# **THE PROBLEM OF EVIL:** Theodicies from the Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences and World Religions

Course Number: Religious Studies 2030.01

Institution: Webster University

Instructor: Dr. Robert Goss <<u>gossro@webster.edu</u>>

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then God is impotent? Is God able but not willing? Then God is malevolent. Is God both able and willing? Whence then evil? ....Epicurus

A world allowed to make itself through the evolutionary exploration of potentiality is a better world than one produced ready-made by divine fiat. In such an evolving world there must be malfunctions and blind alleys...John Polkinghorne

**Requirements:** Class participation (5%), readings, three writing assignments on specific course questions (15% each), and a final research paper (50%). The final research paper (10-15 pages) will examine some facet of theodicies and the model of the divine. Students may write and present precises on recommended readings for extra credit.

# **Required Texts:**

William Cenker (ed), *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, St. Paul, Paragon Press, 1997.

Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (new edition) New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.

Elaine Pagels, The Origin of Satan, New York Vintage Books, 1995.

Richard Swinburne, Providence and the Problem of Evil, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.

Lyle Watson, Dark Nature: A Natural History of Evil, New York, Harperperennial, 1995.

Mark William Worthing, *God, Creation and Contemporary Physics*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996.

Plus book chapters and articles on reserve.

Subscription to META list serve and Internet Assignments

## All Recommended Books and Articles on Reserve at the Eden Webster Library:

Additional Resource: Zygon

## **Classes:**

## Unit 1 Why Evil? Why a Science and Religion approach to theodicy?

What is theodicy? Why theodicy as a subject? How have had science and religion historically interact?

Why religion, natural and social scientific approaches to the question of theodicy?

Can the natural and social sciences provide a means of revising religious theodicies?

Can we develop a dialogue and integrationist model of relating science and religion?

January 18- Introduction: Religion & Science and the Nature of Evil

January 20- Science and Religion

PBS Video: Faith and Reason

Worthing, pp. 1-37

Recommended:

Ian Barbour, Religion and Science, HarperSanFrancisco, pp. 77-161.

January 25- Worthing, pp. 38-94

Swinburne, "The Need for Theodicy," Providence, pp. 3-29.

# Unit 2 Do cosmological processes prefigure evil?

Why is there something rather than nothing?

Can God be found in the passage of the universe from its origin to the distant future?

Why doesn't contingency or chaos prevent novelty and order from emerging?

Are black holes physical expressions of evil?

Is entropy on a cosmic scale a prefiguring of evil?

Why does God function in a world where disorder exercises such a significant role?

Can God survive the consummation of the universe?

January 27- Creation from Nothing vs. Creation from Something

Video: Universe 2000: Beyond the Millennium

Worthing, pp. 95-159

Recommended:

Philip Hefner, "God and Chaos: The Demiurge Versus Ungrund," Zygon, 19:4, December 1984, pp. 469-485.

January 30- Quantum Physics, Chaos and Complexity

Lecture: Dr. William Eidson, "The Quantum Universe"

Worthing, pp. 160-210

John R. Albright, "Physics: What Does One Need to Know?," *Zygon*, vol. 31:3, September 1996, pp. 487-496.

Recommended:

Diamruid O'Murchu, *Quantum Theology*, New York, Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998, pp. 23-38

Alan Wallace, *Choosing Reality A Buddhist View of Physics and the Mind*, Ithaca, Snow Lion, 1996, pp. 70-118

February 1- Entropy and Evil

Robert J. Russell, "Entropy and Evil, Zygon, 19:4, December 1984, pp. 449-468.

# Unit 3 Natural Selection and Selfish Genes

After Darwin, can religion hold that God is a God of power and might?

Why is nature ordered, yet open to disorder? What are the functions of evolutionary blind alleys or malfunctions?

Why did life have to take so long to be come complex, to be endowed with self-consciousness?

What is the role of death within nature? The extinction of species?

Why does God not intervene to prevent pain and suffering?

Can we speak of design without a designer within evolution? What model of the divine would result from speaking only of design?

Does evil spring from chance and the freedom that chance allows?

Is there a divine lure or eros within evolutionary creation?

