The Problem of Evil PHIL6305
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Defend Conference
January 7-11, 2019
Office: Dodd 112, extension #3245
rstewart@nobts.edu
Administrative Assistant
stewartsec@nobts.edu

Seminary Mission Statement

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

Course Description

The course introduces students to contemporary philosophical issues related to the Christian concept of God and the problem of evil. Issues addressed include the nature of evil, the cause of evil, the intelligibility and coherence of the Christian concept of God in light of evil, solutions offered by various world religions to the problem of evil, as well as representative solutions offered by a selection of contemporary philosophers addressing the topic of evil. The thrust of the course will focus upon personal reading, research, and writing.

Core Value and Key Competency

The primary core value of the Seminary addressed in this course is Doctrinal Integrity. The primary key competency in ministry addressed is Christian Theological Heritage. The core value for the 2018-2019 academic year is Doctrinal Integrity.

Core Values Addressed

The course will address the core value of Doctrinal Integrity directly and Spiritual Vitality indirectly. Reflection on the problem of evil is intimately related to reflection on the nature and existence of God as well as to considering the doctrine of creation. The vitality of one’s spiritual life is directly related to the degree of trust one places in God, which derives from one’s understanding of God’s nature. Servant Leadership will be addressed as well in that Christian apologists must model humility.
Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will read broadly on God and evil as understood and studied in contemporary philosophy of religion.
2. Students will become familiar with issues related to evil and the Christian concept of God.
3. Each student will demonstrate an understanding of an issue related to the subject by writing a research paper on a selected topic.

Course Requirements

The course will utilize reading assignments, a reading report, a research paper, and a personal perspective paper.

Lecture Attendance. Students are required to attend all plenary sessions as well as one breakout presentation for each breakout session. Students must to listen to at least 12 breakout sessions of the Defend 2019 Christian Apologetics Conference which they did not attend.

Book Reviews. Each student is required to review 3 books from the Suggested Texts list. The reviews should include: (1) some biographical data concerning the author; (2) an identification of the major elements of content; (3) an assessment of the author’s aim or purpose and of the degree of its fulfillment; and (4) a critical evaluation of the book. The reviews should be 5-7 double-spaced pages and follow Turabian form. The book reviews are due 7 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, March 1, 2019).

Research Paper. Students will write a 3,500-5,000 word (not including notes or bibliography) research paper on an approved theme in relation to the problem of evil.

Basic guidelines regarding the research paper are as follows:

- **Exhaustive**: Research should be exhaustive. The bibliography should contain at least 12 non-electronic sources.
- **Biblical**: The researcher should demonstrate the use of biblical texts and hermeneutical skill in his or her evaluation of the issue.
- **Organization**: The organization and structure of the paper should grow out of the research and should be the best possible means for explicating the topic.
- **Implications**: The researcher should be able to demonstrate the “so what” of their research topic as far as it pertains to evangelical faith, practice, and evangelism.
- **Form and style**: Careful attention should be given to all matters of subdivisions, paragraphing, quoted matter, footnotes, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, word usage, bibliography, etc. Papers (15-20 pages) should be double-spaced, in Turabian format, in Times New Roman 12 pt font, and should contain a bibliography and an NOBTS title page.
• **Critical evaluation:** Critical evaluation—not just superficial treatment of the sources—and accurate exposition of the topic should characterize your paper. It goes without saying that “critical evaluation” requires the use of proper logic.

Topics for your papers are listed in the section *Possible Research Topics.* **Papers due 11 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, March 29, 2019).**

Here is a rough guide to paper grades.

**A Paper:** Demonstrates a *superior* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, and presents very good, clear, and thoughtful arguments, with very few, if any, significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

**B Paper:** Demonstrates a *good* grasp of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, presents an argument that exhibits good reasoning, with minimal significant grammatical and/or form and style problems.

**C Paper:** Demonstrates an adequate though perhaps limited understanding of ideas, arguments, or theories it discusses, mixed with a significant number of incorrect claims, presents weak arguments, contains significant grammatical or structural problems.

**D Paper:** Demonstrates significant misunderstandings of factual matters, uses poor logic or fallacious reasoning (if any) to argue points (e.g., merely makes a series of unconnected assertions), fails significantly with respect to technical specifications.

**F Paper:** Failure to submit a paper, a paper that commits plagiarism, or a paper that presents no argumentation.

*Session Summaries.* Students will write one-page, single-spaced summaries of 12 breakout sessions from the *Defend* Conference that they did not attend. Students taking more than one *Defend 2019* course for NOBTS credit may use 4 session summaries that they summarize for another course so long as they are shaped for the concerns of each course. Summaries should be submitted via Blackboard. **Due 14 weeks after the last day of the Defend the Faith Apologetics Conference (Friday, April 19, 2019).**

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Report #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Report #2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Report #3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Summaries</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the NOBTS grading scale.
Required Texts


Suggested Texts


**Possible Paper Topics**

David Hume’s Argument from Evil  
Alvin Plantinga’s Freewill Defense  
John Hick’s Soul-Building Theodicy  
C. S. Lewis on Evil and Suffering  
Marilyn McCord Adams on Evil, Justice, and the Goodness of God  
J. L. Mackie’s Atheistic Argument from Evil  
John Feinberg’s Evangelical Theodicy  
David Ray Griffin’s Process Theodicy  
William Rowe’s Inductive Case from Evil for the Non-Existence of God  
Augustine of Hippo on Evil and God’s Existence  
The Problem of Evil and the Reality of Hell  
Gregory Boyd’s Warfare Theodicy  
The Problem of Evil in Islam  
Marxism and the Problem of Evil  
Hinduism and the Problem of Evil  
Evil and Suffering in Christian Science  
Evil and Suffering in Latter-day Saint Theology  
Buddhism and Suffering  
Clement of Alexandria on Evil and Suffering  
The Freewill Defense Assessed  
The Question of the Best Possible World and the Problem of Evil  
What of Natural Evils?
Bibliography


