

Theodicy and Early Modern Theology: The emergence of the historically concrete
Instructor: Ephraim Radner, Wycliffe College
Level: 5000

This class will be offered by remote access. Students will be expected to log in to regularly scheduled Zoom sessions.

Class attendance and participation in remote or synchronous online learning classes. The same expectations for student engagement and participation which applies to in-class learning also apply to remote or synchronous learning situations. Students who log into the Zoom site but do not contribute during discussion times and are not visible through live video will not be counted as participating in the class.

Please see information at <https://wycliffecollege.ca/remotelearning>

Before proceeding you will require a webcam and microphone. Laptops have these by default. If you have a desktop you will need to purchase a webcam (webcams come with built in microphone).

Notice of video recording and sharing (Download and re-use prohibited)

Remote courses, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation, and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor. For questions about recording and use of videos in which you appear please contact your instructor.

This seminar course reflects on the emergence of one of the key elements of modern thinking, that is, the focus upon the historically concrete. In theology, this was linked to questions about God's providence, evil, and suffering that took on a specific profile by the end of the 16th century in Western Europe, in the face of actual events and experiences. Having looked at treatments of these elements in the early and medieval church, and on challenges from the 16th century, we concentrate on the 17th and 18th century, first looking at discussions of violence, then natural history, and finally circling around the debate over "theodicy" as Leibniz articulated it, and critiques of his scheme by Voltaire and others. The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 proved a key event crystalizing concerns. After a brief foray into Jewish Hasidism, we end with a contemporary reflection on theology's responsibility to "theodical" challenges. The readings deal with both "natural" and "human-caused" evil, and will try to root discussions in aspects of the historical context of the writers studied.

Target students: Those interested in the history of Western theology, especially in its transition into modernity; those seeking to gain an understanding of the intellectual context in which many contemporary ethical concerns about suffering and evil arose; those interested in the way modern thinkers began to view the relation of God and the natural world; those with an interest in how key thinkers in the Christian and early modern philosophical tradition engaged questions

of historical life.

Goal: to engage in a wide-ranging study of Scriptural interpretation, as rooted in its Christian ecclesial context; readings and discussions will cover some key writers as well as biblical texts (Psalms and Revelation)

Outcomes: become conversant with key elements of the “theology of history” that have informed classic Christian understandings of human existence, as well as with their standard critiques that informed modern rejections of classical Christian theism (TST doctoral program outcome/learning objective 1, on Depth and Breadth of Knowledge); begin to develop a personal theological vision about these matters that is responsible to these classical and modern arguments (Outcome/Objective 3 on Application of Knowledge); learn how to use basic tools for constructive theology that are rooted in historical theological disciplines (Outcome/Objective 2 on Research and Scholarship). Presentations and final papers will relate to Outcome/Objective 5, on Communication Skills.

Requirements: Readings, weekly online discussions of readings, according to provided prompts (15%), presentations (done in pairs, 2x per semester – 25%), class discussions (20%), and a final research paper (40%).

Course Outcomes:

| COURSE OUTCOMES | COURSE ELEMENT | PROGRAM OUTCOMES |
|--|--|---|
| <i>By the end of the course, students will be able to</i> | <i>This outcome will be demonstrated through these course elements</i> | <i>This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe’s statement of outcomes</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe key elements of the “theology of history” that have informed classic Christian understandings of human existence, as well as with their standard critiques that informed modern rejections of classical Christian theism. | Written overviews of readings, presentations, class discussion | PhD: 1.1; 2 (M.Div/MTS: 1.1; 1.2; 1.3) |

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|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze ways in which theological arguments have shaped and been shaped by the human and social experience of suffering and evil. | Written assignments on reading and discussion | PhD: 1.1; 2; 5 (M.Div/MTS: 1.1-5; 2:1,2 [MTS: 2.3]) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate a personal theological vision about these matters that is responsible to these classical and modern arguments | Discussion and Final Paper | PhD: 1.1; 2 (M.Div/MTS: 1.1-5; 2:1,2 [MTS: 2.3]) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply this knowledge by closely analyzing a particular early modern theological text on the topic of theodicy. | Final paper. | PhD: 1.1; 2; 5; 6 (M.Div/MTS: 1.1-5; 2:1,2 [MTS: 2.3]) |

