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# PH 600 Suffering, Tragedy and the Christian Faith

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**PH 600: Suffering, Tragedy and the Christian Faith**  
**J-Term 2008 Course Syllabus Dunnam Campus**  
**Meeting Days: Tuesday – Saturday**  
**Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. & 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**  
**Dates: January 29<sup>th</sup> – February 2<sup>nd</sup>.**  
**Professor: Joseph B. O. Okello**

**Course Description:**

A detailed examination of the problem of evil and the various Christian responses to it. Theological and pastoral dimensions of the problem will be considered.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Articulate the traditional and modern treatments of the problem of evil.
2. Distinguish between the logical, the evidential and the existential versions of the problem of evil
3. Articulate the various responses given to the different versions of the problem of evil.
4. Distinguish between the various types of theodicy offered in response to the problem of evil.
5. Outline a pastoral dimension of the problem, with a view to helping one's congregation chart workable resolutions in light of the problem.

**Required Course Texts:**

Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0060652381 (242 pages)

Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0060652969 (231 pages) Referred to as POP in course schedule

Peterson, Michael ed. *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992. ISBN 0268015155 (365 pages) Referred to as POE in the course schedule.

Swinburne, Richard. *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 9780198237990. (280 pages)

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted in 1997. ISBN080280294X (111 pages) Referred to as LFAS in course schedule.

**Course Requirement:**

1. **Pre-Course Preparation Requirement:** Each student will submit two reading reports from the following two books: *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis and *Providence and the Problem of Evil* by Richard Swinburne. Each report should be no more than 1000 words in length, double-spaced and typed in regular font. The report must answer the following questions:
  - a. How does the author characterize the problem of evil? That is, how does the problem of evil pose a challenge to, or a struggle, with the tenets of Christian faith?
  - b. How does the author respond to the problem of evil? That is, what is the author's view of God's response to the problem of evil?
2. **On-Course Requirements:**
  - a. Each student will attend all class sessions. Since this is a one week intensive course, attendance will be required of all students. Excused absences will be given only under extenuating circumstances like illness, death (God forbid!), and other uncontrollable emergencies.
  - b. Each student will be expected to do all the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss the material in class. Questions for discussion will be provided at the beginning of each lecture.
  - c. Daily assignments: Each student will select one author from the assigned readings and provide a one page summary of the argument presented by the author. The summary should follow these guidelines:
    - i. Identify the central claim, or the most interesting claim, of the author in question.
    - ii. State at least three reasons why the author makes that claim.
    - iii. State why you agree or disagree with the author.
    - iv. Each assignment must be typed on regular font.
    - v. Each assignment must be no more than 500 words long.
    - vi. Be sure to indicate the word count at the top of each assignment.

## Grading Procedure

1. Reading Report: 30% of the final course grade, due on the last day of class.
2. Attendance: 10% of the final course grade.
3. Daily one page assignments 60% of the final course grade:
  - a. Wednesday, January 30: 1<sup>st</sup> assignment due at 10:00 p.m. (15% of course grade)
  - b. Thursday, January 31: 2<sup>nd</sup> assignment due at 10:00 p.m. (15% of course grade)
  - c. Friday, February 1: 3<sup>rd</sup> assignment due at 10:00 p.m. (15% of course grade)
  - d. Saturday, February 2: 4<sup>th</sup> assignment due at 10:00 p.m. (15% of course grade)

## Grading Procedure:

A= 95 – 100, A- = 90 – 94, B+ = 85 – 89, B = 80 – 84, B- = 75 – 79, C+ = 70 – 74, C = 65 – 69, C- = 60 – 64, D+ = 55 – 59, D= 50 – 54, D- = 45 – 49, F = Below 45.