February 3- Evolution and Natural Selection

Dawkins, pp. 1-45

Richard Kropf, "Theodicy in an Evolutionary Perspective," http://freeway.net/~ dialogue/ dial4.htm

February 8- Video: Genetics: Patterns of Diversity

Dawkins, pp.46-108

George Williams, "Huxley's Evolution and Ethics in Sociobiological Perspective," *Zygon*, 23, no. 4, pp. 383-407.

Recommended:

See the responses of Ralph Burhoe and Michael Ruse to Williams' article in that same edition of *Zygon* 

John Haught, God After Darwin, Boulder, Westview, 1999, pp. 45-56.

February 10- "Evolutionary Stable Strategy"

Dawkins, pp. 109-165

Recommended:

Holmes Rolston, Science and Religion, New York, Random House, 1987, pp. 133-146

Haught, God After Darwin, pp. 57-80.

February 15- Selfish Genes

Lecture: Dr. Andrew Davis, "Natural Selection or Genetic Drift or?"

Dawkins, pp. 166-201

Recommended:

Haught, God After Darwin, pp. 81-104.

February 17- Memes: Cultural Equivalence of Genes?

## BBC Video: The Soul of the Universe

Dawkins, pp. 202-266

Recommended:

See Gilkey's response to Dawkins' selfish genes: Langdon Gilkey, in *Biology, Ethics, and the Origin of Life*, ed. by Holmes Rolston, Boston, Jones and Bartlett, pp. 163-190.

Arthur Peacocke, "God's Interaction with the World," *Theology for a Scientific Age*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993, pp. 135-182.

## **Unit 4 Sociobiology and Evil**

Does natural selection determine the way we are? Effective reproduction? Enthusiastic nepotism?

Do our ancestors' division of their world into friends and enemies express biological drives?

Is violence and aggression endemic to human nature? Do ethnic, racial, religious, and national social divisions express biological imperatives?

Does nature need to be redeemed?

In what sense may human morality contribute to the evolution of the universe?

Can the social evolution of altruism overcome the directionality of selfish genes?

What is the role of religion in creating ideals of altruism? The role of the sciences?

Why does God require the human race to go through a painful learning and developmental process?

February 22- The Ecology of Evil

Watson, pp. ix-88.

Recommended:

E. O. Wilson, "From Genes to Culture," *Consilience*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998, pp. 125-163.

February 24- Natural Evil? The Ethology of Evil

Watson, pp. 89-140

Recommended:

David Oates, "Social Darwinism and Natural Theodicy," *Zygon*, vol. 23, no 4, pp.439-434.

Niles Eldrege, "Mass Extinction and Human Responsibility," in *Biology, Ethics, and Origins of Life*, pp. 63-88.

E. O. Wilson, "The Fitness of Human Nature," Consilience, pp. 164-180.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Paper Due

February 29- Human Nature: The Anthropology and Psychology of Evil

Watson, pp. 141-222

Recommended:

E. O. Wilson, "Religion and Ethics," Consilience, pp 238-265.

Langdon Gilkey, "Biology and Theology on Human Nature," in *Biology, Ethics, and the Origins of Life*, by. H. Rolston, pp. 163-190.

Unit 5 Naturalist Views of Evil

Are natural disasters evil or rearrangements of life on earth?

What is the role of pain and suffering within the animal world? Within human life?

Does tragedy adequately replace the concept of natural evil?

Does survival at the genetic, individual, and social levels relativizes goodness?

Is there a hidden pattern behind evil within nature? Is evil nature's builder? How can this be reconciled with theistic models?

March 2- Evil Nature?

Watson, pp. 240-292

Swinburne, "Natural Evil," Providence, pp. 160-192

Holmes Rolston, "Does Nature Need to be Redeemed?," Zygon, vol. 29, no. 2, 1994, pp. 205-229.

Recommended:

Gary Emberger, "Theological and Scientific Explanations for the Origin and Purpose of Natural Evil," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, vol. 46, Spring1994, pp. 150-158.

John Cobb, "Befriending an Amoral Nature," Zygon, vol. 23, no. 4, 1988, pp. 431-436.

March 7- Pain as a Structure of the World: Theodicy of Natural Evil

Holmes Rolston, "Suffering," Science and Religion, pp. 286-293.

John Haught, "Evolution, Tragedy, and Hope," in *Science & Theology: The New Consonance*, ed. by. T. Peters, Boulder, Westview Press, 1998, pp. 228-243.

