

Louisville Seminary
January 6–17, 2020, 9am–4pm
Professor Susan R. Garrett

**NT 4013:
Evil, Suffering, and Death
in the New Testament**

Course Description:

In this course we will seek to identify some of the ways that evil, suffering, and death were experienced and explained by New Testament authors and their contemporaries. We will also consider how ancient views of these phenomena are both similar to and different from modern views, and how we can apply this knowledge in order to minister more effectively to sufferers.

Intended Major Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course, each student should be able to:

1. Use NT ideas about principalities and powers to analyze and critique the institutions, ideologies, and icons that govern our daily lives—and to envision paths for their renewal or reformation.
2. Discuss biblical teachings about trials of faith in ways that reflect both an awareness of the teachings' original cultural contexts and the pastoral or therapeutic needs of twenty-first century people.
3. Write and speak biblically and pastorally on death and afterlife, demonstrating awareness of how views on these topics changed during the biblical era and have continued to change up to the present.

Correlation with Program SLOs:

The course is consistent with the following program-level SLOs:

MDiv SLO #1: Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible and the ability to use critical skills and educated imagination to interpret it in contemporary social and cultural contexts.

MAR SLO #1: Students will be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively.

MFT SLO #5: Graduating students will be able to use a clinically appropriate theological/spiritual framework in the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Format: Sessions will include lecturing by the professor, discussion of assigned readings, and structured discussions and activities of various kinds.

Course Requirements:

1. Consistent attendance is required; any absences must be reported to the teacher in advance and be for good reason. Reading should be done in advance of the session for which a work is assigned. **Wherever the syllabus indicates that you should "make notes," "prepare a summary," or the like, you should bring a digital copy of your work to class.** Attendance and preparation will count for **20% of the final grade.**

2. The class will frequently engage in collaborative writing assignments, most of which will be completed in class (though occasional work outside of class may be required). Final products will be posted on the course website. Students will regularly assess and report the quality and level of their own input into these collective endeavors, as well as the quality of the finished product. Contribution to group projects will count for **50% of the final grade**.
3. Two short (individually authored) essays are required. Each of these will count for 5% of the final grade, for a total of **10% of the final grade**.
4. A final project of the student's own choosing, related to some topic addressed in the course, will be due on January 24, 2020 at 5pm. This could be a short exegetical study, a sermon, a lesson plan for a 2 or 3-week Sunday School class, an annotated bibliography of books or articles on a pertinent topic, an analysis of MFT theories pertinent to clients' experiences of suffering, or something else. The topic should be designed to advance the student's achievement of one or more of the course learning outcomes, and should be decided in consultation with the professor by the second week of the course. Students should plan to spend about 15-20 hours of quality time working on this project, which will count for **20% of the final grade**. With the students' permission, exemplary projects will be posted on the course website.

Course Readings:

Several books have been recommended for purchase. A number of articles and shorter readings are available on CAMS or on the Internet (links in syllabus and on website). A few items will be distributed ahead of time or in class.

Books Recommended for Purchase:

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Creation and Fall; Temptation: Two Biblical Studies*. ISBN: 0684825872.
- Garrett, Susan R. *No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0300140959.
- McAlpine, Thomas H. *Facing the Powers: What Are the Options?* Wipf & Stock, 2003. ISBN: 159244282X.
- Stringfellow, William. *Instead of Death*. New and expanded edition. Wipf & Stock, 2004. ISBN: 1592448739

Schedule:

PART 1: IMAGINING EVIL

Monday, January 6:

- Orientation to the course.** Read carefully through the syllabus ahead of time.
- Exercise #1: Biblical Theodicy.** *Preparation:* Read Clarice J. Martin, "Biblical Theodicy and Black Women's Spiritual Autobiography" (on CAMS). Write down several points from the article or questions you would like to pursue further in this course.
- Exercise #2: Three Ways of Imagining evil.** *Preparation:* Read Carol A. Newsom, "Three (Rather Different) Ways of Imagining Good and Evil" (manuscript distributed to class). Briefly summarize, in writing, the major features of each of the three biblical models for understanding

evil that Newsom discusses. Bring a digital copy to class.

