



# On-Campus Course Syllabus

## OTS 315

### Topics in OT: Theodicy in the OT

#### Spring 2022

#### Class Information

**Day and Time:** Thursday 7:30-10:00 pm

**Room Number:** E208

#### Contact Information

**Instructor Name:** Kevin Warstler

**Instructor Email:** kwarstler@criswell.edu

**Instructor Phone:** 214.818.1331

**Instructor Office Hours:** Tuesday 1-3 pm; Thursday 10-11 am, 1-4 pm

#### Course Description and Prerequisites

A study of selected topics related to the languages, history, background, hermeneutics, or theology of the Old Testament. The topic for this course is theodicy in the Old Testament using selected passages from the Old Testament that develop the ideas related to that subject. (Prerequisites: OTS101, OTS201)

#### Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course you should be able to:

1. Describe the concept of human suffering and how it is presented and discussed in the Old Testament;
2. Discuss the major issues involved in the relationship between divine justice and human suffering;
3. Explain how specific Old Testament texts develop the concept of God's justice in light of the realities of human suffering and injustices;
4. Describe the problem of justice in relation to biblical teachings on the value and rights of women, the institution of slavery, and the divine commands regarding holy war; and
5. Provide some explanations of the relationship between the apparent injustices in the Old Testament and God's character.

#### Required Textbooks

Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011. (978-0801072758)

Thompson, Michael E. W. *Where is the God of Justice? The Old Testament and Suffering*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011. (9781610972628)

#### Course Requirements and Assignments

1. Discussion Board Participation (25%): You are required to post a response from your required reading (both textbooks and Bible reading) and study on a weekly basis through a discussion board that will be

set up in Canvas. Each response should show evidence of your reading and interaction with the material as well as provide some catalyst for discussion on the topics covered. All posts must be completed **no later than the end of the day (midnight) on Monday each week**. Please note that you will be unable to see any other posts until you post your own response. You are also required to respond to two different posts from others in the class **no later than the beginning of class on Thursday (7:30 pm)**. You will be graded on a demonstration of your knowledge and understanding of the material as well as your thoughtfulness and development of your responses to the posts of your classmates. Responses of “I agree” or “I disagree” are not sufficient. This component of the course is a significant foundation for the in-class discussions that we will have each week.

2. Class Participation (25%): Although there will not be a specific class attendance component in the gradebook, it is included in this part of the grade. Attendance and participation are essential given that the material we will be covering needs interaction and community-driven responses. The problem of theodicy in the Old Testament is much too complex and difficult for any one person to solve. In fact, our goal in the course is not so much to “solve” the problem but to articulate the right questions to ask about the subject and to develop legitimate responses that are biblically informed and coherent with the teaching of the rest of Scripture. This requires participation from everyone in the class during our times of discussion, whether those times involve the whole class or division into groups for collaborative learning projects during our class time.
3. Assignments (50%): There will be four required written assignments that will be available on Canvas no later than two weeks before they are due. They will focus on the major topics from the Old Testament that we are covering in the course: human suffering, misogyny, slavery, and holy war. All assignments are required and will be submitted through Canvas. Please note the due dates for each of them on the course schedule.

## **Class Attendance**

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to attend every class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Instructors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual instructors may determine how attendance affects students’ ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades.

## **Campus Closure**

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure’s impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student’s Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses’ objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or

presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

## Grading Scale

Assigning grade definitions (i.e., above average, average, below average) is optional. Please delete the last column below if not assigning definitions. Additionally, delete these instructions when completing syllabus.

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

## Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

## Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting.

Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

## **Institutional Assessment**

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

## **Institutional Email Policy**

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

## **Disabilities**

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

## **Intellectual Property Rights**

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

## Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at [studenttechsupport@criswell.edu](mailto:studenttechsupport@criswell.edu).

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or [studentservices@criswell.edu](mailto:studentservices@criswell.edu). Pastoral and certified counseling services are also available to Criswell students. Appointments are scheduled through the Dean of Students, at [deanofstudents@criswell.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@criswell.edu).

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at [library@criswell.edu](mailto:library@criswell.edu). Offsite login information is available in Canvas in the “Criswell Student Training Course” under “Library Information.”

