

Course ID:	Course Title:	Winter 2023
BT 633	Biblical Theology of Suffering and Hope	Prerequisite: None
		Credits: 3

Class Information		Instructor Information		Important Dates	
Delivery:	Hybrid Synchronous	Instructor:	Beth M. Stovell, Ph.D.	First Day of Class:	Monday, Jan 9
Days:	Mondays	Email:	bstovell@ambrose.edu	Last Day to Add/Drop:	Sunday, Jan 22
Time:	1-4pm	Phone:	403-410-2000 ext. 3995	Last Day to Withdraw:	Friday, March 31
Room:	L2084 or via Zoom	Office:	L2077	Last Day to Apply for Coursework Extension:	Monday, April 3
Final Exam:	No final exam, final paper due March	Office Hours:	By appointment via e-mail	Last Day of Class:	Friday, April 14 (for this class specifically, Monday, April 3)

Important Dates and Information

For a list of all important dates and information regarding participating in classes at Ambrose University, please refer to the Academic Calendar at <https://ambrose.edu/academic-calendar>.

Course Description

Suffering is experienced both individually and in communities all over the world. How does Scripture help us to understand the nature of suffering and how to respond to suffering? How is the Christian hope understood in light of suffering? This course will explore how Scripture addresses these questions. Examining the powerful message of the Old and New Testaments will demonstrate the continuing impact of the Bible's picture of suffering and hope for the Church today, for our spiritual lives, and for the world.

Expected Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will

1. Grow in their theological depth and breadth by identifying and examining the theological themes of suffering and hope in the Old and New Testaments with an awareness of their historical, social, and literary background.
2. Cultivated a heart after God by wrestling with the major themes of suffering and hope within Scripture.

3. Fostered vocational effectiveness by developing exegetical skills and the use of exegetical resources in their study of suffering and hope within Scripture and by examining how questions regarding suffering and hope relate to their own calling from God.
4. Been inspired towards redemptive action exploring the practical implications of these biblical themes of suffering and hope for their own lives, their specific ministry context, and for the modern world.

Required and Recommended Textbooks and Readings

1. Thompson, Michael E. W. *"Where Is the God of Justice?": The Old Testament and Suffering*. Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011.
2. Wright, N. T. *Evil and the Justice of God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2006.
3. Beker, Johan Christiaan. *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament*. Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994.

A modern English translation of the Bible is required reading. Students may use the following translations: NRSV, NASB, NIV 2011, ESV. Students may also use modern translations like the NLT and the Message to complement their reading.

See the bibliography for additional materials.

Course Schedule

The readings for the "Reading for Session" should be read prior to class for the designated day. References to parts of Scripture indicate sections from the Old and New Testaments to be read (e.g., Genesis, Exodus, etc.). "Thompson" refers to Thompson, Michael E. W. *"Where Is the God of Justice?": The Old Testament and Suffering*; "Wright" refers to Wright, N. T. *Evil and the Justice of God*; and "Beker" refers to Beker, Johan Christiaan. *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament*. Please note that some weeks have more reading than others and it would be helpful to read ahead to not get behind.

Date	Topic	Reading for Session	Assignments Due
Jan 9	Introduction to the Syllabus Introduction to the course	No reading in preparation for the first class session (but may start reading ahead)	Discussion question: How do you define suffering? Why are you interested in studying the concepts of suffering and hope in Scripture?
Jan 16	The Problem of Suffering, The Answer of Hope Ecclesiastes and Jeremiah: All that Withers	Thompson, 22-31, 35-58, 62-81 Wright, 9-42 Beker, 1-38	Small group discussion: What are the major themes associated with the problem of suffering? How does Ecclesiastes describe some of these major themes? How is this helpful to us today?

