

NT8365: EVIL, SUFFERING, AND DEATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Perkins, Spring 2017

Dr. Jaime Clark-Soles

214-768-2027

jaimecs@smu.edu (best way to reach me)

Course Description:

In this course we will explore views on evil, suffering, death, and afterlife evinced by various New Testament authors. Questions to be asked of our texts include:

- Who's to blame for ESD, if anyone?
- How are ESDA conceptualized?
- How does the view presented by each author compare to her or his milieu?
- What "solutions" for ESD are envisioned?
- How does all of this relate to our own day?

NOTE: Both Southern Methodist University and your instructor reserve the right to make modifications in content, schedule, and requirements as necessary to promote the best education possible within prevailing conditions affecting this course.

Course Goals:

- 1) To gain knowledge of some New Testament views of ESDA
- 2) To consider if and how those views inform contemporary views of ESDA
- 3) To ponder what resources one might employ if asked the question: "What does the New Testament say about evil, suffering, death and afterlife?" In the course I hope to model that all of the following are useful resources:
 - the Bible
 - dialogue with and/or critique of the Bible
 - tradition
 - dialogue with and/or critique of tradition
 - the experience of others
 - your own experience
 - experience as portrayed through the arts, including film
 - meditation

Required Texts

- New Revised Standard Version Bible.
- Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus*. 2011.
- Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*. New York: Galilee, 1999.
- Jaime Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife in the New Testament*. T&T Clark, 2006.
- Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*. Eerdmans, 1987.

- Jennifer Sutton Holder and Jann Aldredge-Clanton, *Parting: a Handbook for Spiritual Care Near the End of Life*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Sharon Baker, *Razing Hell*. Westminster John Knox Press. 2010.
- Philip Simmons, *Learning To Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life*. Bantam, 2003.
- Marie Fortune, *Keeping the Faith*. 1995.

Required Articles on Reserve

We will use a number of articles and excerpts from books. All of these readings are available either on e-reserve at Bridwell or the course website on Canvas.

Course Requirements

1. Dostoevsky assignment. **Due Mar. 23 by 5:30 pm via email and in hard copy**. After reading the chapters entitled “Rebellion” and “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,” in *The Brothers Karamazov*, write an essay response (750-900 words) that includes **TWO or THREE** of the following four options:

- Summarize Ivan’s main points. What part of his argument can you sympathize with from your own experience and knowledge?
- Summarize the Cardinal’s position. What part of his argument can you sympathize with from your own experience and knowledge?
- Summarize Jesus’ position. What part of his argument can you sympathize with from your own experience and knowledge?
- Summarize Alexei’s position. What part of his argument can you sympathize with from your own experience and knowledge?

The goal here is to enter into each different character’s perspective sympathetically for a moment (even if it goes against your own sensibilities).

2. Book Review. 750-1000 words. **Due by 5:30 pm via email and in hard copy on May 11**. Choose a book from the list at the end of the syllabus. If you want to choose a book not on the list, please consult with the professor first.

Basic Book Review Guidelines

The critical book review should include each of the following items:

- 1) the thesis/intentions of the author;
- 2) a brief summary of the book’s contents;
- 3) the strengths of the book;
- 4) the weaknesses of the book;
- 5) the book’s implications for further study, if any;

6) an evaluation of the work in terms of its ethical value; that is, what I call the "So what?" dimension of the work. Put differently, how might deep engagement with the book affect us, if at all?

3. Movie review on one movie listed below. You can make a case for another movie if you see fit. You may want to arrange to watch the movies in groups. See the "Movie Review Guidelines" on the course webpage. You can submit it to me only or you can also post it to Blackboard. 500-650 words. **Due by April 21 at 5:30 pm in email and hardcopy form.**

- *The Sweet Hereafter*
- *Hotel Rwanda*
- *Crash*
- *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. Especially if you are interested in Disability Studies.
- *The Fault in Our Stars*. Especially if you are interested in Disability Studies.

Basic Movie Review Guidelines

- a. Write a brief summary of the movie's plot.
- b. Comment upon one or two aspects of the film that gripped, frustrated, inspired, or provoked you in some way and explain why. It can be a positive, negative, or simply "interesting" aspect.
- c. What do you take to be the strengths and weaknesses of the movie?