## Course Schedule

Day and Time	Author	Page
<b>Tuesday: 9:00 – 9:50</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b>	
Tuesday: 10:00 – 10:50	Introduction to POE	POE 1 – 19
Tuesday: 11:00 – 11:50	Traditional Treatments of the POE	Book of Job, POE 23 – 31
Tuesday: 1:00 – 1:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Thomas Aquinas, POE 31 – 39
Tuesday: 2:00 – 2:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	David Hume, POE 39 – 56
Tuesday 3:00 – 3:50	Modern Treatments of the POE	Fyodor Dostoyevsky, POE 57 – 67
Tuesday 4:00 – 4:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Albert Camus, POE 67 – 78
<b>Wednesday: 9:00 – 9:50</b>	<b>“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “</b>	<b>Elie Wiesel, POE 79 – 88</b>
Wednesday: 10:00 – 10:50	The Logical Problem of Evil	J. L. Mackie, POE 89 – 102
Wednesday: 11:00 – 11:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Alvin Plantinga, POE 103 – 117
Wednesday: 1:00 – 1:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Alvin, Plantinga, POE 117 – 134
Wednesday: 2:00 – 2:50	The Evidential Problem of Evil	Michael Martin, POE 135 – 140
Wednesday: 3:00 – 3:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	David Basinger, POE 141 – 152
Wednesday: 4:00 – 4:50	The Existential Problem of Evil	William Hasker, POE 153 – 165
<b>Thursday: 9:00 – 9:50</b>	<b>“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “</b>	<b>Marilyn A. Adams, POE 169 – 177</b>
Thursday: 10:00 – 10:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Marilyn A. Adams, POE 177 – 190
Thursday: 11:00 – 11:50	Augustinian Theodicy	St. Augustine, POE 191 – 196
Thursday: 1:00 – 1:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	David Ray Griffin, POE 197 – 208
Thursday: 2:00 – 2:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	David Ray Griffin, POE 208 – 214
Thursday: 3:00 – 3:50	Irenaean Theodicy	John Hick, POE 215 – 223
Thursday: 4:00 – 4:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	John Hick, POE 223 – 229
<b>Friday: 9:00 – 9:50</b>	<b>“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “</b>	<b>Roland Puccetti, POE 231 – 238</b>
Friday: 10:00 – 10:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Roland Puccetti, POE 238 – 246
Friday 11:00 – 11:50	Process Theodicy	Lewis Ford, POE 247 – 256
Friday: 1:00 – 1:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Lewis Ford, POE 256 – 266
Friday: 2:00 – 2:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Hare and Madden, POE 267 – 274
Friday: 3:00 – 3:50	God and the Best Possible World	Robert Adams, POE 275 – 288
Friday: 4:00 – 4:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Philip L. Quinn, POE 289 – 302
<b>Saturday: 9:00 – 9:50</b>	<b>Natural Evils and Natural Laws</b>	<b>R. Swinburne, POE 303 – 316</b>
Saturday: 10:00 – 10:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	Elenore Stump, POE 317 – 330
Saturday: 11:00 – 11:50	Defense and Theodicy	Walls and Plantinga, POE 331 – 338
Saturday: 1:00 – 1:50	Theoretical and Practical Theodicy	Kenneth Surin, POE 339 – 350
Saturday: 2:00 – 2:50	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	James Wetzel, POE 351 – 363
Saturday: 3:00 – 3:50	Pastoral Reflections	Wolterstorff, LFAS (Whole Book)
Saturday: 4:00 – 4:50	Pastoral Reflections	Lewis, POP (Whole Book)

## Means of Communication:

### Online (VIRTUAL Classroom) Communication Guidelines

The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into <http://virtual.asburyseminary.edu> you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The Course Information Center, in the center of your Moodle screen, contains many features to be used throughout the semester, including:
  - a. Course News and Announcements, where I will post items important for the entire class;
  - b) Syllabus, where a copy of the syllabus is provided;
  - c) To Professor, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately;
  - d) Course Questions, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum;
  - e) Prayer Forum, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community;
  - f) Open Forum, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community.
2. Modules, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where e-group discussions will take place, documents or other files to download, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester.
3. Resources, a section located on the left side, provides links to items you will want to use often in the semester.

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