Jan 23	The Psalms: Lament and Hope Israel as the Promise of Hope and the Road to Suffering	Thompson, 31-35, 58-61, 81-84, 100-104 Wright, 43-61 Beker, 39-58	Small group discussion: What role do Psalms of lament play in your current ministry/church context? How might the psalms of lament help us deal with suffering today?
Jan 30	Job: Explorations in Theodicy	Thompson, 105-156. Wright, 62-74	Small group discussion: In what ways does the book of Job explore the idea of theodicy? Does Job offer a picture of hope for today? Why or why not? Exegetical Reflection Paper #1 due, Turn in via Moodle
Feb 6	The Prophets: Visions of Hope amidst Suffering	Thompson, 85-100, 157-198	Small group discussion: What message do the prophets have related to the experience of suffering and hope for people in their time? How does that message impact us today?
Feb 13	The God who Sends His Son: The Story of Jesus in a Suffering Time	Wright, 75-100 Beker, 59-76	Small group discussion: How were the Gospels “good news” to those suffering in the 1 st century? How are the Gospels “good news” to those suffering today?
Feb 20-No Class, Reading Week			
Feb 27	Christ Has Died, Christ is Risen: Christ’s Suffering and the Hope of the Resurrection		Small group discussion: What is the impact of Christ’s death on our view of suffering? How does the resurrection provide a new hope? Draft version of Final Paper Due, Feb 27 at midnight, turn in via Moodle

Mar 6	Paul's Letters: Gospel of Redemptive Suffering	Beker, 75-90	Small Group discussion: What experiences of suffering did the early church in Acts face? What forms of hope did the early church cling to? Are these notions of hope still relevant for today? Why or why not?
Mar 13	Paul's Letters: Response to Tragic Suffering	Wright, 101-130 Beker, 91-106	Small Group discussion: How did Paul's letters approach the question of suffering and hope in new ways? How do these approaches connect with the world today? Exegetical Reflection Paper #2 due, Turn in via Moodle
Mar 20	Revelation: Ultimate Visions of Suffering and Hope	Wright, 131-166 Beker, 107-123	Small group discussion: How did the book of Revelation provide a picture of hope for the people of its time during their suffering? Is the book of Revelation a hopeful or difficult book for today? Why?
Mar 27	Presentations	No reading, prepare for your presentations and final paper	Final paper due by Monday, Mar 27 at midnight via Moodle.
Apr 3	Final comments Presentations	No reading, prepare for your presentations	Final presentation in class
April 10-No Class-Easter Monday			

Requirements:

1. Course Participation: (10%): Across the semester, students will be required to participate in course discussion, in-class exercises, and small group work. This course participation will count for 10% of the student's grade and is required alongside course attendance as a key component of the course. If students will be absent or unable to participate for

any reason, they should inform the professor in advance. At the professor's discretion, the professor may assign an alternative assignment to replace this for a given absence.

2. Exegetical Reflection Papers (2 paper at 20% each=40%) Due Dates: Monday, Jan 30 and March 13, midnight.

Submitted online via Moodle.

- Students will write a 3-5 page exegetical reflection paper by choosing one of the discussion questions from the class syllabus and writing a reflection on this question. Students may choose any of the discussion questions to engage further. However, it is recommended that students choose discussion questions already discussed in class by the time of the assignments.
- This exegetical reflection paper will have two parts: Part 1: Students will answer the question exegetically based on their biblical texts and their course materials. Part 2: Students will explore the impact of the answer of the second half of the question on three spheres: 1. the student's own spiritual journey, 2 their ministry (current or future), and 3. the modern world. **Students should engage with the course notes and readings as they answer all parts of the question.** (For information on how to cite electronic books or course notes, see "Citation of Digital and In Class Sources" in your "Writing and Research Skills" folder under "Course Overview" in Moodle).
- Thus, these papers demonstrate a student's awareness of their course readings and course notes and their reflection upon these course materials.
- Because these papers are "reflection papers," they should use the 1st person ("I") to describe the student's personal journey during that section of the paper. However, the style of the paper should remain academic in all other aspects.
- These papers need to use Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced. The formatting should be in Chicago Manual of Style in the footnotes and bibliography style. See http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- Papers will be submitted via Moodle.

