

TH 619 Suffering: Comparative Theologies

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In the wake of the Holocaust, how can Christians and Jews comprehend evil and suffering? This course explores this theological question theoretically, comparatively and dialogically, considering both social questions and individual suffering. The last few weeks will explore Jewish and Roman Catholic rituals for death.

Syllabus

Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:15 p.m.

Lyons 315

Boston College

Procedure and Requirements

The course is being conducted as a graduate-level seminar.

- Each week all students will prepare a single page on the readings, focusing on a topic of interest and raising questions the student would like to address in class. These should be posted on the Discussions page of the course's Blackboard site before class. While not individually graded, the weekly postings will contribute to an overall participation grade (20% of total course grade).
- In addition, for each session one student will prepare an approximately four-page paper (1000 – 1200 words), with one student serving as a respondent. The paper, modeled on a book review, is to be a critical engagement of the reading incorporating some summation but especially highlighting key issues or questions and why they matter. The student writing the paper needs to post it on Blackboard by Sunday evening to give the respondent adequate time to work with it (all others are to download or print a copy, as they wish). At the beginning of that class session the student will read the paper. The respondent will then speak for five to six minutes (500 – 800 words), expanding on the presentation and/or raising further issues. Each student will be responsible for one paper and one response over the course of the semester (paper = 20% and response = 10% of the total course grade).
- Students will produce a term paper on a topic they work out with the professors, building on reading or interests developed in the class (approximately 5000 words, plus footnotes). A proposal is due by March 17th, and the paper is due May 8th. The professors will provide guidelines for the paper (50% of total course grade).

Schedule of Classes

1/20 Introduction

1/27 Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 1-174 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967)

2/3 Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 175-362

2/10 Jewish Readings of Job

Required:

- The Book of Job with commentary, pp. 1499-1562, in *The Jewish Study Bible: TANAKH Translation* (New York: Oxford, 2004)
- Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 14b-16b – on Blackboard readings page
- Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (University of Chicago Press), III: chs. 22-24

- Nahum N. Glatzer, "The Book of Job and its Interpreters," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard, 1966), 197-220.

Recommended:

- Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man*, ch. XI, "Job and the Mystery of Suffering" 135-156, 339-342 (Job in context of discussion of suffering in the Bible)
- Elie Wiesel, "Job – Our Contemporary," in *Messengers of God* (Random House, 1976), 187-208.
- Jason Kalman, "Biblical Criticism in the Service of Jewish Theology: A Case Study in Post-Holocaust Biblical Exegesis," *Old Testament Essays* 18/1 (2005), 93-108. (on readings page: offers an analysis of Gordis and Wiesel)

2/17 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987)

2/24 Abraham Joshua Heschel

- *The Prophets*, Chapters 9-18 (San Francisco: Harper Perennial Classics, 2001)
- *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*, ed. and trans. Gordon Tucker (New York: Continuum, 2006), Chs. 6-7, pp. 104-143 – on readings page.
- *Man is not Alone*, ch. 16, in *Wrestling with God*, 376-380.

3/10 Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998)

3/17 *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses During and After the Holocaust*, ed. Steven Katz and others. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Israeli Responses:

- Biderman introduction: 205-215
- Pinchas Peli, 244-262
- Yehezkel Sarna, 133-145 (an example of an ultra-orthodox thinker)
- Yehoyada Amir, 304-317
- Yosef Achituv, 318-325
- Warren Zev Harvey, 326-331
- Shalom Rosenberg, 332-349

Note: Term paper proposals are due by today.

3/24 *Wrestling with God*, continued.

American/European thinkers:

- Katz introduction, 355-369

- Joseph Soloveitchik, 381-393
- Richard Rubenstein, 409-418. Recommended: Katz's critique: 582-594.
- Emil Fackenheim, 419-449
- Michael Wyschogrod, 455-461 (response to Fackenheim)
- Irving (Yitzchak) Greenberg, 497-555. Recommended: Katz's critique: 609-612.
- Elie Wiesel, 681-684

3/31 Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975)

4/7 No class (Holy Week/ almost Passover)

4/14 Jewish Responses to Death and Dying:

- Ruth Langer, "[Funerals: A Ritual Description](#)," *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* (2001):108-122. (use the corrected version on Langer's website, linked here)
- Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, rev. ed. (Middle Village: Jonathan David Publishers, 2000).

4/21 Richard Rutherford, *The Death of a Christian*, rev. ed. (Collegeville: Pueblo Books/Liturgical Press, 1990)

4/28 *Order of Christian Funerals, with Cremation Rite*, International Committee on English in the Liturgy (Washington, DC: Catholic Book Publishing, 1999)

5/8 Term papers due

Students are responsible for knowing and following BC's policies for academic integrity:
[://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity)