



**A Biblical Theology  
of Suffering and Hope**

**3 credits**

Prerequisite(s): xxxxxxxxxx

<b>Class Information</b>		<b>Instructor Information</b>		<b>First day of classes:</b>	Wed., Sept. 9, 2015 (Check Moodle and your e-mail for updates)  First day of in person meeting: Friday, Sept 18
<b>Days</b>	3 weekend course: Friday, Sept 18 Sat, Sept 19 Friday, Oct 16 Saturday, Oct 17 Friday, Nov 13 Sat, Nov 14	<b>Instructor:</b>	Beth Stovell, Ph.D.	<b>Last day to add/drop, or change to audit:</b>	Noon, Sat, Sept 19, 2015
<b>Time:</b>	All Fridays: 6:30-9:30pm All Sat: 9am-4pm	<b>Email:</b>	BStovell@ambrose.edu	<b>Last day to request revised exam:</b>	N/A
<b>Room:</b>	A 2131	<b>Phone:</b>	403-410-2000 ext. 3995	<b>Last day to withdraw from course:</b>	End of day, Sat, Oct 17, 2015
<b>Lab/Tutorial:</b>		<b>Office:</b>	L2076	<b>Last day to apply for time extension for coursework:</b>	Thursday, Dec 31, 2015
<b>FINAL EXAM:</b> This course does not have a final exam. Instead, it has a final paper that is due January 31, 2016.		<b>Office Hrs:</b>	By appointment via e-mail	<b>Final due date for all papers:</b>	Sunday, Jan 31, 2016

**Textbooks:**

**Required:**

1. Thompson, Michael E. W. *"Where Is the God of Justice?": The Old Testament and Suffering*. Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011.
2. Wright, N. T. *Evil and the Justice of God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2006.
3. Beker, Johan Christiaan. *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament*. Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994.

A modern English translation of the Bible is required reading. Students may use the following translations: NRSV, NASB, NIV 2011, ESV. Students may also use modern translations like the NLT and the Message to complement their reading.

## Course Description:

Suffering is experienced both individually and in communities all over the world. How does Scripture help us to understand the nature of suffering and how to respond to suffering? How is the Christian hope understood in light of suffering? This course will explore how Scripture addresses these questions. Examining the powerful message of the Old and New Testaments will demonstrate the continuing impact of the Bible's picture of suffering and hope for the Church today, for our spiritual lives, and for the world.

## Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify and examine the theological themes of suffering and hope in the Old and New Testaments with an awareness of their historical, social, and literary background.
2. Evaluate the impact of these themes on their own spiritual journey, the Church, and the world and propose approaches that lead toward redemptive action.

## Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading for Session	Assignments Due
Sept 6- Sept 17	Introduction to the course	Begin reading textbooks for first meeting (substantial reading for first class!)	Discussion question (online discussion board, see Moodle):  How do you define suffering? Why are you interested in studying the concepts of suffering and hope in Scripture?
<b>Weekend #1:</b> Sept 18-19	Friday: Intro to the course, Ecclesiastes and Jeremiah: All that Withers  Saturday morning: Psalms: Lament and hope, Israel as the promise of hope and the road to suffering  Saturday afternoon: Job: Explorations in theodicy	Thompson, 22-84; 100-156  Wright, 9-74; Beker, 1-58	Small group discussion (in person):  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are the major themes associated with the problem of suffering? How does Ecclesiastes describe some of these major themes? How is this helpful to us today?</li><li>2. What role do Psalms of lament play in your current ministry/church context? How might the psalms of lament help us deal with suffering today?</li><li>3. In what ways does the book of Job explore the idea of theodicy? Does Job offer a picture of hope for today? Why or why not?</li></ol> <b>Reflection Paper #1 due on Sunday, October 4, midnight, Turn in via Moodle</b>