D. K. Chester, "The Theodicy of Natural Disasters," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 51:4, 1998, pp. 485-505.

March 9- Contemporary Approaches to Evil

**PBS Video:** Facing Evil (Bill Moyers interview of Maya Angelou, Philosopher Philip Hallie, Jewish scholar Raul Hilberg, Samuel D. Proctor & Barbara Jordan at a Conference on Evil)

Pagels, pp. 3-34

# March 13-17- Spring Break

Unit 6 Monotheistic Theodicies

How do Jewish, Christian, and Islamic aetiologies of evil, suffering, and death compare?

Can the Christian notion of original sin be salvaged? Can it be reinterpreted as the patriarchal fall to violence? Are there biological reasons?

Does the myth of Satan express sociobiological imperatives or what Harold Blooms calls the "Lucifer principle"?

How do we envision sin on a personal, social, and planetary scale?

How do we attempt to re-envision theodicies from Augustinian free-will defense? From the Irenean soul-making? Correlate them with scientific models of theodicies?

How do we envision social evil and environmental oppression? Biocide and ecocide on a scale unimagined?

What is the meaning of human tragedy and suffering?

Can we move beyond the divine persuasion (process) and divine coercion (classical) models of God? Divine guidance? A model from the future?

What can scientific theodicies contribute to the revision of theistic theodicies?

March 21- Mythic Narratives on the Origin of Evil, Suffering, and Death: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Interpretations of Genesis 2

Edward T. Oakes, "Original Sin: A Disputation," *First Things*, vol.87, November 1998, pp. 16-24.

Pagels, pp. 35-111

Recommended:

Philip Hefner, "Biological Perspectives on Original Sin," *The Human Factor*, pp. 123-142.

M. Fox, "Meanings of Sin from Theologians and Biologists," *Sins of the Flesh, Blessings of the Flesh*, New York, Harmony Books, 1999. pp. 137-160.

March 23- The Origin of Satan: Mythic Representations of Cosmic Evil

Pagels, pp.112-184

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due

March 28 & March 30- Jewish Solutions to Theodicy

Cenkner, pp. 3-42

Neusner, pp. 92-119

March 30- Monotheistic Solutions: Christianity

Cenkner, pp. 43-69, pp. 183-198

Swinburne, pp. 30-48

Recommended Highly:

Swinburne, pp. 49-124

April 4- Augustinian and Irenean Theodicies: Free Will and Soul-Making

Swinburne, pp. 49-110

John Hick, "The Two Theodicies: Contrasts and Agreements," in *Evil and the God of Love*,

London, MacMillan, 1966, pp. 262-276.

Recommended:

Hick, pp.43 -75 and pp. 207-241.

April 6- Mythologies of Sin: Scapegoating and Plagues

Beozzo & Elizondo (ed), The Return of the Plague, pp. 9-23

Swinburne, 111-159.

Recommended:

Read the chapter on the scapegoating of Jews: Jeffrey Richards, Sex, *Dissidence, and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages*, New York, Routledge, 1995, 88-115.

April 11- Evil as Social and Environmental Oppression, the Possibility of Geocide?

Swinburne, 223-252.

James Poling, "Defining Evil," *Deliver Us From Evil: Resisting Racial and Gender Oppression*, Minneapolis, Augsburg-Fortress Press, 1996, pp. 110-135.

April 13- Process Theology: Divine Persuasion or Divine Coercion or?

Lecture, Dr. Don Arthur, "Guiding Directions: A Response to the Process Theology"

Cenkner, pp.223-240

Peter H. Hare and Edward H. Madden, "Evil and Persuasive Power," *Process Studies*, vol. 21:1, Spring 1972, pp. 44-48.

David Ray, Griffin, *Evil Revisted: Responses and Recommendations*, SUNY, 1990, pp. 121-158.

Recommended:

Charles Hartshorne, "Whitehead and Berdyaev: Is There Tragedy in God," *Journal of Religion*, vol. 37:2, April 1957, pp. 71-84

April 18- Islamic Responses

Cenkner, pp. 70-98

Neusner, pp. 120-14

Unit 7 Karmic Theodicies

How do Buddhists and Hindus explain the origin of evil and suffering?

What does the decline of the dharma from the myth of a golden age? From a cosmic perspective?