If you want to learn to review movies with more expertise, see Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, 2010.

4. Wink paper. A paper on your experience of a power/principality in relation to Walter Wink and the New Testament. You will e-mail this paper to those assigned to your small group as well as a copy to the professor. 800-1000 words. **Due to professor and your small group via e-mail by noon on April 19.** Guidelines will be provided in class.

5. Summative paper. Final essay that includes along the way answers to the following: Name an issue, problem, or question that has captivated you in some way this semester. What was new to you? What was confirmed for you? How has your mind changed, if at all? Related to the issue, what questions have been raised for you that deserve further reflection? What resources most influenced you over the semester on the subject? What are 2-3 other resources and/or next steps you'd like to explore further to help you deepen your thinking on the subject? How might your learning affect your theology? How might it influence the way you minister to others? (5-6 pp., double-spaced). **Due at 5.30 pm, May 11 via email and in hard copy.**

6. Creative Project. **Due at 5:30 pm May 11 via email and in hard copy.**

“Against the ruin of the world, there is only one defense: the creative act.”
Kenneth Rexroth.

One creative project related to the subject matter of the course will be shared with the class at the end of the course. Just to get you thinking, examples in the past have included dramatic pieces, original poetry, visual arts productions, musical compositions, a short story, and a cake decorated with relevant symbols. No sermons allowed. Why not calligraphy, molding something out of clay, or breaking out the fingerpaints? The options are limited only by your imagination. Students should consult with me by **Apr. 6** regarding their choice. You will present your project to the group during the scheduled time of the Final Exam. You will need to provide a handout of **at least one single-spaced page** to each member of the class that orients them to your project, its genesis, the process, and, most importantly, how the project relates to our course.

7. “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercises. When you see this exercise listed, please do the following each time:

- Develop a list of 3 quotable quotes that represent key insights for you with a brief explanation of why each is significant to you. Our lists will serve as a basis for our discussion. I have in mind 1 single-spaced page.

8. Class participation.

Consistent attendance is expected. Our topic is important and relevant, but also challenging. To be successful, the course will require thoughtful input from each of you. You should come to class fully prepared, having read and reflected upon the assigned readings. For each reading, use the following to make notes in preparation for class discussion:

- a. What are the main points presented by the author? Give a brief summary.
- b. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the material?
- c. What deserves further thought or discussion and why?

At the end of this syllabus, you will find a Class Participation self-assessment page. You will record a grade for yourself for each class and submit the assessment to the professor at the final exam.

9. Leading Group: Please pick one of the days to volunteer to lead the group discussion. It can be on Verhey or you can choose another assigned reading/subject in consultation with the professor.

Course Evaluation

Your grade will be based on the following:

- Dostoevsky assignment: 5%
- Questions/Quotes: 15%
- Powers/principality paper: 10%

- 1 book review: 15%
- 1 movie review: 15%
- Final paper: 15%
- Creative Project: 10%
- Class participation: 10%
- Leading Group: 5%

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

March 23

Introduction: The Problem of Evil, Suffering, and Death

1. READ: Fyodor Dostoevsky, “Rebellion” and “The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor” in *The Brothers Karamazov*. My favorite translation is that done by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (North Point Press, 1990), though you may read from any translation.
2. READ: Thomas F. Tracy, “Why Do the Innocent Suffer?” in *Why Are We Here?* (Edited by Ronald F. Thiemann and William C. Placher; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 40-55. Canvas.

Dostoevsky Assignment Due

March 30

Student Leader:

I. Backgrounds

1. READ: Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Reprint edition 1994, Part I (pp. 1-49). BB.

Ø For Chapter 1: “Theogony” refers to a mythical account of the birth or creation of a god; “cosmogony,” to an account of the birth or creation of the world; “Ugaritic” refers to the language, culture, myths, etc. of the indigenous people of Canaan (cosmogonic myths tell of El, Baal, etc.; by contrast, Babylonian cosmogony tells of Marduk and Tiamat); Chaotkampf refers to mythical belief that the world came into being through divine combat and the subduing of the forces of chaos (as with Marduk and Tiamat).

