

## The Theology of Suffering

### Fall Term 2016

Instructor: Phil C. Zylla, D. Th.

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Tuesdays

10:30 – 12:20 p.m.

Professional Degree Course Code: MS3XS3

Advanced Degree Course Code: MS6XS3

Degree Specializations: Pastoral Studies, Spiritual Care and Counseling, Christian Thought and History, Christian Worldview

Doctor of Practical Theology: Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

### **Course Description:**

Gustavo Gutierrez asks, “Are suffering human beings able to enter into an authentic relationship with God and find a correct way of speaking about God?” This is the core question of this course. We will give attention to both the spirituality for a theology of suffering and to the methods for framing a theology of suffering. Participants will be invited to consider ways in which their own view of suffering is being shaped. This course will examine various theological approaches to suffering including those of noted theologians: Dorothy Soelle, Jurgen Moltmann, Gustavo Gutierrez, and Rubem Alves. Nicolas Wolterstorff suggests that “the valley of suffering is the vale of soul-making.” The course will examine the structure of suffering and offer critical reflection on the ministry implications for pastoral care and counseling of those who are most afflicted.

### **Course Objectives:**

#### **Knowing**

\*To explore a biblical framework for a theology suffering.

\*To reflect on the theological writings of those who have ‘dared their suspicions’ about God and suffering.

#### **Being**

\*To listen for words that resonate with our own experience of suffering. “Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.” - Simone Weil

\*To begin to discern ways that we can meaningfully speak about the goodness of God in a broken and suffering world.

#### **Doing**

\*To articulate our own developing insights about the integration of suffering and a vital relationship with God.

\*To attend to the ways that we are being led into solidarity with those who suffer.

\*To formulate a working pastoral theology of suffering.

**Required Course Textbooks:**

Gutierrez, Gustavo *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.

Moltmann, Jürgen *The Crucified God*. Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1993.

Soelle, Dorothee *Suffering*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Zylla, Phil C. *The Roots of Sorrow: A Pastoral Theology of Suffering*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012.

**Recommended Books:**

Alves, Rubem *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*. Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1990.

Rankka, Kristine M. *Women and the Value of Suffering: An Aw(e)ful Rowing Toward God*. Collegville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998.

Swinton, John *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007.

Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3 : phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<b>September 13</b>	<b>Course Introduction – Common Explanations Components of a Theology of Suffering</b>
<b>September 20</b>	<b>Unspeakable Suffering The Subtle Persistence of Hope</b>
<b>September 27</b>	<b>Dorothee Soelle: Suffering and Solidarity</b>
<b>October 4</b>	<b>Suffering Expedition</b>
<b>October 11</b>	<b>Reading Week</b>
<b>October 18</b>	<b>Jürgen Moltmann: God's Suffering From Loneliness to Community <u>MDiv, MTS Book Review Due:</u> <i>On Job</i> - Gustavo Gutierrez and <i>The Book of Job</i></b>
<b>October 25</b>	<b>From Mutism to Lament Chapel: "Lamentations" <u>Lament Poem Due</u></b>
<b>November 1</b>	<b>Gustavo Gutierrez: Suffering and Liberation Theology of the Book of Job</b>

**Assignments Due:****MDiv, MTS Book Review:** Soelle or Moltmann text

<b>November 8</b>	<b>The Suffering of the Innocent Rubem Alves: Expressing Suffering MA, PhD: Advanced Course Annotated Bibliography Due</b>
<b>November 15</b>	<b>Ministry of Hope to the Afflicted From Indifference to Compassion</b>
<b>November 22</b>	<b>Literature Review Group Discussions <u>Assignments Due:</u> MDiv, MTS - Specialization Literature Review MA, PhD - Advanced Essay Due</b>
<b>November 29</b>	<b>Spirituality and Suffering</b>
<b>December 6</b>	<b>MA/PhD Presentations MDiv, MTS <u>Specialization Essay Due</u></b>
<b>December 13</b>	<b>FEAST OF HOPE <u>Final Poem Due</u></b>

**SUFFERING EXPEDITION – October 4, 2013**

For these two hours we will participate in a journey to observe the contours of suffering and hope all around us. You are invited to look for the ***glimpses of hope and the signs of suffering*** in your encounters with the people and situations you encounter. Remember, “Absolute, unmixed attention is prayer”- Simone Weil. You are invited to heighten your moral vision - to look with eyes with the intention of solidarity. Journal your observations, insights, and ideas that capture your encounter with suffering. Use this reflection as the basis of your lament poem for chapel on October 25, 2016.