<p><b>Weekend #2:</b> Oct 16-17</p>	<p>Friday: The Prophets: Visions of Hope amidst Suffering</p> <p>Saturday morning: The God who Sends His Son: The Story of Jesus in a Suffering Time</p> <p>Saturday afternoon: Christ Has Died, Christ is Risen: Christ's Suffering and the Hope of the Resurrection</p>	<p>Thompson, 85-100, 157-198</p> <p>Wright, 75-100</p> <p>Beker, 59-76</p>	<p>Small group discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What message do the prophets have related to the experience of suffering and hope for people in their time? How does that message impact us today?</li> <li>2. How were the Gospels "good news" to those suffering in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? How are the Gospels "good news" to those suffering today?</li> <li>3. What is the impact of Christ's death on our view of suffering? How does the resurrection provide a new hope?</li> </ol> <p><b>Reflection Paper #2 due on Sunday, November 1, midnight, Turn in via Moodle</b></p>
<p>Weekend #3: Nov 13-14</p>	<p>Friday: Paul's Letters: Gospel of Redemptive Suffering</p> <p>Saturday morning: Paul's Letters: Response to Tragic Suffering</p> <p>Saturday evening: Revelation: Ultimate Visions of Suffering and Hope</p>	<p>Wright, 101-166</p> <p>Beker, 75-123</p>	<p>Small Group discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What experiences of suffering did the early church in Acts face? What forms of hope did the early church cling to? Are these notions of hope still relevant for today? Why or why not?</li> <li>2. How did Paul's letters approach the question of suffering and hope in new ways? How do these approaches connect with the world today?</li> <li>3. How did the book of Revelation provide a picture of hope for the people of its time during their suffering? Is the book of Revelation a hopeful or difficult book for today? Why?</li> </ol> <p><b>Draft version of Final Paper Due Sunday, Nov 29 by midnight</b></p>
<p>January 31, 2016: Final paper due</p>			<p><b>Final paper due by midnight via Moodle on</b></p>

**Requirements:**

- Small Group Participation (10%): Each week students will be given a question to discuss in small groups. This participation is part of how students are evaluated on whether they are reading their textbooks for the course in a timely fashion.

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- **Reflection Papers (2 papers at 25% each): Due Dates: Sunday, Oct 3; Sunday, Nov 2, Submitted online via Moodle**
    - Students will write a 3-5 page reflection paper by choosing one of the discussion questions from the class syllabus and writing a reflection on this question. This reflection should explore the impact of the answer of this question on three spheres: 1. the student's own spiritual journey, 2 their ministry (current or future), and 3. the modern world. Students should engage with the course notes and readings as they answer this question. Students must choose different questions from the syllabus for each of their two papers.
    - These papers must use reading materials and course notes to engage the course discussion question. Thus, these papers demonstrate a student's awareness of their course readings and course notes and their reflection upon these course materials.
    - Because these papers are "reflection papers," they should use the 1<sup>st</sup> person ("I") to describe the student's personal journey during that section of the paper. However, the style of the paper should remain academic in all other aspects.
    - These papers need to use Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced. The formatting should be in Chicago Manual of Style in the footnotes and bibliography style. See [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
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  - **Final Paper and Draft Paper: Final Paper (20% + Draft of final paper: 20%=Total 40%):**
  - **Writing your final paper is a two-stage process-Draft of final paper due Sunday, November 29; Final paper due Sunday, Jan 31. All papers are due by midnight. Both stages are required for an optimal grade in this course. Submitted online via Moodle**
  - **Draft of Final Paper (10%):** Students will turn in a draft of their final paper on February 28 to gauge their progress. This draft may be a full paper, an outline with a clear thesis, or whatever stage of notes the paper is currently in. More comprehensive drafts will be easier to gauge progress and likely provide higher overall grades compared to less comprehensive drafts. This draft will receive an initial grade, which will be 10% of their overall grade for the course. However, if the student's overall grade on the final paper exceeds this draft paper grade, the draft paper grade will be replaced with their final paper grade.
    - Based on the feedback from the draft of their final paper, students will revise their draft and complete their final paper.
    - These papers need to use Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced. The formatting should be in Chicago Manual of Style in the footnotes and bibliography style. See [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
  - **Final paper (20%): Due by midnight on Jan 31, Submitted online via Moodle**
    - Each credit student will write an "interpretive essay" that is 10-12 pages in length. This paper will examine one of the theological themes or one of the biblical texts related to suffering and/or hope in the Old Testament or the New Testament (based on whether you are listed as OT or NT for this course). **The text or topic must be approved by the instructor.** A knowledge of Hebrew or Greek is not required to write these papers and it will not be expected that students will have these language skills. However, if students have taken Hebrew or Greek language courses, they are encouraged to use these skills on their papers.
    - Whether focusing on your specific theme or biblical text, these papers should set their discussion of the theological theme or biblical text in its original historical and cultural background. Discussion should include a variety of different positions on the specific passage or topic from academic articles and books. To ensure this engagement with other scholars, the paper should
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include at least 10 solid academic sources (course materials, when used, should exist in the bibliography, but will not count to this total).