Question: What is the traditional view of “the basic idea of Israelite religion” according to Kaufmann, and what is Levenson’s critique of that view? What difference does the controversy make for how ancient peoples (or we) think about the ongoing presence of evil powers in the world?

Ø For chapter 2: What does Levenson mean when he refers to “the precariousness of creation?” Do the texts he cites make his point effectively? What is the “underlying tension” that Levenson sees in these texts, and what is the “dialectic of realism and hope” to which he refers? For chapter 3: Who is the chief adversary in the “Isaianic Apocalypse,” in Levenson’s view, and what are some of the theological implications of this passage? What are the similarities and differences between laments such as Psalms 74 and 89 and “apocalyptic eschatology?” What does Levenson mean by his reference (p.

40) to “the congruity of the psychology of the rabbis with their eschatology and philosophy of history?” ** (Thanks to Susan Garrett for the questions).

2. Skim: Jaime Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife in the New Testament* (T&T Clark, 2006), Introduction and Chapter 1, “Backgrounds.”

II. Satan

Student Leader:

1. READ: “Satan and the Powers,” chapter 4 in Susan Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*. Canvas.

- Recommended:
Garrett, “Angels and Death,” chapter 6 in *No Ordinary Angel*.
Touched by Angel “Psalm 151” Episode.
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0732108/>

2. Read: Verhey, chs. 1-2

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise

March 31

Gendered Evil: Evil Eve?

Student Leader:

1. READ: Genesis 1:1-6:8

2. READ: Phyllis Trible, “A Love Story Gone Awry,” in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Canvas. A dense read.

3. READ: Will Campbell, “On Silencing Our Finest,” in *Christianity and Crisis*, 45 S 16 1985, pp. 340-342. Canvas.

4. Verhey, chs. 3-5

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise

April 1 9-4:30

Part 1: Paul

Student Leader:

1. Skim: Clark-Soles, *Death*, ch. 2, “Paul.”

2. READ: Galatians; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4, 5, 12;

3. Skim Romans; Read ch. 7

4. READ Verhey, chs. 6-7

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise

II. Heaven/Hell

Student Leader:

1. Recommended: View *Hellbound?* Spend time on website:

<http://www.hellboundthemovie.com>

2. READ: Sharon Baker, *Razing Hell*.

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise

April 6

Student Leader:

The Gospel of John

1. READ or listen to: The Gospel of John

2: READ: Clark-Soles, *Death*, ch. 3: “Death and Afterlife in the Fourth Gospel.”

Recommended: *The Gospel of John*, DVD, Buena Vista Home Entertainment. Starring Henry Ian Cusick.

3. READ: Verhey, chs. 8-11

4. Disability and the Bible. Read chs. related to John 5 and John 9 in Clark-Soles, *Reading John for Dear Life*. Canvas.

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise

Proposal Due for creative project

April 20

Wink/Powers

1. READ: Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Galilee, 1999).

2. Power/principality discussion.

3. READ: Marie Fortune, *Keeping the Faith*

- Develop a list of 3 quotable quotes that represent key insights for you with a brief explanation of why each is significant to you. Our lists will serve as a basis for our discussion (1 page).

4. Read Verhey, ch. 12.

Wink paper due via e-mail to professor and your small group by noon on April 19.

April 21

Student Leader:

Losing those We Love

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise.

1. READ: *Learning to Fall*.
2. READ: *Lament for a Son*.
3. READ: *Parting*.
4. Verhey, chs. 13-15.

Movie Review due.

April 22

Student Leader:

Part I: Revelation

1. READ: Revelation
2. READ: Ian Boxall, *Revelation: Vision and Insight*, pp. 1-47. Canvas.
 - “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise.
3. In Class: Disciple Bible Study video on Revelation.
4. In Class: Image of the Beast video.

Part II: Play the Ball

- “Quotes, Questions, and Insights” exercise on ONE of the first three below (divided among the class).

1. READ: Gregory Knox Jones, *Play the Ball Where the Monkey Drops It*, chap. 9. Canvas.
2. READ: David F. Ford, “Knocked Out of Shape,” *The Shape of Living: Spiritual Directions for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 159-77. Canvas.
3. READ: Verhey, ch. 16-17.
4. Skim: Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife*, “Conclusion.”