Format aimed at remote flexibility:

COVID-19: General comment

Faculty are working hard to adapt their courses to the dynamics of the current situation including changing lecture format, adapting assignments and small group discussions, setting up online discussions, etc. In order to ensure safety for everyone we will be making it possible for all students to take classes remotely in both graduate and professional degrees. While these changes may affect some issues around scheduling particularly for intensive courses, we will continue to work to ensure as little conflict as possible for students in their course selections. All commitments to course delivery in our course syllabi are draft until the first day of class when the final version will be distributed.

This course will be fully available remotely, in keeping with UoT policy for teaching during the social restrictions due to the COVID disease. However, depending on regulatory permission, the course may involve more or less elements of in-person interaction. In any case, the course will take place, even in its remoted format, “live”, (i.e. “synchronously”) except for an online discussion thread.

Class attendance and participation in remote or synchronous online learning classes. The same expectations for student engagement and participation which apply to in-class learning also apply to remote or synchronous learning situations. Students who log into the Zoom site but do not contribute during discussion times and are not visible through live video will not be counted as participating in the class.

Particular format outline:

1. There will be available online weekly a short (up to 30 min.) presentation by the instructor, to be listened to/watched asynchronously before the scheduled class.
2. There may be a few short videos to watch as well, whose url's will be provided.
3. Each class will meet (remotely) by zoom at the scheduled time, for 2 hours (with break). This session will consist of live assigned presentations by students and discussion. Depending on numbers and situation, meeting may occur in-person at Wycliffe as well.
4. All reading material and other resources will be available online on Quercus, and it will be the students' responsibility to read/view material *before* each common session.
5. There will be a single online discussion thread each week, to which students will be expected to contribute (2x/wk). These will deal with assigned readings.

Course syllabus by week:

1. *The Early Church*

Lactantius *On the anger of God* (online)

Salvian, *Of the Government of God*, Book V. (online)

Augustine, *City of God*, Bks 1, 3-4; 9; 20-2; *On the Merit and the Forgiveness of Sins, and the Baptism of Infants* (Book I), pdf.

2. *Classic Thomism*

Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, (Oxford University Press, 2011) – online at UoT

3. *New encounters*

Fernando Cervantes, “The Idea of the Devil and the Problem of the Indian in the case of Mexico in the 16th century” (Institute of Latin American Studies, Research Papers, 24 (London: 1991), online.

B. de las Casas *A short account of the Destruction of the Indies* (New York: Penguin, 1992; or the 1652 translation of John Philips, online at UoT).

J. de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* – edited by Jane E. Mangan ; with an introduction and commentary by Walter D. Mignolo ; translated by Frances M. López-Morillas. selections (pdf.). Or online 19th c. version.

Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, selections in English (trans. Jesse Zeldin), online.

4. Religious and political struggle

Milton, *Samson Agonistes* (online: Dartmouth College Milton Reading Room)

Anne Conway's *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, Edited by Allison P. Coudert and Taylor Corse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1996. (online, UoT)

5. The mysterious natural world

Thomas Burnet, *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684-90; London, 1759) – online (UoT); Bk. I:12; Bk. II: 1-3, 6, 10-11; Bk. III. 1. 12; Bk. IV:1,9,10.

John Woodward, *An Essay Towards a Natural History of the Earth* (1702) – online (UoT); Parts I, II, and VI.

6. Moral repugnance

Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, articles on “Manichéens” and “Pauliciens”, in Pierre Bayle, 1734 (2nd ed.), *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr Peter Bayle*, trans. P. Desmaizeaux, London: Knapton *et al.* – online (UoT)

7. The great claim

[G.W. Leibniz's *Theodicy*, Edited by E.M. Huggard; Gutenberg, online]

Leibniz, *The Shorter Leibniz Texts*, trans. ed. Lloyd Strickland (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 29-46; 91-118; 166-210.

