

THEO 01–10 THE PROBLEM OF GOD

Summer 2020

June 1–July 3, 2020

(Draft)

Class Time: MTWR, 1:00 –3:00 pm
Class Location: Reiss 559
Instructor: Mehmet S. Sayilgan, PhD
Office: 140b New North
Office Hours: 3:00 –3:50 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment
e-mail: mss249@georgetown.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course engages with the problem of evil and suffering which has been one of the most challenging issues facing both religious and non-religious. On the one hand, it is believed that faith in God provides the best explanation to the question of evil and comforts those who suffer because of various reasons such as losing loved ones to death, sickness or natural disasters. On the other hand, many philosophers have been pointing out that the idea of a powerful, just and loving God cannot be reconciled with the evil and suffering that exist in the world. We will examine various perspectives developed by world religions and put both religious and non-religious views in conversation. The course does not claim to solve the problem, but will engage with the issue creatively and critically.

COURSE GOALS

- Getting acquainted with conceptual issues and controversies around the problem of evil and suffering.
- Understanding various perspectives of the problem of evil and suffering in world religions.
- Articulating arguments for and against the existence of God based on the problem of evil and suffering.
- Mapping the theme of suffering and evil in literature and traditional philosophy.

COURSE READINGS

Required

- Chad Meister and Paul K. Moser, *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- Some of the readings are available on Canvas. They can be accessed through the following link: <http://canvas.georgetown.edu>.

Recommended

- Michael L. Peterson, *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017). Second Edition.
- Mark Larrimore, *The Problem of Evil: A Reader* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000)
- Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2004).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Punctual attendance and participation 20%**
All students are expected to carefully read the weekly readings, attend every class session on time, participate in discussions, and engage with the readings critically.
- **Class Journals on Canvas 40 %**
In order to stimulate class discussions, students will post their reflections of the readings on Canvas for each day of the class. Each journal (250-300 words) on the readings of the day should be posted before 12 pm on the day of the class. The instructor may call on some students to share their entries. The journal entries are private and can only be accessed by the instructor.
- **Class Presentation (10%):**
Each student will present a case study based on one of the readings.
- **Final Paper (30%)**
Guidelines for the final paper will be posted on Canvas.
- **GRADES:**

A	94-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-93	C	74-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-73
B	84-86	D+	67-69
B-	80-83	D	64-66

Note: The Georgetown Intellectual Life Report of 1996-97 recommends that no more than 30% of grades be in the “A/A-” range.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Students are expected to abide by the Georgetown University Undergraduate Honor System. Please visit the Honor Council’s website and familiarize yourself with the posted materials: <<https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system>>. In case of cheating and plagiarism, student will be referred to the Honor Council. Information about plagiarism are available at:
< <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/policies/standards-of-conduct>>.
- Students having disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center located in Leavey Center, Suite 335. Information about disability support is available on the center’s website < <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/disability/>>.
- Students are expected to attend all class sessions. More than three unexcused absences will affect a student’s grade. Absences because of illness, religious

observance, or a required university-sponsored program will be considered “excused.” Instructor may ask for an official document in case of an excused absence. Any student missing seven (7) or more days will fail the course. Students are responsible for the materials missed because of absences.

- If you will be late or miss the class, please notify me by e-mail as soon as possible.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

I. Introduction

June 1 Introduction to the Course

II. Conceptual Issues and Controversies

June 2 Evil and the meaning of life
Read: Cottingham, 11-27.

Beauty and the Problem of Evil
Read: Taliaferro, 28-44.

June 3 Logical Arguments from Evil and Free-Will Defenses
Read: Oppy, 45-64.

God, Evil, and the Nature of Light
Read: Draper, 65-84.

June 4 Skeptical Theism
Read: Perrine and Wykstra, 85-107

Evil, Hiddenness, and Atheism
Read: Schellenberg, 108-23.

June 8 Anti-Theodicy
Read: Tarakakis, 124-46.

Cosmic Evolution and Evil
Read: Southgate, 146-64.

Naturalism, Evil, and God
Read: Ruse, 249-68.

III. World Religions on Evil, Suffering, and Death

- June 9 Hinduism on Evil and Suffering
Read: Willett (on Canvas)
- Hindu Perspective on Death
Read: Sumegi (on Canvas)
- June 10 Buddhist Perspective on Evil and Suffering
Read: Anbeek (on Canvas)
- Buddhism on Death
Read: Sumegi (on Canvas)
- June 11 Taoism on Evil and Suffering
Read: Lagerway (on Canvas)
- Taoism on Death
Read: Sumegi (on Canvas)
- June 15 Confucianism on Evil and Suffering
Read: Cheung (on Canvas)
- June 16 Judaism and the Problem of Evil
Read: Goodman, 193-209.
- Judaism on Death
Read: Sumegi (on Canvas)
- June 17 Christianity, Atonement, and Evil
Read: Fiddes, 210-29.
- Christianity on Death
Read: Sumegi (on Canvas)
- June 18 Islam and the Problem of Evil
Read: Winter, 230-48
- Islam on Death
Read: Sumegi (on Canvas)
- June 22 Buddhism
Read: Prothero (on Canvas)
- June 23 Grief without belief (on Canvas)

IV. Literature on Evil and Suffering

June 24

City of God

Read: Augustine (on Canvas)

“The Lisbon Earthquake”

Read: Voltaire (on Canvas)

Letter from Rousseau to Voltaire

J.J. Rousseau (on Canvas)

June 25

“Rebellion”

Fyodor Dostoevsky (on Canvas)

The Book of Job

Read: Nursi on Sickness and Job’s story (on Canvas)

V. Case Studies

June 29

“Is God a White Racist?”

Read: William R. Jones (on Canvas)

The Holocaust

Rabbi Or N. Rose (on Canvas)

In class watch: *God on Trial*

June 30

Grief Observed

C.S. Lewis (on Canvas)

“On the Death of a Child”

Read: Nursi (on Canvas)

July 1

Everything Happens for a Reason

Kate Bowler (on Canvas)

The Confessions of a Funeral Director

Caleb Wilde (on Canvas)

July 2

Review of the course