

Theologies of Suffering Syllabus

Fall 2008 (Online 404-002)

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This course focuses on theologies of suffering. This is designed as an online seminar course which will demand much reading, reflecting and online discussion. This online section will focus on written interaction and assignments, personal reflection on the theologies of suffering and substantive feedback to one another.

Because of the nature of the subject matter, this course will be very challenging to the core of our beliefs. The readings will include focuses on: 1) Scriptural treatment of suffering (Psalms, Job, Lamentations); 2) Theologians on suffering (Moltmann, Schillebeeckx, Soelle, Hall); and 3) Theologians and religious thinkers from various perspectives (womanist, liberation theologians, pastoral care). Each week students will complete the weekly assignments and a reflection essay based on the weekly reading highlighting the key concepts and points made by the authors. In addition there will be five required synchronistic online class sessions.

This course will complement the course on illness, dying and grieving, thus it will not focus on these dimensions of suffering. One of the areas of focus which will be found throughout the course will be the inter-relationship between individual suffering and systemic suffering.

Objectives:

1. To survey the perspectives of Scripture, theologians and other religious thinkers with particular attention on Christian theologies of human suffering and evil.
2. To foster the development of each student's own theology of suffering and hope.
3. To foster the development of each student's skills in understanding the possible meaning and meaninglessness of suffering.
4. To bring to light the interconnection between pastoral care to individuals and striving for justice in responding to systemic suffering.
5. To discern the dynamic relationship between personal sin, structural sin, chance, God, responsibility and suffering and affliction.
6. To think, speak and write with care and much thought about human suffering and ways in which we are called to respond.
7. To be open regarding a diversity of theological perspectives in relation to issues of human suffering.

Synchronistic Online Class Sessions:

There will be five required synchronistic online class sessions:

1. Thursday, August 4, 2008 from 7-8:30 pm Central time
2. Thursday, September 25, 2008 from 7-8:30 pm Central time
3. Thursday, October 23, 2008 from 7-8:30 pm Central time
4. Thursday, November 13, 2008 from 7-8:30 pm Central time
5. Thursday, December 4, 2008 from 7-8:30 pm Central time

Student Weekly Assignments

Reading for this course is **substantial**, interesting, important and professionally stimulating. Students will submit online one to two page single-spaced critical essay from the reading assignment of each week. Select one issue in the book related to your personal or professional interest. Describe that position concisely. Critique the author's opinion, positive and negative impressions. End your essay with your own point of view.

In addition, complete the weekly assignments on blackboard by the due dates (Thursday of each week) and post substantial responses to your fellow students by the respective due dates (Tuesdays of each week). Points will be deducted for late assignments.

Student Final Project

The final project is a five to seven page research essay, double spaced, outlining your theology of suffering and how that theology will influence your ministry. It is important to use sources from the class to document, support and develop your vision. You are encouraged to bring in other resource from other related courses or reading. As an alternative, you can design a project or presentation based on the course material to use in your area of ministry or ministry site. (Proposal due October 10, Paper/Project/Presentation due November 26)

Course Evaluation

1. Regular punctual completion of online assignments, participation in the five synchronistic class sessions and posting feedback to the assignments of your fellow students. 1/2 course grade.
2. Completion of weekly reflection essays. 1/4 grade
3. Completion of final paper/project/presentation 1/4 grade

Theologies of Suffering Schedule

Fall 2008

Week 1: Monday, August 25, 2008 – Tuesday, September 2, 2008

Orientation, Method, Content, Syllabus, Issues of Theology, Theodicy, Suffering

Readings:

Suffering [Paperback]

By: Dorothee Soelle (Author)

Augsburg Fortress Publishers (June 1984)
\$13.60

God & Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross [Paperback]

By: Douglas John Hall (Author)
Augsburg Fortress Publishers (September 1987)
\$14.96

Week 2: Wednesday, September 3 – Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Issues in the Theology of Suffering (continued)

Readings:

Same as week one

Week 3: Wednesday, September 10 – Tuesday, September 16, 2008

Scripture and Suffering: An Overview

Reading:

Psalms 3, 13, 22, 88 (Bible)

Why Do We Suffer?: A Scriptural Approach to the Human Condition [Paperback]

By: Daniel Harrington S.J. (Author)
Sheed & Ward (February 1, 2000)
\$16.95

Week 4: Wednesday, September 17 – Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Scripture and Suffering: Job

Readings:

The Book of Job (Bible)

On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent (Paperback)

by Gustavo Gutierrez (Author)
Orbis Books (June 1987)
\$13.50

Week 5: Wednesday, September 24 – Tuesday, September 30, 2008

Scripture and Suffering: Lamentations

Reading:

The Book of Lamentations (Bible)

Lamentations and the Tears of the World [Paperback]

By: Kathleen M. O'Connor (Author)
Orbis Books (February 2002)
\$15.00

Week 6: Wednesday, October 1 – Tuesday, October 7, 2008

Spiritual Suffering: The Dark Night of the Soul

Readings:

[Mother Theresa's Crisis of Faith.](#)

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1655415,00.html>

Week 7: Wednesday, October 8 – Tuesday, October 14, 2008: Reading week, One page proposal for final paper/project/presentation due Friday, October 10, 2008.

Week 8: Wednesday, October 15 – Tuesday, October 21, 2008

Theology of the Cross: Moltmann

Reading:

[The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ As the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology](#) [Paperback]

By: Jurgen Moltmann (Author)

Augsburg Fortress Publishers; 1st Fortress Press ed edition (October 1993)

\$16.32

Week 9: Wednesday, October 22 – Tuesday, October 28, 2008

The Place and Meaning of Suffering in Schillebeeckx

Reading:

[Unbroken Communion: The Place and Meaning of Suffering in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx](#) [Paperback]

By: Kathleen Anne McManus (Author)

Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (April 2003)

\$29.95

Week 10: Wednesday, October 29 – Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Womanist Perspectives on Suffering

Reading:

[A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering \(Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner, Vol 8\)](#) [Paperback]

By: Emilie M. Townes (Editor)

Orbis Books (October 1993)

\$17.16

Week 11: Wednesday, November 5, - Tuesday, November 11, 2008

Liberation Theology and Suffering

Reading:

Where Is God?: Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, And Hope

by Jon Sobrino (Author), Margaret Wilde (Translator)

Orbis Books (November 30, 2004)

\$16.50

Week 12: Wednesday, November 12 - Tuesday, November 18, 2008

Pastoral Care and Justice

Reading:

Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope [Paperback]

By: Kathleen D. Billman (Author), Daniel L. Migliore (Author).

Wipf & Stock Publishers (October 2007)

\$21.00

Week 13: Wednesday, November 19 - Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Hope

Reading:

Saved in Hope: Spe Salvi [Hardcover]

By: Pope Benedict XVI (Author)

Ignatius Press (February 2008)

\$10.17

Week 14 & 15: Wednesday, November 26 - Friday, December 5, 2008

Student Final Paper/Project/Presentation due by 4 pm Central time November 26, 2008.

Constructive feedback to fellow students' final project/paper/presentation due Tuesday, December 2, 2008.

Recommended:

A Grief Observed [Paperback]

By: C. S. Lewis (Author)

HarperOne; 1 edition (February 6, 2001)

\$8.76

The Problem of Pain [Paperback]

By: C. S. Lewis (Author)

HarperOne; New Ed edition (February 6, 2001)

\$8.76