- **Exercise #3: Evil in Narrative Form.** *Preparation:* Write a paragraph or two describing how evil is conceptualized in a well-known narrative from fiction, history, or politics. How is evil described, recognized by other characters, and combated? Bring a digital copy of your analysis to class.

PART 2: THE WORLD OF APOCALYPTIC

Tuesday, January 7:

- **Exercise #1: The apocalyptic worldview.** *Preparation:*
 - Read [Sidnie White Crawford, "Apocalyptic," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 72–73](#) (on CAMS). Make notes summarizing the following: key features and major antecedents of *apocalypse* as a literary genre; the definition and key features of *apocalyptic eschatology*; and key features of an *apocalyptic worldview*.
 - Read Daniel 7 carefully, and skim chaps. 8-12, along with the introduction to Daniel and notes for Daniel 7 **in a good study Bible**.
 - Read Revelation 12-13 carefully, along with the introduction to Revelation and notes for Revelation 12-13 **in a good study Bible**.
 - Read and make notes on [M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, pp. 51-59](#) (on CAMS).

Discussion: What are the options for making sense of our apocalyptic heritage today? What should we keep, and what do we think may have outlived its usefulness?

- **Exercise #2: Satan and his servants.** *Preparation:*
 - Read Job [1:1–2:13](#); Zech [3:1-6](#); 2 Sam [24:1-14](#) and parallel account in 1 Chron [24:1-13](#); Wis [2:21-24](#); Luke [4:1-13](#)
 - Read and take notes on *The Life of Adam and Eve* (= *Apocalypse of Moses*) 15-30 (at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/the-apocalypse-of-moses/>)
 - Read and take notes on *Jubilees* 10:1-14; 17:15–18:19 (available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/the-book-of-jubilees/>)
 - Read Susan R. Garrett, "Jesus Christ, Exorcist." (Available at <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/christianity/2004/04/jesus-christ-exorcist.aspx>)
 - Read Susan R. Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, chaps. 3-4

Discussion: Can Christians who believe in Satan share a sense of common purpose in Christ with those who do *not* believe in Satan? How can members of the opposing groups converse authentically with each other in church or therapeutic contexts?

Wednesday, January 8:

- **Exercise #1: Principalities and powers.** *Preparation:*
 - Study the following passages:
 - Luke [22:53](#) [What does Jesus mean by his assertion “This is your hour…”?];
 - 1 Cor [2:6-8](#) [who are “the rulers of this age?”]; 1 Cor [15:24-28](#); Rom [8:38-39](#); Rom [13:1-7](#); Eph [1:20-23](#); Eph [6:10-17](#); Heb [2:14](#); Revelation [13:1-18](#)
 - Read and take notes on Thomas H. McAlpine, *Facing the Powers: What Are the Options?* (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1991), Introduction + chaps. 1, 2, and 4

- **Exercise #2: Analyzing the powers that be.** *Preparation:*
 - Write essay #1, not to exceed 3 double-spaced pages. (Complete the essay ahead of time and bring it to class.) This essay is to be based on the handout by Bill Wylie-Kellerman, “Thinking Biblically and Theologically about a Particular Power: An Inventory of Provoking Questions” (on CAMS).
 - Identify a “principlality” with which you have had some experience. Examples include church judicatories; the court system; INS; IRS; U.S. military; a corporation; or an “ideology,” “ism,” or “icon.”
 - Answer the “provoking questions” as applied to that principlality. Address all of the questions under the first heading (“Creatureliness: Defining a Principlality”). If you have too much material to address all questions under the second two headings, then pick and choose, but do not exceed the 3-page limit.
 - *NOTE: To inspire you, here are three essays by former students:*
 - [On ICE \(Immigration and Citizenship Enforcement, Part of the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services\)](#)
 - [On the organization Presbyterian Women](#)
 - [On racism in the United States](#)

Thursday, January 9:

- **Exercise #1: Death as a ruling power at work in the world.** *Preparation:*
 - Read Rom 5:12-21 in a good study Bible
 - Read the Wikipedia article on William Stringfellow, along with his book, *Instead of Death*. Take notes.