- Each paper must include an “application” or “significance for the church and society today”. This section must explore the implications for the student’s own faith journey, for the Church today, and for the world.
- Students will be provided with a rubric identifying the major components of the paper and how they will be graded. The rubric and checklist for this assignment will be included in the folder “Rubrics for Course Assignments” in the “General” section of Moodle.
- This paper needs to use Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced. The formatting should be in Chicago Manual of Style in the footnotes and bibliography style. See [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

**All assignments will be turned in via Moodle. See discussion of individual assignments above for more details.**

**Attendance:**

1. Course sessions will begin in a timely fashion. To receive full points for course participation, you are expected to arrive before class begins and stay until class ends. **If for some valid reason you will be unable to attend class or will be late, please notify the professor by phone or email in advance of the class session.**
2. **Unexcused absences will severely impact a student’s final grade because small group participation is a 10% requirement for the course. To have an absence excused, students need to contact their professor with an explanation, preferably prior to the start of class.**
3. Due dates for assignments in this class are firm. They are set up for the overall success of the class - that is, for both students and the instructor. **Late work drops one letter grade (10 pts) per day late unless other arrangements are made in advance with (a maximum of 50% total possible removed).** Please stay on top of your assignments and do not procrastinate. If you realize that you will be late in turning in an assignment for a legitimate reason, please see the “Extensions” policy below.

If you feel that you are falling behind or getting into trouble, please come see me early. There are things that can be done early on to get things back on track before it is too late

**Grade Summary:**

Assignment	Percentage
Discussion Questions/Course Participation	10%
Reflection Papers (2 X 25%)	50%
Draft of Final Paper	20%
Final Paper	20%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	100%

The available letters for course grades are as follows:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>
A+	Excellent
A	
A-	
B+	Good
B	
B-	
C+	Satisfactory
C	
C-	
D+	Minimal Pass
D	
F	Failure

Because of the nature of the Alpha 4.00 system, there can be no uniform College-wide conversion scale. The relationship between raw scores (e.g. percentages) and the resultant letter grade will depend on the nature of the course and the instructor's assessment of the level of each class, compared to similar classes taught previously.

Please note that final grades will be available on student registration system. Printed grade sheets are not mailed out.

### **Other**

Bibliography for additional research:

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.

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

Ehrman, Bart D. God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question - - Why We Suffer. New York: Harper One, 2008.

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.

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.

Gerstenberger, Erhard S. and Wolfgang Schrage. Suffering. Trans. John E. Steely. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.

Griffin, David. God, Power and Evil: A Process Theodicy. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.

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.

Howard, J. Keir. Disease and Healing in the New Testament. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2001.

