There are excellent resources describing plagiarism and how to avoid it prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and freely available for download:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10ujmBKDRdb53SZ3XHRoXJF6M52Uhu-kr2CV8l654XeA/edit#slide=id.p4>

[http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism\\_Spectrum\\_US\\_8.5x11.pdf](http://williambadke.com/Plagiarism_Spectrum_US_8.5x11.pdf)

<https://prezi.com/dcbl-pnzuv9i/whats-the-big-deal-about-plagiarism/>

### **Equity of Access**

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience.