

ST6510 – THE PROBLEM OF PAIN
RTS CHARLOTTE
SPRING 2022

I. GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

A. Contact Information

1. Instructor: Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
2. Email: dthomas@rts.edu
3. TA: Beck Otersen
4. Email: botersen@firstprescolumbia.org

B. Calendar

1. Course Dates: February 1 – May 10
2. Meeting Time: Thursdays 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

A. Catalogue Description

1. An examination of the theological and pastoral issues related to “the problem of pain” involving systematic, historical, exegetical, and theological perspectives on suffering. The course will examine the book of Job and other related biblical material as well theological constructs that address this issue. The focus will be *pastoral*.

B. Learning Objectives

1. Get acquainted with the history of Christian thought on suffering.
2. Become aware of contemporary apologetic issues related to suffering.
3. Develop a pastorally sensitive theology of pain and suffering.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Attendance

1. Class attendance is imperative for successful completion of this course.

B. Textbooks (Required)

1. Keller, Timothy. *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (New York: Dutton, 2013) [ISBN: 978 0 525 95245 9]
2. Larrimore, Mark. *The Problem of Pain: A Reader* (Malden, MA; Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2010) [ISBN: 978-0631220145]
3. Taylor, Justin and John Piper. *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006) [ISBN: 978 1 58134 809 5]
4. Wiesel, Elie. *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006) [ISBN: 978 0 374 50001 6]
5. Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Harper One, 2009) [ISBN: 978 0 060 65296 8]
6. Carson, D. A. *How Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) [ISBN: 978 0 8010 3125 0]

7. Thomas, Derek W. H. *Calvin's Teaching on Job: Proclaiming the Incomprehensible God* (Geanies: Mentor, 2004) [ISBN: 978 1 8579 2922 5]

C. Assignments

1. Required Reading

- Read the assigned text books in full and submit a reading report on Canvas.
- See Appendix III for a copy of the reading report.

2. View *Schindler's List*: A Film by Steven Spielberg, 1993

- Note: The original edition of this movie is rated R for language, some sexuality, and realistic violence. Students may elect to watch an edited version (suggested sources: Cleanmedia.com or Clearplay.com).
- Yes, you really have to watch a movie. It's a vivid depiction of the Holocaust and a masterful portrayal of suffering.
- Submit a report on Canvas confirming that you viewed the film.

3. In-class Presentation

- Prepare and present a 20-minute presentation on some aspect of the problem of pain. See Appendix II for more details.

4. Term Paper

- Write a 10–15 page research paper on some issue related to the material covered in this course. See Appendix I for more details.

IV. COURSE GRADE

A. Required Reading	25%
B. Required Film	5%
C. Presentation	25%
D. <u>Term Paper</u>	<u>45%</u>
E. Total	100%

APPENDIX I: TERM PAPER GUIDELINES**I. Assignment:**

- A. Students will write a research paper on an approved topic related to the course material.
- B. *Nota Bene*: Your paper and your presentation may examine the same topic if you so choose.
- C. Students should submit term papers via Canvas in PDF format.
- D. The paper is due on Canvas by May 12, 2022.

II. Length:

- A. 10–15 pages

III. Formatting:

- A. Keep it consistent throughout
- B. Use footnotes rather than endnotes!!
- C. 12 pnt. font
- D. Double spaced
- E. Recommended: Turabian Style or SBL Style
 - 1. <https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHSsupp2015-02.pdf>
- F. Must include a bibliography page. Automatic letter grade deduction if biblio is missing!

IV. Important to Note:

- A. Please make sure that your thesis/purpose statement is on the first page of your paper. If the reader can't tell what your paper is about after the first page, then you should edit.
- B. Please proofread to ensure that you are writing in coherent sentences.
- C. Must have at least ten (10) sources. At least one (1) of these must be a peer reviewed journal article. Quality of sources will greatly impact the quality of the paper.