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can visit the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203, or schedule an appointment by emailing [tutoringcenter@criswell.edu](mailto:tutoringcenter@criswell.edu) or by calling 214.818.1373.

## Course Outline/Calendar

Class	Date	In-Class Topic/Item Due	Textbook Reading	Bible Reading
1	Jan 20	Intro. to the Course, Syllabus		
2	Jan 27	The Reality of Suffering	Thompson, Intro. and Ch. 1	Psalms 6, 74, 88
3	Feb 3	The Suffering of Life in a Fallen World	Thompson, Ch. 2, Psalmic Interlude 1	Ecclesiastes 1–6
4	Feb 10	The Suffering of God’s Servants	Thompson, Ch. 3, Psalmic Interlude 2	Jeremiah 11–20
5	Feb 17	Waiting on God	Thompson, Ch. 4, Psalmic Interlude 3	Gen. 37, 39–40; Habakkuk
6	Feb 24	Theodicy and the Righteous and Wicked <b>Assignment One Due</b>	Thompson, Ch. 5–6, Psalmic Interlude 4	Psalms 37, 73; Job 1–3, 10, 27
7	Mar 3	Hope in the Midst of Suffering	Thompson, Ch. 7–8	Isaiah 59–66
8	Mar 10	God’s Character Under Attack	Copan, Ch. 1–2	Psalms 44; Lam. 1–2

	Mar 14–18	<b>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES</b>		
9	Mar 24	God's Jealousy	Copan, Ch. 3–5	Exodus 32–34; Deut. 4
10	Mar 31	Patriarchalism and Misogyny in Israel <b>Assignment Two Due</b>	Copan, Ch. 10–11	Exodus 21:7-11; Num. 5:11-31; Deut. 21:15-17
11	Apr 7	God and His Laws	Copan, Ch. 6–8	Deut. 12–14, 27– 28; Ezek. 20:1-31
12	Apr 14	Slavery in Israel <b>Assignment Three Due</b>	Copan, Ch. 12–14	Exodus 21:1-6; Leviticus 25; Deut. 15:12-18
13	Apr 21	The Justice of Punishments	Copan, Ch. 9	Exodus 21:12– 23:19; Deut. 21
14	Apr 28	Holy War and Genocide in Israel <b>Assignment Four Due</b>	Copan, Ch. 15–18	Deut. 7; Joshua 6, 8; Judges 2
15	May 5	Theodicy and the New Testament	Copan, Ch. 19–20	Matthew 5; Mark 13; Rev. 20–21
	May 12	NO CLASS ON FINAL EXAM WEEK		

## Selected Bibliography

Balentine, Samuel E. *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Boyce, Richard Nelson. *The Cry to God in the Old Testament*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, ed. J. J. M. Roberts, vol. 103. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

Castelo, Daniel. *Theological Theodicy*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.

Chirichigno, Gregory C. *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011.

Cowles, C. S., Eugene H. Merrill, Daniel L. Gard, and Tremper Longman III. *Show Them No Mercy: God and Canaanite Genocide*. Edited by Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Crenshaw, James L. *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Theodicy in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

Davidson, R. *The Courage to Doubt: Exploring an Old Testament Theme*. London: SCM Press, 1983.

Feinberg, John S. *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.

Fløysvik, Ingvar. *When God Becomes My Enemy: The Theology of the Complaint Psalms*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 1997.

Fretheim, Terence E. *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*. Overtures to Biblical Theology, eds.

- Walter Brueggemann et al. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Gerstenberger, Erhard S. and Wolfgang Schrage. *Suffering*. Translated by John E. Steely. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1977. Reprint, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980.
- Keller, Timothy. *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2013.
- Morgan, Christopher W. and Robert A. Peterson. *Suffering and the Goodness of God*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *God, Freedom, and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Schilling, S. Paul. *God and Human Anguish*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977.
- Scott, Mark S. M. *Pathways in Theodicy: An Introduction to the Problem of Evil*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Thompson, Michael E. W. *Where Is the God of Justice?: The Old Testament and Suffering*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011.