Do the Buddhist notions of dependent origination and emptiness express a non-dualistic model for speaking of evolutionary design without a designer?

What can scientific theodicies contribute to the revision of theistic theodicies? Non-theistic theodicies?

April 20- Hindu Theodicies: Evil, Rebirth, and Liberation

Cenkner, pp. 116-155

Neusner, pp. 7-35

Recommended:

Bimal K. Matilal, "A Note on Samkara's Theodicy," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 20, 1992, pp. 363-376.

April 25- Buddhist Notions of Karma and Compassion

Video: Excerpts from Palden Gyatso, a Tibetan Buddhist monk imprisoned for 33 years in Chinese prisons

Cenkner, pp. 99-115.

Neusner, pp. 36-66

Recommended:

G. Obeyesekere, "Theodicy, Sin and Salvation in a Sociology of Buddhism," *Dialectic in Practical Religion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, in pp. 7-40.

Unit 8 Radical Evil: Antitheodicy, and Challenges to Models of the Divine

How do we re-envision theistic models from radical evil and suffering? Divine Impotence or Divine Apathy? Dynamic compassion?

How do we compare Jewish (tikkun ha-olam, renewal of the universe), Christian (divine suffering), and Buddhist (pratitya-samutpada, dependent origination/compassion) responses to the holocaust?

Can we create a model of theodicy encompassing scientific and religious theodicies?

April 27- The Trial of God

Wiesel, Night.

May 2- Divine Suffering? Divine Limitation? Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist Responses to the Evil of the Holocaust.

Masao Abe, "Dynamic Sunyata," in *Divine Emptiness and Historical Fullness*, ed. by C. Ives, *A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation with Masao Abe*, Trinity Press, 1995. pp. 50-92.

Richard Rubinstein, "Holocaust, Sunyata, and Holy Nothingness," in *Divine Emptiness*, pp. 93-112.

Highly Recommended:

Abe, "Kenotic God," in *The Empting God*, ed. by J. Cobb and C. Ives, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1990, pp. 9-61

Abe, "The Problem of the Holocaust," Emptying God, pp. 180-189.

Thomas Altizer, "Buddhist Emptiness and the Crucifixion of God," *Emptying God*, pp. 69-78.

Eugene Borowitz, Dynamic Sunyata and The God Whose Glory Fills, pp. 79-90.

Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed), Holocaust Theology, London, Lamp Press, 1989.

May 4- Re-envisioning the Model of the Divine

## **Research Papers: Due May 11**

Appendix A

## **Recommended Readings**

Marilyn McCord Adams & Robert Merrihew Adams, *The Problem of Evil*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Timothy Anders, *The Co-Existence of Evil: An Inquiry into the Ultimate Origins of Human Suffering*, Open Court Publishing Co., 1994.

Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, Harper San Francisco, 1997

Roy F. Baumeister, *Inside Human Cruelty and Violence*, New York, W. H. Freeman & Co., 1996.

Harold Bloom, *The Lucifer Principle: A Scientific Expedition into the Forces of History*, New York, Atlantic Monthly, 1997

Zachary Braiterman, (God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

Enest Becker, The Structure of Evil, New York, Free Press, 1968.

John H. Beckstrom, *Darwinism Applied: Evolutionary Paths to Social Goals*, Westport, Praeger, 1993.

John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Stephen T. Davis (ed), Encountering Evil, Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1981.

Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*, New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995.

Frans De Waal, Good Nature: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997.

Leonard W. Doob, *Panorama of Evil: Insights from the Behavioral Sciences*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1978.

Gillan Rosemary Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, New York, Cambridge University press, 1990. Edward Farley, *Good & Evil*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1990.

Matthew Fox, Sins of the Flesh, Blessings of the Flesh: Lessons for Transforming Evil in the Soul and Society, New York, Harmony Books, 1999.

R. Douglas Geivett, *Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theology*, Temple University Press, 1995.

Michael Gelvin, This Side of Evil, Marquette University Press, 1998.

Paul Gilbert, Human, Nature and Suffering, New York, The Guilford Press, 1992.

Langdon Gilkey, *Nature, Reality and the Sacred: The Nexus of Science and Religion*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993.

Roger S. Gottlieb (ed), Thinking the Unthinkable, New York, Paulist Press, 1990.

David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1976.

