



# Course Syllabus Wycliffe College Toronto School of Theology

This description is intended to assist in the course approval process and to assist students in determining whether this course will help them achieve their educational objectives and the learning goals of their program. It is not a learning contract. The details of the description are subject to change before the course begins. The course syllabus will be available to the class at the beginning of the course.

## ***Course Identification***

Course Number : WY5651HF  
 Course Name: Theodicy and Early Modern Theology: The emergence of the historically concrete  
 Campus: St. George

## ***Instructor Information***

Instructor: Ephraim Radner Teaching Assistant:  
 E-mail: e.radner@wycliffe.utoronto.ca E-mail:  
 Office Hours:

## ***Course Prerequisites or Requisites***

Give the course code and title of any pre-requisite or requisite courses.

## ***Course Description***

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.

## ***Course Methodology***

Seminars, readings, précis, presentations, discussions, research paper

## ***Course Outcomes***

COURSE OUTCOMES	COURSE ELEMENT	PROGRAM OUTCOMES
By the end of this course, students	This outcome will be achieved through these	This course outcome corresponds to these aspects

	course elements:	of Wycliffe's statements of outcomes (MTS, MDiv)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will 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;</li> </ul>	Readings, seminar discussions	<b>PhD:</b> 1.1 <b>MA:</b> 1.1–1.3 <b>ThM:</b> 1.2 <b>DMin:</b> 1.1, 1.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• begin to develop a personal theological vision about these matters that is responsible to these classical and modern arguments;</li> </ul>	Readings, seminar discussions, research paper, presentations	<b>PhD:</b> 4.3.1 <b>MA:</b> n/a <b>ThM:</b> 1.1 <b>DMin:</b> 4.3.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn how to use basic tools for constructive theology that are rooted in historical theological disciplines;</li> </ul>	Seminar discussions, research paper, presentations	<b>PhD:</b> 2.5 <b>MA:</b> 2.5 <b>ThM:</b> 2.5 <b>DMin:</b> 2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn oral and written communication skills.</li> </ul>	Research paper, presentations	<b>PhD:</b> 2.5 <b>MA:</b> 2.5 <b>ThM:</b> 2.5 <b>DMin:</b> 2.5

## Course Resources

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### Required Course Texts

- Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (Oxford University Press, 2011)
- B. de las Casas, *A short account of the Destruction of the Indies* (New York: Penguin, 1992)
- Peter Admirand, *Amidst Mass Atrocity and the Rubble of Theology: Searching for a Viable Theodicy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

### Course Website(s)

- Blackboard <https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>. Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask Thomas Power for further help.

## ***Class Schedule***

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**Week 1 (September 14)** The Early Church.

*Readings:* 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; *Against Two Letters of Pelagians*, Book II. (online).

**Week 2 (September 21)** Classic Thomism.

*Readings:* Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

**Week 3 (September 28)** New encounters.

*Readings:* 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); 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).

**Week 4 (October 5)** Religious and political struggle.

*Readings:* 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, U of T).

**Week 5 (October 12)** Thanksgiving Monday, no class.

**Week 6 (October 19)** The mysterious natural world.

*Readings:* Thomas Burnet, *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684-90; London, 1759), (online, U of T); 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, U of T); Parts I, II, and VI.

**Week 7 (October 26)** Reading Week.

**Week 8 (November 2)** Moral repugnance.

*Readings:* 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, U of T).

**Week 9 (November 9)** The great claim.

*Readings:* G.W. Leibniz’s *Theodicy*, Edited by E.M. Huggard (Chicago, IL: Open Court), 1990.

**Week 10 (November 16)** Sceptical sail-trimming and reaction.

*Readings:* Pope, *Essay on Man* (online); Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (online).

**Week 11 (November 23)** The Lisbon earthquake of 1755

*Readings:* 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, U of T); B. Stillingfleet, “Some thoughts occasioned by the late earthquake”, 1750, (online U of T); Anonymous, “A Poem on the Late Earthquake in Lisbon” (1755), (online).

**Week 12 (November 30)** Reacting to reaction.

*Readings:* Rousseau, *Lettre à Monsieur de Voltaire*; Theodore Braun and John B. Radner (eds.), *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions* (Oxford: Voltaire Fdtn, 2005); John Wesley, “Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Earthquake at Lisbon” (London: 1756), (online).

**Week 13 (December 7)** 18th-century Jewish Hasidism and beyond.

*Readings:* Rabbi Schnuer Zalman of Liadi, Tanya, at [http://www.chabad.org/library/tanya/tanya\\_cdo/aid/6237/jewish/Lessons-in-Tanya.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/tanya/tanya_cdo/aid/6237/jewish/Lessons-in-Tanya.htm); Nehemia Polen, *The holy fire : the teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Northvale, NJ : 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].

**Week 14 (December 14)** A contemporary reflection on theology and theodicy.

*Readings:* Peter Admirand, *Amidst Mass Atrocity and the Rubble of Theology: Searching for a Viable Theodicy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012).

## Evaluation

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### Requirements

Readings, weekly critical précis (15%), presentations (done in pairs, 2x per semester – 25%), discussions (20%), and a final research paper (40%).

### Grading System

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalents	Grade Point	Grasp of Subject Matter
A+	90–100%	4.0	Profound & Creative
A	85–89%	4.0	Outstanding
A-	80–84%	3.7	Excellent
B+	77–79%	3.3	Very Good
B	73–76%	3.0	Good
B-	70–72%	2.7	Satisfactory
FZ	0–69%	0	Failure

Grades without numerical equivalent:

CR	Designates credit; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value
NCR	Designates failure; has no numerical equivalent, but has a grade point value of 0 and is included in the GPA calculation
SDF	Standing deferred (a temporary extension)
INC	Permanent incomplete; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value

WDR	Withdrawal without academic penalty
AEG	May be given to a final year student who, because of illness, has completed at least 60% of the course, but not the whole course, and who would not otherwise be able to convocate; has no numerical equivalent and no grade point value

### ***Policy on Assignment Extensions***

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which they are registered. Under **exceptional circumstances**, with the written permission of the instructor, students may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be requested no later than the last day of classes of the term in which the course is taken. The request form is available on the college website or from the Registrar’s office.

**One percentage point per day will be deducted on the course grade if an extension has not been requested by the stated deadline.**

**Course grades.** Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>) or college grading policy.

### ***Policies***

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***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 <http://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* (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>), a student who plagiarizes in this course. 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 ([http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library\\_Archives/Theological\\_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm](http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm)).

***Turnitin.com.*** Students may be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

***Other academic offences.*** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

**Writing Style.** The writing standard for the Toronto School of Theology is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), which is available at Crux Books.

## ***Bibliography***

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### ***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.

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.