Class rules to reduce your stress:

First Pancake Rule: As with the first pancake you make in any batch, I assume that your first exegetical reflection paper might not be your best paper. You are still learning how to write papers for my course. For that reason, I have the "first pancake" rule. You may revise your first exegetical reflection paper for this course. You have until the date the final paper is due (Mar 27) to turn in this revised version. This can bring up the grade on your first paper, if it is lower than you would like. This "first pancake rule" only applies to Exegetical Reflection Paper #1 and no other assignments.

3. Final Paper and Draft Paper: Final Paper (30% + Draft of final paper: 10%=Total 40%):

- Writing your final paper is a two-stage process-**Draft of final paper due Monday, February 27; Final paper due Monday, March 27. All papers are due by midnight on Monday. Both stages are required for an optimal grade in this course. Submitted online via Moodle.**
- Draft of Final Paper (10%): Students will turn in a draft of their final paper on February 27 to gauge their progress. **The minimum requirement for this assignment is a thesis statement, outline, and bibliography of books.** However, this draft may be a full paper, an outline with a clear thesis, or whatever stage of notes the paper is currently in. More comprehensive drafts will be easier to gauge progress and likely provide higher

overall grades compared to less comprehensive drafts. This draft will receive an initial grade, which will be 10% of their overall grade for the course. However, if the student's overall grade on the final paper exceeds this draft paper grade, the draft paper grade will be replaced with their final paper grade.

- Based on the feedback from the draft of their final paper, students will revise their draft and complete their final paper.
- The draft will need to use Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced. The formatting should be in Chicago Manual of Style in the footnotes and bibliography style. See https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

- **Final Paper/Creative Project (30%): Due by midnight on March 27, Submitted online via Moodle**

- Each credit student will write/create a final paper/project. This final paper/project may come in one of two types: an exegetical essay OR a creative project of equivalent depth and breadth.
- **Type 1: Exegetical Essay:** For the exegetical essay, a student will do the following: 1) Choose a real world example of suffering in the world today. This example may be personal, local, or global. Research this real world problem using at least 3 solid academic sources. 2) Write a paper that uses one of the biblical texts studied in this course to address this real world problem. Research these biblical texts to offer insight into addressing the real world problem.
- Final papers in the "exegetical essay" style should be written as to an academic audience similar to a research paper. They must include applications to three spheres: student's faith journey, ministry context, and the world. Additions to this final application section will be partially determined by the topic of real world suffering the student chooses to discuss.

OR

- **Type 2: Creative Project:** Creative projects can take two forms: either a: a project associated with a ministry session such as teaching or preaching or b: an art piece with a written explanation of its meaning and the foundational research behind it.
- Creative projects must: 1) Choose a real world example of suffering in the world today. This example may be personal, local, or global. Research this real world problem using at least 3 solid academic sources. 2) Create a project that uses one of the biblical texts studied in this course to address this real world problem. Research these biblical texts to offer insight into addressing the real world problem.
- Creative projects may include:
 - a) a project for a ministry session such as teaching, preaching. **Examples of types of presentations/sermons:** The paper may be a sermon or a ministry presentation which may include a teaching session for a Bible study, a small group study, a Sunday School course, or a ministry conference/gathering/retreat, etc.. **When student discusses the topic/theme with instructor, the format for this delivery should be discussed as well.**
 - a. **Short Context Abstract:** Students must specify in a short abstract at the top of the document who the real or imagined target audience is for this project (e. g., urban church, multi-cultural,

low-income, para-church organization such as InterVarsity, a service organization, etc.) as well as any other pertinent information (e. g., a sermon for a special occasion such as a communion service, or a Bible study for a three day women’s retreat, etc.) This counts towards the total word count/page count for the paper.

- b. This course is not a homiletics course, but rather a Scripture course. The purpose of this assignment is to assess each student's ability to move from “doing theology” in an academic setting to “applying theology” in a pastoral setting. While I will *not* be assessing this assignment for homiletic prowess, I still expect each student to practice sound homiletic and teaching principles.
- c. All papers include application and this is particularly true in the sermon/ministry presentation paper: Application should include these three areas: 1. the student’s own spiritual journey, 2. their ministry (current or future), and 3. the modern world. This application should propose ways that their theme or passage could move towards redemptive action. (See instructor if clarification is needed).