Discussion: How does Stringfellow see Death (the power) manifesting itself in various arenas of human experience, and how does he think that through Christ humans can be victorious over Death? What is the meaning of the book’s title?

- **Exercise #2: The denial of death.** *Preparation:*
 - Read Copeland, *Knowing Christ Crucified*, pp. 127-47 (on CAMS).
 - In class: watch video *Flight from Death: The Quest for Immortality*.

Discussion: What are the negative consequences of denying death? Is doing so ever healthy and appropriate? What compelling reasons are there to acknowledge the presence of suffering and the imminence of Death?

PART 3: TRIALS OF FAITH

Friday, January 10:

- **Exercise #1: Biblical traditions about testing.** *Preparation:*
 - Read the following texts, making notes as you go on the following questions: Who is the tempter/tester in each passage? Does the writer of that passage regard the testing/tempting as a good thing, or as something utterly contrary to God's purposes?
 - **OT:** [Job 1-2](#)
 - **Gospels:** Mark [1:12-13](#); Mark [8:11-13, 31-33](#); Mark [10:2](#); Mark [12:15](#); Mark [14:32-42](#) (together with [Heb 5:7-10](#)); Luke [4:1-13](#)
 - **Paul:** Rom [5:3-4](#); 1 Cor [7:5](#); 1 Cor [11:28-32](#) (in context); 2 Cor [12:7-10](#)
 - **Epistles:** Heb [2:14-18](#); Heb [4:16](#); Heb [5:7-10](#); Heb [12:5-11](#); James [1:2-8](#); James [4:7](#)
 - **Revelation:** Rev [3:10](#)

- **Exercise #2: The Testament of Job.** *Preparation:*
 - Read *Testament of Job* (available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/testament-of-job/>).
 - Write a paragraph on each of the following questions (and bring a digital copy to class):
 - What are notable features of Satan in this portrayal?
 - How does Job's alleged foreknowledge of all the bad things that would happen to him affect your assessment of his perseverance?

Discussion: How does this document, which was likely written at about the same time as the New Testament, contribute to our understanding of ancient views of testing and temptation?

- **Exercise #3: Preparing People to Face Trials.** *Discussion:* Is it pastors' and therapists' responsibility to prepare their parishioners or clients to face suffering and affliction? How might they do so?

Monday, January 13.

- **Exercise #1: Cultural Models of Affliction.** *Preparation:* Read and take notes on Susan R. Garrett, "Paul's Thorn and Cultural Models of Affliction" (on CAMS). Focus especially on the first part of the essay, which discusses the notion of "cultural models" and sketches three biblical models of affliction. Bring a digital copy of your notes to class.

- **Exercise #2: On suffering as "chastisement" or "discipline."** *Preparation:*
 - Study the following biblical texts: Deut [8:2-5, 16](#); Prov [3:11-12](#); 2 Macc [6:12-17](#); Sir [also known as Ecclesiasticus] [1:26-27](#) (note that, throughout Sirach, the Greek *paideia* is translated sometimes as "instruction" or "learning" and sometimes as "discipline"); Sir [2:1-11](#); Sir [4:11-19](#); Sir [6:18-31](#); Sir [18:13-14](#); Sir [30:1-2](#); Wis [3:1-6](#); Hebrews (especially