**FEAST OF HOPE**

“Words, which are good to be eaten”. Alves’ vision that words and food have the same mother, hunger, leads us to conclude the course with a feast:

1. Prepare the Table: - through the week we will each contribute to the preparation of our table for the feast of hope. Feasts are extravagant - dishes, tablecloths, candles, and many other smells/sights/sounds will enhance our table.
2. Prepare the Words: - each participant will be invited to share a selection from their own writing: poem, prayer, drawing, etc. during the meal. A final poem will be written for presentation in the final class at the *Feast of Hope*. Please PROVIDE A LEGIBLE WRITTEN COPY TO THE INSTRUCTOR. Due: December 13, 2016
3. Prepare the Food: - what’s a feast without food? Each class session we will build our vision for a memorable meal. Be creative! Together we’ll feast on the words and the food.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS****1. BOOK REVIEWS****30 marks (15 each)**

Write a 5-page response to *On Job [Gutierrez] and the Book of Job* paying particular attention to the resonance that you experience with the author and the biblical text. What words do you connect with? Why? What are the expressions that help you to articulate what you are feeling about God? Can you say how your own theology of suffering is being shaped in dialogue with these writers? Do not rehearse the content of the book but interact with the ideas that inform your own theology of suffering.

**Book Review # 1: On Job [Gutierrez] and The Book of Job****Due: October 18, 2016 15 marks**

Write a 5-page response to either: **Soelle, *Suffering*, or Moltmann, *Crucified God***. Try to contextualize the issues that this theologian raises for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What are some of the key theological turns in this volume? How do these issues continue to inform a theology of suffering? What are the major theological themes that this book addresses? What has changed since this volume was written? What is emerging for you as the key issues for a theology of suffering from interacting with this volume?

**Book Review # 2: Soelle, or Moltman****Due: November 1, 2016 15 marks****2. COURSE PARTICIPATION**

The course design is collegial and interactive. Participants are invited to engage in meaningful discussions, to interact in the various opportunities of the course, and to complete all reading and written assignments through the week. The course participation will be graded in the presentation of two poems: one in the chapel period on October 25, 2016 and the other in the *Feast of Hope* on December 13, 2016.

**Lament Poem # 1****Due: October 25, 2016****5 marks****Feast of Hope Poem # 2****Due: December 13, 2016****5 marks**

**n.b. Please provide a copy of the poem at the time of the exercise in class for submission to the instructor.**

**3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

From the course bibliography select an additional 400 pages of reading to engage on the theme of suffering. You will be invited to share in your reading group from your annotated notes of these selected reading. Prepare written annotated notes on your reading from the perspective of your degree specialization and come to class prepared to share your findings with course participants. Elements of the annotated literature review should include:

- a. Title
- b. Reference information
- c. One sentence description of the author
- d. A defining quotation from the book
- e. Key codes: phrases, words, concepts that are core to the volume
- f. Two paragraph reflection on the reading from the perspective of your specialization

**Due: November 22, 2016****20 marks****4. SPECIALIZATION ESSAY**

It is important that we begin to express our suspicions about God's presence/absence in our struggle for understanding of suffering as we live in a broken world. You are invited to write a 15-page essay that BOTH reflects your area of specialization AND summarizes your own reflections on the theology of suffering. Criterion used to assign grades for the essays are:

\***interaction with primary textbooks:** How well do you dialogue with the theologians?

\***theological reflection:** Are you taking care to attend to the truth?

\***creativity and writing style:** Do you allow the words to have their own will?

\***specialization:** What are the core insights gained for your specialization?

\***personal integration:** Can you speak meaningfully about God in the face of suffering?

**Essay Due: December 6, 2016**

**40 marks**

### **MS 6XS6 Advanced Degree Course Requirements**

#### **Course Participation**

The course design is collegial and interactive. Participants are invited to engage in meaningful discussions, to interact in the various opportunities of the course, and to complete all reading and written assignments through the week. The course participation will be graded in the presentation of two poems: one in the chapel period on October 25, 2016 and the other in the *Feast of Hope* on December 13, 2016.

**Lament Poem # 1**

**Due: October 25, 2016**

**5 marks**

**Feast of Hope Poem # 2**

**Due: December 13, 2016**

**5 marks**

#### **Advanced Course Annotated Bibliography:**

In addition to a careful reading of the core textbooks, advanced students in the MA/PhD program will read an additional 10 key volumes from the selected bibliography and write an annotated summary (1.5 pages double spaced) for each volume read. The selection of volumes must be approved the professor by September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016 as a specialized reading list.