Paul Rateau, “The Theoretical Foundations of the Leibnizian Theodicy and its Apologetic Aim”, in Larry M. Jorgenson and Samuel Newells (ed.) *New Essays on Leibniz' Theodicy* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), pp. 92-111.

G.W. Leibniz, “Causa Dei” (propositional summary of the *Theodicy*), pdf.

8. Sceptical sail-trimming and reaction

Pope, *Essay on Man* (online)

Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (online)

9. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755

[Luis A. Mendez-Victor et al. (eds.), *The 1755 Lisbon Earthquake: Revisited* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), cc. 1-9 on historical background (online)]

Voltaire, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (1756), McCabe Translation, online.
Candide (trans. Burton Raffel, Yale U. Press, 2005): online, UofT.

[B. Stillingfleet, “Some thoughts occasioned by the late earthquake”, 1750; online U.oT.]

Anonymous, “A Poem on the Late Earthquake in Lisbon” (1755) – online.

10. Reacting to reaction

Rousseau, *Lettre à Monsieur de Voltaire* (online)

[Theodore Braun and John B. Radner (eds.), *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions* (Oxford: Voltaire Fdn, 2005). pdf.]

John Wesley, “Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Earthquake at Lisbon” (London: 1756), online.

Ottobah Cugoana, “Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of Slavery” (London: 1787), online.

11. 18th-century Jewish Hasidism and beyond

[Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi, Tanya, at
http://www.chabad.org/library/tanya/tanya_cdo/aid/6237/jewish/Lessons-in-Tanya.html]

The holy fire : the teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto, Nehemia Polen. Northvale, N.J. : J. Aronson, c1994 (pdf selections)

[Susan Nieman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), chapters 1, 2, and opening of 3 (Lisbon). – recommended review (pdf)]

12. A contemporary reflection on theology and theodicy

Readings on the Civil War and Theology:

Thomas E. Jenkins, *The Character of God: Recovering the Lost Literary Power of American Protestantism* (Oxford, 1997), cc. 2, 5, 6, 10.

George C. Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: U. of N. Carolina Press, 2010), c. 14, “God’s Wrath”.

David Rolfs, *No Peace for the Wicked: Northern Protestant Soldiers and the American Civil War* (Knoxville: U. of Tennessee Press, 2009), c. 7, “Divine Judgment”.

Edward J. Blum, “‘To Doubt This Would Be To Doubt God’: Reconstruction and the Decline of Providential Confidence”, c. 11 in Ben Wright and Zachary W. Dresser (eds.), *Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address”

[Joseph de Maistre, “On Sacrifices”, cc.1-3, from *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, online ed. of *Collected Works*]

– these will be made available, but will depend on our progress in the previous weeks.

Some Recommended Readings (not required):

Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer (eds), *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy* (Toronto/Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto, 2001), online.

R. R. Dynes, “The Dialogue between Voltaire and Rousseau on the Lisbon Earthquake: The Emergence of a Social Science View”, *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 18:1 (2000), pp. 97-115.

Rita Goldberg, “Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Lisbon Earthquake,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 13 (1989): 1-20.

Accessibility

Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism

Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST Basic Degree Handbook

(www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks) and the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) Students will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges(www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

Style

The writing standard for the Toronto School of Theology is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), which is available at Crux Books. This course does not demand strict compliance with these rules, but assumes their general frame as a guidelines.

Example of our focus: Is this poem a case of theological irony?

Theodicy

By Czeslaw Milosz

Translated By Czeslaw Milosz And Robert Hass

No, it won't do, my sweet theologians.
Desire will not save the morality of God.
If he created beings able to choose between good and evil,
And they chose, and the world lies in iniquity,
Nevertheless, there is pain, and the undeserved torture of creatures,
Which would find its explanation only by assuming
The existence of an archetypal Paradise
And a pre-human downfall so grave
That the world of matter received its shape from diabolic power.

Czeslaw Milosz, "Theodicy" from The Collected Poems: 1931-1987. Copyright © 1988 by Czeslaw Milosz Royalties, Inc. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.