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DN 983 THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

Sept 18, Oct 9, Nov 6, Dec 4

First Presbyterian Church (ARP), Columbia, SC

Saturdays: 0900-1700

3 Semester Credit Hours

Professor: R.J. Gore, Jr., Ph.D.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course addresses the intellectual questions which arise as to why and how there can be suffering if God is all powerful and all-loving. Students explore these questions from biblical, theological, and pastoral perspectives, developing the implications for effective ministry to those who are suffering.

COURSE PURPOSE:

To introduce the student to the problems of evil and pain and to consider appropriate pastoral care for those who suffer, including the use of ritual theory as a means of healing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for ministry in the Christian Church. As a part of that mission, one goal is to teach students how to think theologically and act biblically in providing pastoral care to persons who are experiencing the deep hurts of life. In this course, students explore their own understanding of the biblical and theological data in order to obtain an angle of vision on evil, pain, and the goodness of God.

Specific objectives for this course are that, by the end of the course, students will:

1. **Identify** significant issues related to the problem of evil and **develop** responses to the challenges raised by those issues.
2. **Examine** biblical teachings on suffering and **apply** them to the issues raised by the problems of evil and pain.
3. **Apply** theological insights to the pastoral care of those who suffer from the deep hurts of life.
4. **Understand** the basics of ritual theory and implications for ministry to the broken..
5. **Create** rituals that bring healing and wholeness to parishioners.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS: REQUIRED

Carson, D.A., *How Long, O Lord?* Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. ISBN 978-0801031250

Davis, Stephen T., ed. *Encountering Evil, Live Options in Theodicy*. New ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001. ISBN 978-0664222512

Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: Macmillan, 1944. Reprint, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001. ISBN 978-0060652968

_____. *A Grief Observed*. 1961. Reprint, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001. ISBN 978-0060652388

Locke, Hubert G. *Searching for God in Godforsaken Times and Places*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. ISBN 978-0802860842
Ramshaw, Elaine. *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. ISBN 978-0800617387
Wiesel, Elie. *Night*, Rev. ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006. ISBN 978-0374500016

Students are expected to secure their own copies of all required textbooks. As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>. There you will find links to familiar vendors (CBD, Amazon, B&N, and Books-A-Million) and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of copies of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

READING PROGRESSION: Due by

CLASS ONE: Ramshaw and Wiesel

CLASS TWO: Davis, Locke

CLASS THREE: Lewis, *Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed*

CLASS FOUR: Carson

ARTICLES: REQUIRED by CLASS ONE

Bell, Robby. *Lament for a Wounded Faith*. Speech at Erskine Theological Seminary, November 17, 2005. <http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/gore/Lament.pdf>

Boice, James M. *Special Announcement by Boice*. Philadelphia: Tenth Presbyterian Church, May 7, 2000.

[http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/gore/Special Announcement By Boice.pdf](http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/gore/Special%20Announcement%20By%20Boice.pdf)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Card, Michael. *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in The Lost Language of Lament*. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2005.

Tada, Joni Eareckson and Steve Estes. *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

COURSE COMPONENTS AND REQUIREMENTS:

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through four learning components. The first is the **Content Component**, the student's own mastery of material, accomplished by completing the required readings. The ability to apply biblical and theological principles in effective pastoral ministry is determined largely by the student's mastery of the biblical, theological, and philosophical data associated with the problem of pain.

The second is the **Reflection Component**. Students will consider the role of ritual in providing healing to those who have experienced the deep hurts of life.

The third is the **Discussion Component**. Each class will incorporate discussion and lecture. A vital exchange of ideas is essential to the process of exploration.

The fourth is the **Integration Component** which will integrate the various objectives of this course and provide the student an opportunity to develop an appropriate ministry response to the pastoral problem of pain.