OR

- b) Alternatively, students may choose to create an art piece for example creating a worship song or liturgy, a story, a drama, or some other kind of artwork. These artistic pieces need to have an appended discussion of the research behind the artistic piece and an explanation of its implications and meaning.

Requirements for all exegetical essays and creative projects:

- This paper/project will examine a real world problem in light of one of the theological themes or one of the biblical texts related to suffering and/or hope in the Old Testament or the New Testament (based on whether you are listed as OT or NT for this course. NT students will use NT texts or themes and OT students will use OT texts or themes). **The text or topic must be approved by the instructor as well as whether students will be doing the paper or creative project option.** A knowledge of Hebrew or Greek is not required to write these papers and it will not be expected that students will have these language skills. However, if students have taken Hebrew or Greek language courses, they are encouraged to use these skills on their papers.
- All papers will research the biblical texts they are examining as part of their process for writing the paper.
- Whether focusing on your specific theme or biblical text, these papers (or creative projects) should set their discussion of the theological theme or biblical text in its original historical and cultural background and include discussion of the literary elements associated with the biblical text or theme. Discussion should include a variety of different positions on the specific passage or topic from academic articles and books. To ensure this engagement with other scholars, the paper should include **at least 10 solid academic sources** (course materials, when used, should exist in the bibliography, but will not count to this total).
- Each paper or creative project must include an “application” section. This section must explore the implications for the student’s own faith journey, for the Church today, and for the world. These sections will be adapted based on the real world problem the paper/project is examining.

- Students will be provided with a rubric identifying the major components of the paper and how they will be graded. The rubric and checklist for this assignment will be included in the folder “Rubrics for Course Assignments” in the “General” section of Moodle.
- This paper needs to use Times New Roman, 12 point font, double spaced. The formatting should be in Chicago Manual of Style in the footnotes and bibliography style.
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

All course assignments will be posted via Moodle.

4. Final Presentation (10%): Due either Mar 27 or Apr 3. **Presentations must be submitted on Moodle under “Final Presentation” before 12pm on the day they are presented. Points will be deducted if nothing is turned in. (If the presentation is in a form that cannot be submitted via Moodle (e.g., an art piece, a dance, etc., please discuss with professor ahead of time).**

- Students will present a summary of the main points of their final paper in a creative way. Depending on the size of the class, these may be presented in groups or individually. If group presentations occur, the professor will create these groups based on final paper topics and will provide additional information about shaping a group presentation. Students will fill out a sign up sheet for times using Moodle once class groupings are assigned.
- This presentation may be in the form of a homily (“sermonette”), a teaching session, or simply an explanation of the main parts of the paper. Other creative presentations are also encouraged such as poetry, art, Ted Talk, imagined bible study, etc. When appropriate, this presentation should **include a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi presentation and all presentations must last no longer than 15 minutes. Other forms of presentation may be permitted, but must be approved with the instructor in advance.** Creativity is encouraged!
- For online students, this presentation can either be pre-recorded and shown in class or can be performed live online. If a student in the in-person course cannot be in-person for the presentation for any reason, they can organize the same options as online students with the professor.
- The goal of this presentation is for students to clearly share the major points of their papers with their classmates in a memorable way. A rubric for this assignment is included in the folder “Rubrics and Resources” in the “Course Overview” section of Moodle.
- Presentations will be given during class on Mar 27 or Apr 3 as there will be no final exam for the course. **All presentations must be submitted via Moodle by 12pm prior to the day they are presented (See note above for exceptions and procedure).**

Attendance:

1. Course sessions will begin in a timely fashion. To receive full points for course participation, you are expected to arrive by the time class begins and stay until class ends whether you are in-person or online. If for some valid reason you will be unable to attend class or will be late, please notify the instructor by email in advance of the class session. Students who generally attend in-person who are feeling any signs of sickness should switch to the online session for the week to avoid infecting other students. If such sickness is severe, please contact the professor for an excused absence and for make up materials.
2. **Students with three unexcused absences will be dropped a full letter grade from their final grade.** In addition, students will be dropped an additional third of a letter grade for every unexcused absence after the third. This

means an A+ student can only receive a B+ after three unexcused absences, a B after four, a B- after five, etc. To excuse an absence, you need to contact me by e-mail in advance and in some cases a note will be required.