- [2:10-18](#); [5:7-10](#); [12:1-13](#)); [Seneca, *Epistle 13*](#) (on CAMS); [Epictetus, *Discourses 1.29*](#) (on CAMS)
- Read and take notes on [Charles H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering, 9-23*](#) (on CAMS)
- **Exercise #3: On the “Job-model” for understanding suffering. Preparation:**
- Read the following, taking notes on the following questions: Who is the “tyrant” in each of the texts? What is the correct 5:6-11 or ideal response to persecution by the tyrant in each document?
 - [Testament of Job](#)
 - [4 Maccabees](#). (Read [this introduction](#) to gather the gist and progression of 4 Maccabees. Skim the whole book, but read chaps. 11-16 [accounts of the martyrdoms of the last three brothers, and the author’s praise for their mother] in their entirety).
 - Luke [4:1-13](#); 1 Pet [5:6-11](#); Rev [12:1-12](#) (especially v. 10)

Tuesday, January 14

- **Exercise #1: Ministering to Sufferers.**
- Write essay #2, not to exceed 3 double-spaced pages. (Complete the essay ahead of time and bring it to class.) Address the following questions:
 - What are the types of suffering that you yourself have witnessed, or that you expect to witness (or experience) in your work?
 - Is psychological suffering such as grief or depression worse than, not as bad as, or about the same as physical suffering? Think of specific examples: e.g., how do the grief and loneliness felt by a wealthy widow in Lexington, Kentucky compare to the suffering experienced by persons who are starving or living in wretched conditions in an inner city, on the U.S./Mexico border, or in war-ravaged Syria? To the suffering of persons who are in the throes of painful illness? To the pain of persons who are victims of racial or sexual violence? Is it even possible to quantify suffering in this way?
 - In general terms, what are the responsibilities of therapists or pastors in ministering to the suffering? Are they obligated to provide answers to the intellectual problems that suffering raises? Merely to offer a “ministry of presence?” Something else?
- **Exercise #2: What do the experts say?** During this session, the class will skim a number of books on ministering to or counseling sufferers. The task will be to write a brief description of the contents, relevance, and approach. These will be compiled into an annotated bibliography to be made available for future use.

Wednesday, January 15:

- **Exercise #1: Reflecting theologically on temptation. Preparation:**
- Read and make notes on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: Two Biblical Studies*, 109-44. Note that you are required to read *only* the second essay, on “Temptation.”
 - In preparation for a group reflection exercise, you will be assigned ahead of time to consider one of the following themes from Bonhoeffer’s essay. Make notes on your

assigned theme, bringing biblical perspectives on the topic as well as your or others' personal experience to bear. The themes are as follows:

- “In times of temptation the Christian is abandoned by his or her powers—and, in a manner of speaking, by God” (see p. 112 and elsewhere).
- “Satan is a deceptive seducer, who comes to us not from hell but in paradise” (see pp. 116-117).
- “Temptation of the flesh through desire and through suffering is at bottom one and the same” (see p. 134).

Discussion: In class we will discuss your thoughts in small groups, putting them into written form to share with the class.

PART 4: DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

Thursday, January 16:

- **Exercise #1: “And the last enemy is Death.”** *Preparation:*
 - Read [Garrett, “The Meaning of Life after Death,” parts 1-3](#) (on CAMS)

Discussion: What do you see as the most urgent questions pertaining to death that pastors and therapists are asked to address? How can the biblical material inform your answers to these questions? How does the biblical material *complicate* your an

- **Exercise #2: Controversies over beliefs about the afterlife.** We will discuss two case studies, which will be distributed in class.

Friday, January 17:

- **Popular Ideas about the Afterlife.** *Preparation:*
 - Read Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, chap. 6.
 - Read selections from [James Moorhead, *World without End: American Mainstream Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880–1925*](#) (on changing views of death, heaven, and hell in American society [on CAMS]).
 - Read “Spiritualism,” online: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritualism>
 - Read Gordon Lichfield, “The Science of Near-Death Experiences,” online: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/04/the-science-of-near-death-experiences/386231/>
 - Find and read three or four accounts of near-death experiences on the web (making note of URLs). What (if any) common traits do you notice?

Discussion: How should pastors and therapists respond to the following?

