

The Problem of Evil PHIL6305
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Defend Conference
January 3-7, 2022
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Seminary Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Core Values Addressed

The course will address the core values *Doctrinal Integrity* and *Mission Focus* by giving attention to defending and presenting Christian beliefs particularly as they relate to Christian evangelism. *Servant Leadership* will be addressed as well in that Christian apologists must model humility.

Competencies Addressed

The competencies of Christian Theological Heritage, Disciple Making, and Spiritual and Character Formation will be addressed.

Course Description

The course introduces students to contemporary philosophical 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 the topic of evil. The thrust of the course will focus upon personal reading, research, and writing.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Students will read broadly on God and evil as understood and studied in contemporary philosophy of religion.
2. Students will become familiar with issues related to evil and the Christian concept of God.
3. Each student will demonstrate an understanding of an issue related to the subject by writing a research paper on a selected topic.

Required Textbooks

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

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

Course Requirements

1. Lecture Attendance. Students are required to attend all sessions of the *Defend 2022* Christian Apologetics Conference. **Students must take a picture of themselves wearing their conference name badges on stage in front of the conference backdrop and post it to Blackboard.**

2. Required Reading. Students are required to read all of the two required textbooks. Students are not required to review these two books, nor may they review either of the required books in lieu of one of the books listed for book reviews. **Students must affirm on Blackboard that they have done this.**

3. Book Reviews. Each student is required to review **2** of the following books. **Students may not duplicate book reviews from any other course for this course.** If a student wishes to substitute another book in place of one of the books on the list below, he or she must get the professor's permission in an email to do so.

Reviews should include: (1) some professional biographical data concerning the author; (2) a summary of the book; (3) an assessment of the author's aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. All grammar and citations in the reviews should follow Turabian form. Reviews should be 5-7 double-spaced pages (which won't be difficult if students include all of the above criteria). **Book Reviews are due 8 weeks after the final day of the *Defend 2022* Apologetics Conference (March 4, 2022).**

Books for Book Reviews

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

Michael Bergmann, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea, *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

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

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

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O' Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

- John Claypool, *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler: How to Handle Grief*. Waco: Word, 1974.
- Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Horton Davies, *The Vigilant God: Providence in the Thought of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Barth*. New York: Peter Lang, 1992.
- Stephen T. Davis, *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. New Edition. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001.
- R. Douglas Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. New York: Dutton, 2013.
- Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer. *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy*. Toronto Studies in Philosophy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Mark Larrimore, *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000.
- C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. New York: Bantam, 1983.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- Michael L. Peterson, *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.
- D. Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.
- Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- William Rowe, *God and the Problem of Evil*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.
- John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Can God Be Trusted: Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Heath A. Thomas, Jeremy Evans, and Paul Copan, *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

4. Session Summaries. Students must write one-page, single-spaced summaries of 10 different breakout sessions from the *Defend 2022* Christian Apologetics Conference. Students taking more than one *Defend 2022* course for NOBTS credit may not use any session summaries that they use for another course. Summaries should be submitted via Blackboard. **Summaries are due 14 weeks after the conclusion of the *Defend 2022* Apologetics Conference (April 15, 2022).**

5. Research Paper. Each student is required to submit a research paper on a topic related to the problem of evil. The paper should be not less than 3,000 words nor more than 4,000 words in length (double spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font). Papers must adhere to the Turabian style guide. **Students may NOT submit the same paper for this course and another NOBTS course.** **Research**

papers are due 12 weeks after the final day of the *Defend 2022 Apologetics Conference* (April 1, 2022).

Research papers should be:

- **Well-Rounded:** The bibliography should contain *at least* 10 sources, at least half of which must be non-online sources.
- **Biblical:** The researcher should demonstrate the use of biblical texts and hermeneutical skill in his or her evaluation of the issue.
- **Organization:** The organization and structure of the paper should grow out of the research and should be the best possible means for explicating the topic.
- **Implications:** The researcher should be able to demonstrate the “so what” of their research topic as far as it pertains to evangelical faith, practice, and evangelism.
- **Form and style:** Careful attention should be given to all matters of subdivisions, paragraphing, quoted matter, footnotes, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, word usage, bibliography, etc. Papers (15-20 pages) should be double-spaced, in Turabian format, in Times New Roman 12 pt font, and should contain a bibliography and an NOBTS title page.
- **Critical evaluation:** Critical evaluation—not just superficial treatment of the sources—and accurate exposition of the topic should characterize your paper. It goes without saying that “critical evaluation” requires the use of proper logic.