May 11: Communal Final

- Final Paper due.
- Creative Project due.
- Book review due.

Books that may be of further interest (many others under Resources on the hellboundthemovie.com website)

- Deanna A. Thompson, *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World*. 2016.
- Ira Byock, *Dying Well: Peace and Possibilities at the End of Life*. 1997.
- Rev. Dr. Carla Cheatham. *Hospice Whispers: Stories of Life*. 2015.
- Marilyn McCord Adams. *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. 1999. Technical and dense. For a student with a bent toward analytical philosophy.
- Mark Larrimore, editor. *The Problem of Evil. Dense*, big book. A student could choose a number of essays or a couple of sections of the book to focus on. Looks fascinating.
- Mitch Albom, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. 2003.
- Johan Christiaan Beker, *Suffering and Hope*. 1994.
- Audrey Coulombis, *Getting Near to Baby*. 2001.
- Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*. 2007.
- Joan D. Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*. 2003.
- Philip Gulley and James Mulholland, *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person*. HarperSanFrancisco, Reprint 2004.
- Craig Hill, *In God's Time: The Bible and the Future*. Eerdmans, 2002.
- Joyce Hutchison and Joyce Rupp, *May I Walk You Home? Courage and Comfort for Caregivers of the Very Ill*. 2009.
- Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. 2004.
- Harold Kushner, *Who Needs God?* 2002.
- C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*. 2009. Originally published in the 1940s.
- C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. Originally published in 1961.
- Andrew Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*. 1995.
- Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, Matthew Linn, *Good Goats: Healing Our Image of God*. Paulist Press, 1994.
- Terence Nichols, *Death and Afterlife: A Theological Introduction*. 2010.
- Randy Pausch, *The Last Lecture*. 2008.
- Virginia Stem Owens, *Caring for Mother: A Daughter's Long Goodbye*. 2007.
- M. Scott Peck, *In Heaven as On Earth: A Vision of the Afterlife*. 1998.
- Constance and Daniel Pollock, compilers. *Visions of the Afterlife: Heaven, Hell and Revelation as Viewed by the World's Great Writers*. Word, 1999.
- Lewis Richmond, *Healing Lazarus: A Buddhist's Journey from Near Death to New Life*. 2002.
- Alice Siebold, *The Lovely Bones*. Available in various media, including e-book. 2009.
- Raquel St. Clair, *Call and Consequences: A Womanist Reading of Mark*. 2008.
- Barbara Brown Taylor, *God in Pain: Teaching Sermons on Suffering*. Abingdon, 1998.
- Peter Trachtenberg, *The Book of Calamities: Five Questions about Suffering and its Meaning*. 2008.
- Phyllis Vos Wezeman, Anna Liechty, Kenneth Wezeman, *Wipe the Tears: 30 Children's Sermons on Death*. Pilgrim Press, 2004.

- Natalie Kertes Weaver, *The Theology of Suffering and Death: An Introduction for Caregivers*. 2013.
- Frederick Schmidt, *The Dave Test*. 2013.
- Rebekah L. Miles, *When the One You Love is Gone*. 2012.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

SMU DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Southern Methodist University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) at 214-768-1470 or www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Then you must schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4)

MINORITY CONCERNS AND THE PERKINS CURRICULUM

In 1975 the Perkins Senate passed resolutions which bear on the relation of the Perkins curriculum to this school's common concern for the status of ethnic minority groups and of women both in education for ministry and in the ministry itself. The following statement summarizes these resolutions with respect to all courses except those in the area of Ministry.

