Description
In a world that appears racked with violence—from catastrophic tsunamis to horrendous acts of terror and much more besides—Evil, Suffering, God will confront one of the most enduring and perplexing questions that continues to haunt the human experience: how can we reconcile belief in a loving and omnipotent God with the existence of evil and suffering in the world? The course will approach this question from historical, theological, and pastoral angles not to solve it once and for all but rather in an attempt to enter ever more deeply into the mysteries of the challenge that it continues to pose.

The course will proceed in a modified seminar format, which will include introductory lectures, in-class student presentations, guest speakers, and much time devoted to participatory engagement of the readings and wider issues they raise.

Much of the thinking about the so-called “problem of evil” has been dominated by work that broadly falls under the disciplines of systematic theology and philosophy of religion. This is both curious and troubling because it has the unfortunate consequence of often proceeding in abstraction from concrete and practical lived experiences of evil and suffering. This course will attempt to resist this artificial separation and, with Sarah Coakley, will ask: can systematic theology can become pastoral again?

Goals and Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course students should be able to:
1. Recognize and distinguish between a variety of different approaches to the articulation of evil and suffering in the Christian tradition.
2. Explain key historical moments in the development of the problem of evil and suffering.
3. Articulate and critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to evil and suffering.
4. Develop and/or refine your own way of thinking about evil, suffering, and God and their relation through critical engagement with the Christian tradition.
5. Develop skills in interpreting different kinds of texts.

Expectations
Students are expected to attend all classes, do the readings before the class in which they will be discussed, and actively participate in class discussion. Before the course begins students are expected to read one text to be chosen from the list of readings that accompanies the course schedule below.
and prepare an in-class presentation. During the course students will make one in-class presentation and submit five short critical reflections on one of the assigned readings for the day. After the course concludes students will write a major research paper, which is due on July 13th.

Assessments

1. In-class participation (5%). This will be based on evidence of having read and absorbed the material, being present and timely, being prepared to engage in discussion, and willingness to listen and hear other voices. Attendance at all classes is expected. If you must be absent, please let the instructor know in advance.

2. Five 500 word (approximately 2 double-spaced pages) critical reflections (i.e. not simple summaries) on any one or combination of the assigned readings (5% ea. for a total of 25%). Hard copies are due in class on the day the readings in question will be discussed. You are not expected to submit a critical reflection on the day of your in-class presentation or on the days we will have guest speakers with us. If you wish to submit more than five critical reflections you are welcome to do so and I will count your best five toward your final grade.

3. One in-class presentation of approximately 15 minutes (30%). Your presentation should set the wider context of the work in question, including some biographical information about its author, the work’s historical significance, as well as a critical engagement of the work’s argument, method, sources, and any other relevant details. A hard copy of your presentation materials (e.g., power point slides, handouts, notes, etc…) should be handed in the day of your presentation. Due to the intensive nature of the course students are strongly encouraged to read the text and prepare their presentation before the course begins. Sign up will be via email with the instructor. No more than one student may present on any given day so the sooner you sign up the more choice you’ll have.

4. One 5000 word (approximately 20 double-spaced pages) research paper that critically engages a particular theme from the course (40%). Please bear in mind that your paper should not simply be a discussion of a particular topic or theme and must develop a thesis that makes a definite and limited assertion that is explained and supported by evidence. Topics must be cleared with the instructor by the last day of class, which is Friday, June 8th. Papers are due Friday, July 13th and should be submitted electronically to the “Research paper” dropbox in LEARN.

General notes about assessments:

- All citations should be in Chicago Style and include footnotes and a bibliography. A helpful citing and writing guide developed for Theological Studies is available on the UW Library website.
- The rubric that will be used for grading written work gives equal weight to each of the following areas: (1) structure and argument, (2) knowledge and understanding, (3) use of sources, and (4) style and presentation.
- Students should expect to do significant reading for the research paper beyond the required readings for the course though will be permitted to use the text they present on in class as part of their research paper.
- Late assessments will be penalized 3% per calendar day if other arrangements have not been made in advance.
Required Texts

Books are available for purchase at the UW Bookstore or at your favorite online retailer. Other readings will be available on e-reserve in the library.

Course Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Texts for in-class presentations</th>
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| Monday, May 28th   | **Introduction**  
| Tuesday, May 29th  | **Beginnings**  
| Wednesday, May 30th| **Before Theodicy I**  
| Thursday, May 31st | **Before Theodicy II**  
| Friday, June 1st   | **The Rise of Theodicy**  
| Monday, June 4th   | **Beyond Optimism**  
2: *Guest lecturer: Rev. Dr. Eleanor Epperly*  
Jones, Dorie. “*Ministry in Times of Crisis.*” [e-reserve; full text also available online] | Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part I–II (326). |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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2: Guest lecturer: Jason Reimer Greig Creamer, Deborah Beth. "Theology and Chronic Pain: Some Initial Reflections." *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 17, no. 2 (April 2013): 212-219. [e-reserve; full text also available online]  
| Friday, June 8th | **Looping Back**  
1: Bauckham, Richard. “Only the Suffering God can Help: Divine Passibility in Modern Theology.” *Themelios* 9, no. 3 (1984): 6–12. [e-reserve; full text also available online]  
| Friday, July 13th | **Research paper due!** |
University of Waterloo Policies

Academic Integrity
In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage and the Arts Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

Discipline
A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties).

Plagiarism Software
Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin® in this course.

Grievance
A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4 (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals
A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72).

Note for Students with Disabilities
The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.
Selected Bibliography
Special Topics in Theological Studies: Evil, Suffering, God (TS690)
Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo
Instructor: Dr. Kyle Gingerich Hiebert

Bauckham, Richard. "‘Only the Suffering God can Help’: Divine Passibility in Modern Theology." *Themelios* 9, no. 3 (1984): 6–12. [Full text available online]
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: Macmillan, 1922. [Full text available online]


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