V. Helpful Resources:

- A. <https://rts.edu/campuses/charlotte/students/research-and-writing-seminary-papers/>
- B. <https://rts.edu/campuses/charlotte/students/pen-and-parchment/>

APPENDIX II: PRESENTATION GUIDELINES**I. Assignment**

- A. Students will prepare an oral presentation on some aspect of the problem of pain.
- B. *Nota Bene*: Your presentation and your paper may examine the same topic if you so choose.
- C. We will assign a presentation schedule during the first few weeks of class.
- D. Presentations will be delivered on April 21, 2022 and April 28, 2022.

II. Length

- A. Presentations should be a total of 20 minutes (10–15 minutes of material and 5–10 minutes of Q&A).

APPENDIX III: REQUIRED READING REPORT¹

Please indicate how much of the assigned reading you completed: _____%

¹ This is a copy of the Required Reading Report that will be filled out via Canvas at the end of the course.

APPENDIX IV: *SCHINDLER'S LIST* HONOR STATEMENT²

I pledge on my honor that I have viewed the movie *Schindler's List* within 6 months of taking this course.

Name: _____

² This is a copy of the Honor Statement that will be filled out via Canvas at the end of the course.

APPENDIX V: TENTATIVE LECTURE SCHEDULE³

Date	Topic
February 3	Introduction
February 10	The First Human Sin
February 17	Demonology
February 24	An Overview of Evil and Suffering in Scripture
March 3	Death Before the Fall
March 10	Impassibility: Does God Suffer?
March 17	Spring Break!
March 24	Animal Suffering
March 31	Divine Causality
April 7	The “Free Will Defense”
April 14	Violence and the Cross
April 21	Class Presentations
April 28	Class Presentations
May 5	Pastoral Approaches to Suffering
May 12–17	Final Exam Week

³ Topics and order may change. I will try to let you know in class each week what we will cover in the next session.

RTS Charlotte Classroom Technology Usage

RTS Charlotte recognizes how essential it is for students to have reliable, campus-wide access to the internet. For that reason, we have made Wi-Fi available for our student body, not only in the library and student lounges, but also in the classrooms. We know that students need to use the internet to download class materials, access files on the Cloud, and locate other important information. However, we also recognize that internet access in the classroom provides opportunity for abuse and misuse. Some students have unfortunately used their internet access to engage in many activities that distract them from the classroom lectures (e.g., surfing the web, checking sports scores, playing games). Not only does such activity hamper a student's own seminary education, but it distracts other students who can easily view the screens of nearby students. In addition, donors and classroom guests (who often sit in the back) can see this inappropriate internet usage, which reflects poorly on RTS. Classroom etiquette includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet or playing computer games or other distracting activities. In addition, students must respect standards set by individual professors regarding the use of technology during their class.

In order to address this issue, we must appeal to the integrity of the students as ones who are preparing for a lifetime of ministry to Christ and his church. We expect each student to take personal responsibility for proper classroom technology usage and to encourage others around them to do the same. All RTS-Charlotte students are accountable to the policies stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog and are therefore expected to use technology in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities. Student conduct is under the supervision of the Dean of Students.



COURSE OBJECTIVES RELATED TO MDiv* STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course: The Problem of Pain
 Professor: Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas
 Campus: Charlotte
 Term: Spring 2022

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	
<i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes. *As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		Strong Moderate Minimal None	Mini-Justification
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Strong	Students are expected to produce an oral presentation and a research paper that articulates a biblical and pastoral theology of suffering.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Scriptural justification/assessment is required for the doctrinal concepts articulated in this course.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	This course examines the issues raised by Reformed Theology like sovereignty, impassibility, and the distinction between primary and secondary causality.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	All truth is in order to godliness
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Students are expected to think of ways the doctrines explored form a worldview.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Students are urged to defend their doctrinal positions winsomely and pastorally.
Preach	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	Frequent analysis of how doctrine should/can be preached will be made content of preaching.
Worship	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Minimal	This course will cover aspects of pastoral ministry other than corporate worship.
Shepherd	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Strong	Pastoral application will be done throughout.
Church/World	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	We will examine several different positions on the problem of pain.