**Due Date: November 8, 2016**

**25 marks**

#### **Advanced Essay:**

MA, PhD students will write a 40 page research paper on a theme approved by Dr. Zylla related to the theology of suffering. The paper should critically engage the literature of the theology of suffering from the perspective of the student's research interest. In addition to the course readings the essay should be supported by peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to the core argument.

**Due Date: November 22, 2016**

**40 marks**

#### **Advanced Lecture:**

The paper will be the subject of a presentation to the class at the end of the course.

MA and PhD students in the course will present a 40 min. presentation with appropriate handouts/powerpoint on their research topic at a class session on December 6, 2016

**Due Date: December 6, 2016**

**25 marks**

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“Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?” Lamentations 2:13

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**College Style for Submission of Written Work:**

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College website.

**Statement on Academic Honesty:**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g. failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one’s academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at <https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

**Gender Inclusive Language:**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

**Contacting the Instructor:**

Dr. Phil C. Zylla

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E-mail instructor: [zyllap@mcmaster.ca](mailto:zyllap@mcmaster.ca)

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For appointments during office hours email Executive Assistant:

Scott, [fairles@mcmaster.ca](mailto:fairles@mcmaster.ca)

Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up until the first day of class.

**Selected Bibliography**

Alves, Rubem A. *A Theology of Human Hope*. St. Meinrad, Indiana: Abbey Press, 1969.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*. London/Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1990.
- Billman, Kathleen D. and Daniel L. Migliore. *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*. Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1999.
- Boersma, Hans *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Brown, Sally A. and Patrick D. Miller, eds. *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew and Public Square*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
- Brueggemann, Walter *The Threat of Life: Sermons on Pain, Power and Weakness*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
- Clarke, Anthony *A Cry in the Darkness: The Forsakenness of Jesus in Scripture, Theology and Experience*. Macon, Georgia: Regent's Park College with Smyth and Helwys, 2002.
- Claypool, John R. *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler*. New Orleans, Louisiana: Insight Press, 1995.
- Depoortere, Kristiaan *A Different God: A Christian View of Suffering*. Louvain: Peeters Press/W.B. Eerdmans, 1994.
- Fiddes, Paul *The Creative Suffering of God*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Floysvik, Ingvar *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997.
- Ford, S. Dennis *Sins of Omission: A Primer on Moral Indifference*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Fretheim, Terence E. *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Geddes, Jennifer L., ed. *Evil After Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Girard, René *Job: The Victim of his People*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo *A Theology of Liberation, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. New York: Orbis Books, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*. New York: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Hauerwas, Stanley *Cross-Shattered Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990.

- Hummel, Leonard M. *Clothed in Nothingness: Consolation for Suffering*. Minneapolis: Augsburg/ Fortress Press, 2003.
- Janzen, J. Gerald *At the Scent of Water: The Ground of Hope in the Book of Job*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2009.
- Jenkins, Michael *In the House of the Lord: Inhabiting the Psalms of Lament*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Keating, James F. and Thomas Joseph White, O.P., eds. *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2009.
- Kreeft, Peter *Making Sense Out of Suffering*. Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1986.
- Long, William R. and Glandion W. Carney *A Hard-Fought Hope: Journeying with Job Through Mystery*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2004.
- Manning, Brennan *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffins Path to God*. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000.
- McManus, Kathleen Anne *Unbroken Communion: The Place and Meaning of Suffering in The Theology of Edward Schillebeexckx*. New York/Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Moltmann, Jürgen *Experiences of God*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hope for the Church: Moltmann in Dialogue with Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Crucified God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theology of Hope*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Way of Christ Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Nouwen, Henri *Adam: God's Beloved*. New York: Orbis Books, 2005
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Can You Drink the Cup?* Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Wounded Healer*. New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1979.
- Nouwen, Henri J.M., Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1983.
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Richard, Lucien *What Are They Saying About the Theology of Suffering?* New York: Paulist Press, 1992.

Sapp, Gary L., ed. *Compassionate Ministry*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1993.

Swinton, John *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 2007.

Tabb, Mark A. *Out of the Whirlwind*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

Thiel, John E. *God, Evil, and Innocent Suffering: A Theological Reflection*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002.

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Van der Poel, Cornelius J., C.S.Sp. *Wholeness and Holiness: A Christian Response to Human Suffering*. Franklin, Wisconsin: Sheed & Ward, 1999.

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

\_\_\_\_\_. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 2005.

Walsh, James, S.J. and P.G. Walsh *Divine Providence & Human Suffering*. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1985.

Weems, Ann *Psalms of Lament*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

Wiesel, Elie *Night*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. by Marion Wiesel, New York: Hill and Wang, 2006.

Weinandy, Thomas G., O.F.M., Cap. *Does God Suffer?* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000.

Williams, Rowan *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1982.

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