David Ray, Griffin, Evil Revisited: Responses and Recommendations, SUNY, 1990.

Peter Hare & Edward Madden, *Evil and the Concept of God*, Springfield, C.C. Thomas, 1968.

Albert Harper, *The Theodicy of Suffering*, San Francisco, Mellen Research University Press, 1990. (L)

Philip Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995.

Arthur L. Herman, *The Problem of Evil and Indian Thought*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.

John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, London, MacMillan, 1966.

Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed), *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996.

Carl Jung, Answer to Job, New York, Pastoral Psychology Group, 1955.

C.J. Jung, Murray Stein (ed), Jung on Evil, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996.

Richard W. Kropf, *Evil and Evolution: A Theodicy*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984.

T. O. Ling, Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1962.

Jane Maienshein & Michael Ruse (ed), *Biology and the Foundation of Ethics*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Bernard McGinn, *Anti-Christ: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, Harper San Francisco, 1994.

Mary Midgley, Beast and Man, revised edition, New York, Routledge, 1995.

Jurgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1973.

Jacob Neusner (ed), Evil and Suffering, Cleveland, The Pilgrim Press, 1999.

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (ed), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian traditions*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980.

Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Qunatum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics*, New York, Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998.

Paul Oppenheimer, *Evil and the Demonic: A New Theory of Monstrous Behavior*, New York, New York University Press, 1996.

David Parkin (ed), The Anthropology of Evil, New York, Basil Blackwell, 1985.

Arthur Peacocke, Theology for a Scientific Age, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993.

Ted Peters, *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society*, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

Ted Peters (ed), *Science & Theology: The New Consonance*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1998.

Norman Pittinger, Cosmic Love and Human Wrong, New York, Paulist Press, 1978.

Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978

Michael L. Peterson, God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues, Westview Press, 1998.

James Newton Poling, *Deliver US From Evil: Resisting Racial and Gender Oppression*, Minneapolis, Augsburg-Fortress Press, 1996.

John Polkinghorne, The Faith of a Physicist, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996.

John Polkinghorne, Science and Providence, UK, SPCK, 1989.

Stephen Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1994.

James Rachel, *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Social Darwinism*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1998.

Paul Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil, Boston, Beacon Press, 1967.

Holmes Rolston, *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey*, New York, Random House, 1987.

Holmes Rolston, *Genes, Genesis, and God*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

John R. Roth & Michael Berenbaum (ed), *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications*, New York, Paragon House, 1989.

Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, Ithaca, Cornel University Press, 1977.

Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy & Arthur R. Peacocke (ed), *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, (2nd edition) Vatican State, Vatican Observatory/CTNS, 1997.

John A. Sanford, Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality, New York, Crossroad, 1994.

Kathleen M. Sands, *Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1994.

Hans Schwarz, *Evil: A Historical and Theological Perspective*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995.

Ulrich Simon, A Theology of Auschwitz, London, Galloway, 1967. (L)

Dorothee Soelle, Suffering, Philadephia, Fortress Press, 1975.

John G. Stackhouse, *Can God Be Trusted: Faith and the Challenge of Evil*, Oxford University Press.

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context*, Albany, SUNY, 1988.

Terrence W. Tilley, *The Evils of Theodicy*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1991.

Thomas B. Tracy, *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

Jane Mary Trau, *The Co-Existence of God and Evil*, American University Studies, Peter Lang, 1991.

Peter Vardy, The Puzzle of Evil, M.E. Sharoe, 1997.

Allan Wallace, *Choosing Reality: A Buddhist View of Physics and the Mind*, Ithaca, Snow Lion, 1996.

Angela West, *Deadly Innocence: Feminism and the Mythology of Sin*, New York, Cassell, 1995.

Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality, Free Press, 1979.

Barry L. Whitney, *What Are They Saying about God and Evil?* New York, Paulist Press, 1989.

Barry L. Whitney, Evil and the Process God, New York, E. Mellen Press, 1985.

Edward Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1978.

Edward O. Wilson, *Consilence: The Unity of Knowledge*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Richard Wranghams & Dale Peterson, *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origin of Human Violence*, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Richard Worsley, *Human freedom and the Logic of Evil: Prolegomena to a Christian Theology of Evil*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1996.

Mark Wynn, God and Goodness: A Natural Theological Perspective, New York, Routledge, 1999.