

ANNA CASE-WINTERS
McCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
GOD, SUFFERING AND EVIL
T-430 Spring 2002

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

If God is good and all-powerful, why is there so much suffering and evil in the world? Various attempts to answer this question, (Augustine, Irenaeus, Process Theology) will be considered and evaluated as the theological problems which the question raises are explored.

SCHEDULE:

March 27

Introduction of Course Plan and Requirements

Lecture: God, Suffering and Evil: Defining the Problem and its Terms

April 3

Lecture: Traditional Approaches to the Consideration of Evil

Discussion: The Augustinian Type of Theodicy

Readings: Hick Ch. III-IV
Inbody, Ch. 1-2

April 10

Lecture: Catholic and Reformed Perspectives: The Free Will Defense

Discussion: Continuing The Augustinian Type of Theodicy (Group II)

Readings: Hick, Ch. V, VI, and VIII
Case-Winters, Preface, Introduction and Ch. 1-3
Davis, Ch. 3
Inbody, Ch.3

April 17

Lecture: Creaturely Existence as the Occasion for Evil:
Tragically Structured Finite Freedom

Discussion: The Irenaean Type of Theodicy (Group III)

Readings: Hick, Ch. IX-XI;
Davis, Ch. 2
Farley Ch. 1-2

April 24

Lecture: "Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion"

Discussion: The Protest Type of Theodicy (Group IV)

Readings: Farley, Ch. 3-5

Inbody, 4 and 5

Davis, Ch. 1 and 5

May 1

Lecture: A Reconsideration of Omnipotence

Discussion: The Process Type of Theodicy

Readings: Case-Winters, Ch. 4 - 7

Davis, Ch. 4

Inbody, 7-8

May 8

Moral and Natural Evil

Readings: Review pertinent readings in preparation for disputation and do independent reading for final paper.

Small group disputation question is "Whether a natural disaster (i.e. the sudden destruction of our universe) or a human catastrophe (i.e. Auschwitz, nuclear holocaust) is compatible with the existence of a deity who is utterly good and utterly powerful."

May 15

Freedom and Power

Readings: Review pertinent readings in preparation for disputation and do independent reading for final paper.

Small group disputation question: Whether or not human freedom can account for all evil in the world and is compatible with affirming God as utterly sovereign.

May 22

History and Eschatology

Readings: Review pertinent readings in preparation for disputation and do independent reading for final paper.

Small group disputation question: Whether the claim that world process is teleological (directional) and is moving toward a divinely ordained end solves the problem of theodicy.

May 29

Closing arguments...

In small groups share (10 minute limit) an outline of your final paper and your preliminary insights into the relation of God, suffering, and evil.

Course Evaluation

TEXTBOOKS:

Case-Winters, Anna. God's Power: Traditional Understandings and Contemporary Challenges. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.

Davis, Stephen, ed. Encountering Evil. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.

Farley, Wendy. Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.

Hick, John. Evil and the God of Love. New York: Harper & Row, 1978

Inbody, Tyron. The Transforming God. Westminster/John Knox. 1997.

Weisel, Elie. Night. New York: Bantam Books, 1960.

REQUIREMENTS and GRADING:

1. Class preparation, attendance, and participation. It is expected that students come to all classes having read the assigned materials and well prepared to engage in informed discussion. (30% of grade).
2. Leadership of discussion of the readings. The class will be divided into groups for this purpose. The group is charged with offering a reflective moment at the beginning of the next class. This could be a prayer, scripture, song, or reading/reflection of some kind. (Within a five minutes or less range). The group will also provide (a very brief) summation of the argument of the thinkers we are reading and three or four questions that will promote interesting and relevant discussion. (10% of grade)
3. Participation in a class field trip to the Holocaust Museum in Skokie (to be arranged) and completion of the related writing assignment due **Wednesday after the visit** (10% of grade). Please finish reading Night by Elie Wiesel prior to the field trip. Written Assignment: A response (@ one page, single-spaced) to the experience of the Museum .Let these questions guide you:
 1. The exhibit/picture that moved me most was.... Because....
 2. My thinking about the nature/reality of evil was illumined in the following way(s)....
 3. If asked where is God in all of this, I would want to say....
4. A 10-15 page paper on the following question: "In what sense (if any) can God's unlimited power and goodness be affirmed given the pervasive presence of evil in world process and world history?" For this paper the student should make use of the attached reading list for additional

resourcing beyond the textbooks for the course. The paper is due **May 29, if you are a senior the paper is due May 22.** (50% of grade).