- Our culture’s obsession with zombies and vampires
- Popular claims of NDEs
- The glorification of violence and death in movies and video games
- Other pertinent cultural phenomena?

- **Exercise #2: Course Wrap-Up.** Please come prepared to discuss what you see as the most important takeaways from the course.

APPENDIX 1 – COURSE POLICIES

Inclusive Language Policy:

In speech and in written assignments, please avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. Do not use language that leaves out part of the population, perpetuates stereotyping, or diminishes importance. Do not use male pronouns (such as “men”) to refer to a group that includes females as well. Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary.

Plagiarism Policy:

Prohibition of plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Ideas and words (even short phrases, if distinctive) drawn from print, Internet, or other sources should be fully documented. Any student work in which plagiarism is discovered will receive an automatic F with no possibility of redoing the assignment, and the infraction will be reported to the academic dean. Use great care!!!

Attendance Policy:

Perfect attendance is expected, and roll will be taken. Absences may adversely affect your grade. In case of unavoidable absences, confer with the professor regarding make-up work.

Policy on Late Papers and Exams, and Incompletes

All papers are due in class on the date assigned for discussion of that topic. Late papers will be penalized. Papers more than 48 hours late will not be accepted. Grades of incomplete for the course will be permitted only in extreme circumstances, and must be arranged by the date specified by the registrar’s office.

Policy on Use of Electronic Devices in Class

You should bring your computer or your cell phone to class, inasmuch as we will have need to access the Internet for various purposes. You are expected to be wholly engaged in the classroom activities at all times, and so should keep your non-course-related checking of your phone to a minimum. Do not view pages on your laptop that are not relevant to the class (including email), inasmuch as it will be a distraction to your classmates.

APPENDIX 2 – BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Creation and Fall: Temptation: Two Biblical Studies*. 1st Touchstone ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. **BOOK ON RESERVE.**

Garrett, Susan R. *No Ordinary Angel: Celestial Spirits and Christian Claims about Jesus*. The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. **BOOK ON RESERVE.**

McAlpine, Thomas H. *Facing the Powers*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2003. **BOOK ON RESERVE.**

Stringfellow, William. *Instead of Death*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004. **BOOK ON RESERVE.**

CAMS

Boring, M. Eugene. *Revelation*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989. Pp. 51-59. **EXCERPT ON CAMS.**

Copeland, M. Shawn. *Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018. Pp. 127-47. **ARTICLE ON CAMS.**

Crawford, Sidnie White. "Apocalyptic." In Freedman, David Noel, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, eds. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000. Pp. 72-73. **ARTICLE ON CAMS.**

Garrett, Susan R. "The Meaning of Life after Death." Parts 1-3. From ThePresbyterianLeader.com. **ARTICLES ON CAMS.**

Garrett, Susan R. "Paul's Thorn and Cultural Models of Affliction." In White, L. Michael, and O. Larry Yarbrough, eds. *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne a. Meeks*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. Pp. 82-99. **ARTICLE ON CAMS.**

Martin, Clarice J. "Biblical Theodicy and Black Women's Spiritual Autobiography." In *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil & Suffering*, edited by Emilie M. Townes. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1993. Pp. 13-36. **ARTICLE ON CAMS.**

Moorhead, James H. *World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999. Pp. 48-76. **EXCERPT ON RESERVE.**

Newsom, Carol A. "Three (Rather Different) Ways of Imagining Good and Evil." Unpublished manuscript, used with author's permission. **MANUSCRIPT ON CAMS.**

Shen, Patrick. *Flight From Death - The Quest for Immortality*. DVD. Go-Kart Records, 2005. **DVD WILL BE SHOWN IN CLASS.**

Talbert, Charles H. *Learning through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in Its Milieu*, 2018. Pp. 9-23. **EXCERPT ON CAMS.**

Wylie-Kellerman, Bill. "Thinking Biblically and Theologically about a Particular Power: An Inventory of Provoking Questions." Unpublished manuscript. **MANUSCRIPT ON CAMS.**