1. Instructors and students alike are urged to use inclusive language, images and metaphors that will give full and positive value to both the past contributions and the future prospects of ethnic minorities and women in the church and in society at large.
2. Instructors and students alike are urged to give sensitive consideration to the role of images from a predominantly white and male culture in shaping both the language and concepts of Christian theology and the models and methods of Christian ministry that are widely current today.
3. Instructors are urged to make every effort to provide--in the syllabi, assignments and formats of their courses--opportunities for women students and students from ethnic minority groups (1) to study the functions of ministry with particular reference to their own status or tradition in the life of the church, (2) to practice the functions of ministry (when practice is an element in a course) in settings which reflect or, if possible, arise from their own status or tradition in the life of the church, (3) to receive evaluation of their practice of the functions of ministry from persons who are not only knowledgeable about and skilled in those functions, but also share their special status or tradition in the life of the church, and (4) to observe the practice of persons who, as women or as members of ethnic minority groups, provide models of effective ministry which are immediately

relevant to the special status or tradition of women or members of ethnic minority groups in the church.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment: “Sexual harassment, any abusive use of authority that emphasizes a person's sexuality or sexual identity, is sex discrimination and, as such, is specifically prohibited in all its forms, explicit or implicit, in relationships among all members of the SMU community. Sexual harassment includes sexual inferences or overt advances on the part of employers, employees, co-workers, teachers, and students insofar as toleration or rejection of such behavior affects the evaluation of the harassed person's performance or the performance itself. Specific forms of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, generalized sexist remarks or behavior, inappropriate and offensive but essentially sanction-free sexual advances, solicitation of sexual activity or sex-related behavior by promise of rewards, coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment, and sexual crimes and misdemeanors. It is a serious breach of professional ethics for a teacher to initiate or acquiesce in a sexual relationship with a student who is under the personal supervision of the faculty member. Therefore, Southern Methodist University prohibits consensual sexual relationships between a faculty member and a student enrolled in a course taught by the faculty member or whose academic work is supervised by the faculty member. This applies even when both parties appear to have consented to the relationship. A faculty member who is or has been involved in a consensual sexual relationship with a person should not enter into a student/teacher relationship with that person.” (SMU Faculty Handbook, p. 17)

Written Assignment Guidelines

	Excellent	Good	Needs Serious Improvement
Depth of Thought and Analysis	Paper is constructed in a logical and coherent fashion. Conclusions flow from a well-executed plan, in succinct and meaningful statements.	Topic is stated clearly. Remarks show a degree of analysis. Some areas of the paper lack supporting and rational support.	Topic is vague and under developed. Paper lacks the level of effort for original graduate work.
Synthesis and Congruency	Paper is well integrated and flows as one complete argument. Paper flows from general ideas to specific conclusions.	Sections of the paper connect; however, not all sections or paragraphs fall in a natural or logical order.	The paper appears to have no direction, with subtopics appearing disjointed.
Thoroughness	The appropriate content is covered in depth without being redundant.	Essential material is not covered to the degree required to explain the topic thoroughly.	Major sections are omitted, glossed over, or unnecessarily repeated.
Clarity of Writing and Mechanics	Writing is crisp, clear, and succinct. No spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors are made.	Unnecessary words and ambiguous statements are made. Meaning is unclear in parts of the paper. Some spelling and grammar errors are made.	It is hard to know what the writer is trying to express. Writing is convoluted. Misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and improper punctuation are frequent.

Format:

All written assignments should include the word count along with your name.

- Times New Roman
- 12-point font
- 1 inch margins
- Double-spaced
- ENDNOTES, NOT footnotes

Submission requirements:

All written work is due to the professor's e-mail box by the start of the class period unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus. Bring a hard copy to class as well. Any work not in the professor's box e-mail box by then will be considered late. Be sure to send it early enough that you are not hampered by the vagaries of cyberspace.

Late Paper (Assignment) Policy

1. Late Assignments and Incompletes:

The clear expectation at Perkins is that examinations are to be taken when given and papers are to be completed on time. Papers for this class are due at the beginning of the class on the date assigned. Those that are turned in after the beginning of class will be penalized according to the following guidelines:

- Papers turned in 0–2 days late will be penalized 10 points off their final grade.

- Papers turned in 3–6 days late will be penalized an additional 10 points off their final grade.
- Papers turned in after 6 days will receive a grade no higher than 50 (F).
- After 14 days, no credit at all will be given for the assignment.
- All late papers are ineligible for comments.

A grade of “Incomplete (I)” can be granted only by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Refer to the Perkins Catalogue for details about the granting of an “Incomplete.”

Note: The last day for the submission of all written work at Perkins is **May 11, 2017**.

Return of work:

Expect a two-week turnaround on written work submitted to the professor on time.