- Due dates for assignments in this class are firm. They are set up for the overall success of the class - that is, for both students and the instructor. Late work drops one letter grade (10 pts) per day late unless other arrangements are made in advance. Please stay on top of your assignments and do not procrastinate. If you realize that you will be late in turning in an assignment for a legitimate reason, please see the "Extensions" policy below.

If you feel that you are falling behind or getting into trouble, please contact me early. There are things that can be done early on to get things back on track before it is too late.

Grade Summary:

Assignment	Percentage
Small Group Discussion Questions	10%
Exegetical Reflection papers (2 X 20%)	40%
Draft of Final Paper/Creative Project	10%
Final Paper/Creative Project	30%
Final Presentation	10%
TOTAL:	100%

Grade	Interpretation	Grade Points
A+	Mastery: Complete Understanding of Subject Matter	4.00
A		4.00
A-		3.70
B+	Proficient: Well-Developed Understanding of Subject Matter	3.30
B		3.00
B-		2.70
C+	Basic: Developing Understanding of Subject Matter	2.30
C		2.00
C-		1.70
D+	Minimal Pass: Limited Understanding of Subject	1.30
D		1.0
F		0.00
P	Pass	No Grade Points

Because of the nature of the Alpha 4.00 system, there can be no uniform University-wide conversion scale. The relationship between raw scores (e.g. percentages) and the resultant letter grade will depend on the nature of the course and the instructor's assessment of the level of each class, compared to similar classes taught previously.

Please note that final grades will be available on student registration system. Printed grade sheets are not mailed out.

Ambrose University Important Policies & Procedures:

Communication

All students have received an Ambrose e-mail account upon registration. It is the student's responsibility to check this account regularly as the Ambrose email system will be the professor's instrument for notifying students of important matters (cancelled class sessions, extensions, requested appointments, etc.) between class sessions.

Exam Scheduling

Students who find a conflict in their exam schedule must submit a *Revised Final Exam Time Application* to the Office of the Registrar by the deadline noted in the Academic Calendar. Requests will be considered for the following reasons only: 1) the scheduled final examination slot conflicts with another exam; or 2) the scheduled final examination slot results in three consecutive examination periods. Travel is not considered a valid excuse for re-scheduling or missing a final exam.

Standards of Behaviour in the Classroom Setting

Learning is an active and interactive process, a joint venture between student and instructor and between student and student. Some topics covered within a class may lead to strong reactions and opinions. It is important that Students understand that they are entitled to hold contradictory beliefs and that they should be encouraged to engage with these topics in a critical manner. Committing to this type of "active learning" significantly increases the learning experience for both teacher and student, and reflects the Christian imperative to pursue truth, which lies at the heart of the Ambrose educational experience. However, active discussion of controversial topics will be undertaken with respect and empathy, which are the foundations of civil discourse in the Classroom Setting. Primary responsibility for managing the classroom rests with the instructor. The instructor may direct a student to leave the class if the student engages in any behaviour that disrupts the classroom setting. If necessary, Ambrose security will be contacted to escort the student from class. Please refer to your professor regarding their electronic etiquette expectations.

Academic Integrity

We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Academic dishonesty is taken seriously at Ambrose University as it undermines our academic standards and affects the integrity of each member of our learning community. Any attempt to obtain credit for academic work through fraudulent, deceptive, or dishonest means is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as one's own. Plagiarism is fraud and theft, but plagiarism can also occur by accident when a student fails or forgets to acknowledge to another person's ideas or words. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are

reported to the Academic Dean and become part of the student's permanent record.