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- Kitamori, Kazoh. Theology of the Pain of God. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox, 1958.
- Kreeft, Peter. Making Sense Out of Suffering. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1986.
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- Lindstrom, Fredrik. Suffering and Sin: Interpretations of Illness in the Individual Complaint Psalms. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994.
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- 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.
- Seybold, Klaus and Ulrich B. Mueller. Sickness and Healing. Trans. D. W. Stott. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.
- 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.
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Vanauken, Sheldon. A Severe Mercy. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977.

Volf, Miroslav. Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

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.

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

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## Policies:

### Communication

All students have received an Ambrose e-mail account upon registration. It is the student's responsibility to check this account regularly as the Ambrose email system will be the professor's instrument for notifying students of important matters (cancelled class sessions, extensions, requested appointments, etc.) between class sessions. If students do not wish to use their Ambrose accounts, they will need to forward all messages from the Ambrose account to another personal account.

### Registration

During the **Registration Revision Period** students may enter a course without permission, change the designation of any class from credit to audit and /or voluntary withdraw from a course without financial or academic penalty or record. Courses should be added or dropped on the student portal by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. After that date, the original status remains and the student is responsible for related fees.

Students intending to withdraw from a course after the Registration Revision Period must apply to the Office of the Registrar by submitting a "Request to Withdraw from a Course" form or by sending an email to the Registrar's Office by the **Withdrawal Deadline**; please consult the List of Important Dates on the my.ambrose.edu website. Students will not receive a tuition refund for courses from which they withdraw after the Registration Revision period. A grade of "W" will appear on their transcript.

### Exam Scheduling

Students wishing to withdraw from a course, but who fail to do so by the applicable date, will receive the grade earned in accordance with the course syllabus. A student obliged to withdraw from a course after the Withdrawal Deadline because of health or other reasons may apply to the Registrar for special consideration.

Students, who find a conflict in their exam schedule must submit a Revised Examination Request form to the Registrar's Office by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. Requests will be considered for the following reasons only: 1) the scheduled final examination slot conflicts with another exam; 2) the student has three final exams within three consecutive exam time blocks; 3) the scheduled final exam slot conflicts with an exam at another institution; 4) extenuating circumstances. Travel is not considered a valid excuse for re-scheduling or missing a final exam.

### Electronic Etiquette

Students are expected to treat their instructor, guest speakers, and fellow students with respect. It is disruptive to the learning goals of a course or seminar and disrespectful to fellow students and the instructor to use electronics for purposes unrelated to the course during a class session. Turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Laptops should be used for class-related purposes only. Do not use iPods, MP3 players, or headphones. Do not text, read, or send personal emails, go on Facebook or other social networks, search the internet, or play computer games during class. Some professors will not allow the use of any electronic devices in class. The professor has the



right to disallow the student to use a laptop in future lectures and/or to ask a student to withdraw from the session if s/he does not comply with this policy. Repeat offenders will be directed to the Dean. If you are expecting communication due to an emergency, please speak with the professor before the class begins.

### **Academic Policies**

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the Academic Calendar. Personal information (information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual) may be required as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at [privacy@ambrose.edu](mailto:privacy@ambrose.edu).

### **Extensions**

Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a course Extension from the Registrar's Office. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise "due to circumstances beyond the student's control."

### **Appeal of Grade**

An appeal for change of grade on any course work must be made to the course instructor within one week of receiving notification of the grade. An appeal for change of final grade must be submitted to the Registrar's Office in writing and providing the basis for appeal within 30 days of receiving notification of the final grade, providing the basis for appeal. A review fee of \$50.00 must accompany the appeal. If the appeal is sustained, the fee will be refunded.

### **Academic Integrity**

We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Academic dishonesty is taken seriously at Ambrose University as it undermines our academic standards and affects the integrity of each member of our learning community. Any attempt to obtain credit for academic work through fraudulent, deceptive, or dishonest means is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism

involves presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as one's own. Plagiarism is fraud and theft, but plagiarism can also occur by accident when a student fails or forgets to acknowledge to another person's ideas or words. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean and become part of the student's permanent record.

**Note:** Students are strongly advised to retain this syllabus for their records.