Topics for your papers are listed in the section *Possible Research Topics*. **Research papers are due 12 weeks after the final day of the *Defend 2022 Apologetics Conference* (April 1, 2022).**

Here is a rough guide to paper grades.

A Paper: Demonstrates a *superior* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, and presents very good, clear, and thoughtful arguments, with very few, if any, significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

B Paper: Demonstrates a *good* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, presents an argument that exhibits good reasoning, with minimal significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

C Paper: Demonstrates an adequate though perhaps limited understanding of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, mixed with a significant number of incorrect claims, presents weak arguments, contains significant grammatical or structural problems.

D Paper: Demonstrates significant misunderstandings of factual matters, uses poor logic or fallacious reasoning (if any) to argue points (e.g., merely makes a series of unconnected assertions), fails significantly with respect to technical specifications.

F Paper: Failure to submit a paper, a paper that commits plagiarism, or a paper that presents no argumentation.

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale: 93-100, A; 85-92, B; 77-84, C; 70-76, D; 0-69, F.

The final grade will be determined accordingly:

Conference Attendance	10%
Required Reading	10%
Book Reviews	20%
Research Paper	30%
<u>Session Summaries</u>	<u>30%</u>
Final Grade	100%

Extra Credit may be earned for: (1) additional book reviews (students taking more than one course will not receive extra credit for book reviews from another class), additional session summaries, or attendance at approved apologetics events; or (2) attending the EMNR/ISCA conference AND writing the session summaries; or (3) attendance at ad hoc apologetics events in the spring semester for which the student has previously received the approval of the professor of record.

Possible Paper Topics

David Hume's Argument from Evil

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

A Critique of J. L. Mackie's Atheistic Argument from Evil

John Feinberg's Evangelical Theodicy

An Evangelical Critique of David Ray Griffin's Process Theodicy

A Critique of William Rowe's Inductive Case from Evil for the Non-Existence of God

Augustine of Hippo on Evil and God's Existence

The Problem of Evil and the Reality of Hell

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

Evil and Suffering in Latter-day Saint Theology

Buddhism and Suffering

Clement of Alexandria on Evil and Suffering

The Freewill Defense Assessed

The Question of the Best Possible World and the Problem of Evil

What of Natural Evils?

Suggested Bibliography

Adams, Marilyn, and Adams, Robert, eds. *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Bowman, Robert M. Jr., Ed Komoszewski, and Darrell L. Bock, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Jesus Christ*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007.

Brown, Colin. *Christianity and Western Thought*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1990.

———. *Miracles and the Critical Mind*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.

———. *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1968.

Bush, L. Russ. *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1983.

Clark, Kelly James. *Return to Reason*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Collins, Francis S. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2007.

Copan, Paul. *True for You But Not for Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Copan, Paul. *When God Goes to Starbucks: A Guide to Everyday Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.

Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Third Edition. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008.

Davis, Stephen T., ed. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973.

Dyrness, William. *Christian Apologetics in a World Community*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983.

Evans, Craig A. *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.

Geisler, Norman. *Philosophy of Religion*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.

———. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

- Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Dutton, 2008.
- Kreeft, Peter. *Making Sense out of Suffering*. Ann Arbor: Servant, 1986.
- Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- Lewis, C. S. *Miracles*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Why God Won't Go Away: Is the New Atheism Running on Empty*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.
- Mitchell, Basil. *The Justification of Religious Belief*. New York: Seabury Press, 1974.
- Moreland, J. P. *Christianity and the Nature of Science*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- . *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- Nash, Ronald. *Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1988.
- Pearcey, Nancy. *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015.
- . *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010.
- . *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004.
- Ramm, Bernard. *Varieties of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961.
- Spitzer, Robert J. *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Sproul, R.C., Gerstner, John, and Lindsley, Arthur. *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Stewart, Robert B. *Can Only One Religion Be True?: Paul Knitter and Harold Netland in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- . *The Future of Atheism: Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.
- . *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.
- . *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart Ehrman and Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011.
- . *The Message of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and Ben Witherington III in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Swinburne, Richard. *The Concept of Miracle*. London: Macmillan, 1970.

Wallace, J. Warner. *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013.