Academic Policies

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the Academic Calendar. The academic calendar can be found at <https://ambrose.edu/academics/academic-calendar>

Privacy

Personal information (information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual) may be required as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at privacy@ambrose.edu.

Coursework Extensions

Should a request for a time extension on coursework exceed the end of the term, a *Coursework Extension Application* must be completed and submitted to the Office of the Registrar. The extension (if granted) will be recorded on the student record. Extensions are granted at the discretion of the instructor and registrar. Normally, Course Extension Applications will be considered only when all of the following conditions are met:

- the quality of prior course work has been satisfactory;
- circumstances beyond your control, such as an extended illness or death of a family member, make it impossible for you to complete the course work on time; and
- you submit *Coursework Extension Application* to the Office of the Registrar on or before the deadline specified in the Academic Schedule.

If granted, time extensions do not excuse you from a final examination where one has been scheduled for the course. A temporary grade of TX will be assigned until a final grade is submitted in accordance with the new deadline. A final grade of F will apply to:

- all course work submitted after the end of the semester unless a coursework extension has been granted; and all course work submitted after the revised due date provided by an approved extension to coursework.

Academic Success and Supports

Accessibility Services

Academic accommodation is provided to Ambrose students with disabilities in accordance with the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Provision of academic accommodation does not lower the academic standards of the university nor remove the need for evaluation and the need to meet essential learning outcomes. Reasonable accommodations are tailored to the individual student, are flexible, and are determined by considering the barriers within the unique environment of a postsecondary institution. It can take time to organize academic

accommodations and funding for disability-related services. Students with a disability who wish to have an academic accommodation are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services as early as possible to ensure appropriate planning for any needs that may include accommodations. Staff can then meet with students to determine areas to facilitate success, and if accommodations are required, ensure those accommodations are put in place by working with faculty.

Ambrose Writing Services

Ambrose Writing services provides academic support in the four foundational literacy skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also assists students with critical thinking and the research process. Throughout the academic year, students can meet with a writing tutor for personalized support, or they can attend a variety of workshops offered by Academic Success. These services are free to students enrolled at Ambrose University. Academic Success serves all students in all disciplines and at all levels, from history to biology and from theatre to theology. To learn more, please visit <https://ambrose.edu/sas/writing-services>

Ambrose Tutoring Services

Ambrose Tutoring Services provides support in specific disciplinary knowledge, especially in high-demand areas such as chemistry, philosophy, math and statistics, and religious studies. These tutors also coach students in general study skills, including listening and note-taking. During the academic year, Ambrose Tutoring Services offers drop-in tutoring for courses with high demand; for other courses, students can book a one-to-one appointment with a tutor in their discipline. These services are free to students enrolled at Ambrose University. To learn more, please visit <https://ambrose.edu/tutoring>.

Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. We encourage students to build mental health supports and to reach out when help is needed.

On Campus:

- Counselling Services: ambrose.edu/counselling
- For immediate crisis support, there are staff on campus who are trained in Suicide Intervention Skills and can help you access mental health support. See <https://ambrose.edu/student-life/crisissupport> for a list of staff members.
- For additional wellness resources go to the Ambrose wellness page: <https://ambrose.edu/wellness>

Off Campus:

- Distress Centre - 403-266-4357
- Alberta Mental Health Helpline - 1-877-303-2642 (Toll free)
- Sheldon Chumir Health Care Centre - 403-955-6200
- Emergency - 911

Sexual Violence Support

We are committed to supporting students who have experienced gender based sexual violence in the past or while at Ambrose. Many of the staff, faculty, and student leaders have received Sexual Violence Response to Disclosure training. We will support you and help you find the resources you need and you can access information about reporting. Information about the Sexual Violence policy and on and off campus supports can be found on our website— ambrose.edu/sexual-violence-response-and-awareness.

Off Campus:

- Alberta's Online for Sexual Violence - 1-866-403-8000 call or text
- Clinic: Sheldon Chumir Health Centre - 403-955-6200
- Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse - 403-237-5888
- Chat: www.calgarycasa.com

Note: Students are strongly advised to retain this syllabus for their records.