These four learning components will provide a well-rounded learning experience for the thoughtful student.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Requirement One: All students will read the required volumes prior to the due date. Classroom discussion will assume familiarity with these texts. Students will complete a series of Reflection Papers on the readings, each 500-600 words in length, single-spaced, with NO footnotes (Times New Roman 12 font or similar). The student is to select at least one key concept from each of the textbooks, explain briefly what that concept involves, and how it has stretched the student's understanding of the Problem of Pain and pastoral responses to those who suffer. Footnotes are NOT needed; make reference to page numbers of text in parentheses if needed.

Requirement Two: Attend class regularly and participate in the discussions. There are no excused absences.

Requirement Three: At the completion of the in-class portion of the course, students will write an **Integrative Paper**, twelve to fifteen pages, double-spaced, that captures the student's intentional approach to the problem of pain. This is a research paper but the expectation is that the student will bridge the gap between theory and practice. (Follow the scholarly apparatus presented in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 7th edition.) The purpose of this paper is to draw together, from all the various sources of learning and experience, to present an intentional approach to ministry to those who have experienced the deep hurts and sorrows of life. The due date for this paper will be 10 December 2010. The paper should be e-mailed as a WORD attachment to arrive by that date.

GRADING CRITERIA:

- The Readings/Response Papers each will count 10% of the course. (6 x 10%=60%)
- The Integrative Paper will count 40% of the course grade.

STANDARDS FOR ALL PAPERS:

- A.....No more than 4 misspellings or grammatical errors in total**
 - Identified the most significant articles, books in bibliography
 - Used research materials expertly, leaving no unanswered questions
 - Thesis statement clear and proved
- B.....No more than 2 misspellings or grammatical errors per page**
 - Identified a number of important articles, books in bibliography
 - Used research material fairly, addressed most problem areas
 - Thesis statement clear and sustained
- C.....No more than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page**
 - Used the minimum required number of bibliographical entries
 - Used research material adequately
 - Thesis statement not clear and/or not sustained
- D.....More than 3 misspellings or grammatical errors per page**
 - Failed to use minimum number of bibliographical entries
 - Research poorly done
 - What thesis statement?

ERSKINE SEMINARY POLICIES

Drop/Add/Withdrawal

Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Office Hours

My normal office hours are printed in this syllabus. However, due to meetings and unforeseen circumstances that may arise, my schedule may change. If you need to see me, I strongly recommend that you call or e-mail to schedule an appointment.

Language about God and Humanity

Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

Conduct in Theological Discussions

Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

Plagiarism

Any student who commits plagiarism is in violation of Seminary policy and is liable for dismissal. See Seminary Catalog for complete information.

Incompletes

The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant

the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

Official Seminary Class Attendance Policy:

Class participation is considered an important part of the total educational experience at Erskine Seminary. Students are expected to attend classes on a regular basis and are responsible for the mastery of all materials required in the course. Each professor will indicate in writing the specific class attendance policy at the beginning of each course. In general, students are allowed up to three hours of unexcused absence without penalty. Students wishing to take a course which meets four times over the semester **must** attend the first meeting of the course.

Policy Regarding Absences:

Students are required to attend all class sessions. If students have to be absent for any reason, they are still responsible for all work missed and all work due. A student who misses more than three class sessions for any reason will automatically fail the course.

Style and Bibliographical Formatting Requirements:

All papers must be typed/processed (12-point type, Times New Roman double-spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "Style and Form Standards" (Erskine Seminary) and Turabian 7th edition. In this course, footnotes are required in the research paper. The paper's cover page is not counted towards page requirements. Bibliography is not required.

Late or Incomplete Work:

Any work not submitted by the due date will be assessed a late penalty. The final deadline for submitting all late work and make-up work will be identified during the course. Any work not received by this deadline will be given a grade of "0," unless the student has made prior arrangements to take an incomplete for the course. Incomplete (I) marks will be handled in accordance with policy statements in the Catalog. In particular, one should note that the student does not automatically have the privilege of taking an incomplete. Rather, it is the professor's prerogative to give an incomplete, and only when the student has completed most of the work for the course and has been providentially hindered from completing the remainder.

COURSE-RELATED WEB MATERIALS