

“The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.”

Course	WRESTLING WITH TROUBLING TEXTS NEWT 0541 1A / OLDT 0541 1A
Date, Time, and Delivery Format	MAY 6 – JULY 26, 2024 AYSYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
Instructor	WILLIAM J. WEBB, Ph.D. Email: bwebb@tyndale.ca
Class Information	The course is web-based asynchronous with no fixed class time. Office Hours: You are welcome to post questions in the appropriate forums online. For other matters where more direct communication is helpful, we can set up a phone call, Zoom coffee or, if possible, meet at any Starbucks in Waterloo, ON (where I live).
Course Material	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One . Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine troublesome biblical texts by exploring hermeneutical methods that emphasize reading biblical texts redemptively within their ancient-world setting and canonical development. Students will shape the selection of texts and topics such as: ownership and harsh treatment of slaves, corporal punishment, cutting off a wife's hand, forced marriage/rape of war captives, genocide in holy war, collective punishment of an entire family for the crime of a single person, gender inequality, the prohibition of homosexuality and premarital sex, a supposedly loving God casting people into eternal, never-ending torment, etc.

Prerequisite: BIBL 0501

Students will reflect on how our contemporary horizon unwittingly impacts the understanding of difficult texts with both positive and negative contributions. Ultimately, students will wrestle with how textual meaning and biblical authority apply to life today.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

- examine redemptive-movement meaning as biblical texts are read within their ancient social and canonical contexts.
- identify how a reader’s horizon impacts the assessment of biblical texts and articulate the pros and cons of viewing the Bible from the radically different horizons of (a) contemporary ethical conventions and (b) the original ancient-world setting.
- realize why Christians have often misread and misapplied these ethically challenging texts.
- appraise the interplay between the hermeneutics, ethics and storyline that permits them to evaluate a range of more nuanced answers for difficulties within Scripture.
- display the skill of suspended-judgment listening that enables an accurate presentation of “diverse voices” along a spectrum ranging from very conservative, fundamentalist-type Christians to the ultra-critical voices of new atheism.
- apply hermeneutical principles that help (a) sort through cultural/transcultural components within the biblical text and (b) move our appropriation of the Bible beyond its concrete specificity to embrace a greater fulfillment of its redemptive spirit.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED TEXTS

Cowles, C. S., Eugene H. Merrill, Daniel L. Gard, and Tremper Longman III. [*Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*](#). Edited by Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003. [ISBN: 0-310-24568-0]

Neville, David J. [*The Vehement Jesus: Grappling with Troubling Gospel Texts*](#). Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017. [ISBN: 978-1-62032-480-6]

*Webb, William J. [*Slaves, Women, & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*](#). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. [ISBN: 0-8308-1561-9].

Webb, William J. [*Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts*](#). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011. [ISBN: 978-0-8308-2761-9].

Webb, William J. and Gordon Oeste, [*Bloody, Brutal and Barbaric? Wrestling with Troubling War Texts.*](#) Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019. [ISBN: 978-0-8308-5249-9]

*Note: If you have had a *Biblical Interpretation* course at Tyndale and have already read this [*Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*] as a textbook, please let me/the professor know and I will give you an alternative reading assignment possibly from the recommended list below.

B. SUPPLEMENTARY/RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND TOOLS

Beale, G. K. [*The Morality of God in the Old Testament.*](#) P&R Publishing and Westminster Seminary Press, 2013. [ISBN: 978-1-59638-852-9]

Boyd, Gregory A. [*Cross Vision: How the Crucifixion of Jesus Makes Sense of Old Testament Violence.*](#) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.

Lamb, David T. [*God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?*](#) Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011. [ISBN: 978-0-8308-3826-4]

Lynch, Matthew J. [*Flood and Fury: Old Testament Violence and the Shalom of God.*](#) Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2023.

Middleton, J. Richard. [*Abraham's Silence: The Binding of Isaac, the Suffering of Job, and How to Talk Back to God.*](#) Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021

Nugent, John C. [*The Politics of Yahweh: John Howard Yoder, the Old Testament, and the People of God.*](#) Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011. [ISBN: 978-1-60899-914-9]

Seibert, Eric A. [*Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God.*](#) Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009. [ISBN: 978-0-8006-6344-5]

Seibert, Eric A. [*The Violence of Scripture: Overcoming the Old Testament's Troubling Legacy.*](#) Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012. [ISBN: 978-0-8006-9825-6]

Sprinkle, Preston, ed. [*Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church.*](#) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016. [ISBN: 978-0-310-52863-0]

Sprinkle, Preston, ed. [*Four Views on Hell.*](#) 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016. [ISBN: 978-0-310-51646-0]

Strauss, Mark L. [*Jesus Behaving Badly: The Puzzling Paradoxes of the Man from Galilee.*](#) Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. [ISBN: 978-0-8308-2466-3]

Trimm, Charlie. [*The Destruction of the Canaanites: God, Genocide, and Biblical Interpretation.*](#) Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2022. [ISBN: 978-0-8028-7962-2]

Tyndale recommends www.stepbible.org – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as

for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

C. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to “Guidelines for Interactions” on your course resource page at [classes.tyndale.ca](#).

D. DISCUSSION FORUMS, EXPECTATIONS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Discussion Forums. Discussion forums are a key aspect of this course. They are your opportunity to wrestle with the assignments/relevant issues under consideration, to share your ideas with your peers, and share the evolving group consensus. There are two types of forums in this course: (a) research-based forums and (b) fun forums. You will discover the difference between these two forum types as you read through the assignment section (below) and in the “Forum Rules” posted online.

Forum Expectations and Responsibilities. As you know, the course is being offered online. An online course, by its very nature, is different from one presented using traditional classroom methods. Thus, it is important for you as a student to approach this course differently than you might approach a classroom course. You have more personal responsibility in a course such as this. We are an online community building our knowledge and understanding together. Doing your readings and regularly showing up online by collaborating in discussions, asking questions, and providing feedback to your learning cohort are important community responsibilities. Additionally, in order to keep up in the course it will be important for you to work consistently throughout the semester. You will need to be disciplined and take the initiative to participate.

You are also expected to complete the anonymous course evaluation in the final week of the course.

The role of your instructor is different as well. In an online course, the main role of the instructor is to function as a coach. I will be striving in various ways to fulfill that function. I will be presenting information in various formats along the way, but my main role will be to help guide you through the course so that you can get as much from the course as possible. Throughout, I will be encouraging you to think critically about the course content and the views of others, mine included. *I will be online regularly, but I will not be responding to every post in the discussion forums. Rather, I will make intermittent contributions, summarizing, challenging, and at times suggesting new directions.* One last thing, make sure that you read the documents related to forums that you will find in the resources section of the website (the main window

before the weeks start)—i.e., (a) Forum Rules and (b) specific instructions for each forum. These resources provide more detailed information about specific course requirements.

E. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Attendance in this course is demonstrated by regular log-ins and up-to-date participation in forums.

1. DFs and Q&As: Reflecting Upon Troubling Texts (30%)

Each week will provide an opportunity for students to participate in something—a survey, a discussion forum [DF], or a Q&A coffee time with the professor.

Survey. A survey will be available towards the end of the first week of the course (open Friday to Sunday). All students are encouraged (but not required) to complete the short survey to identify what topics they want for weeks 6—10. See weeks 6—10* under the “Schedule” section (below) for further details. Since your input from the survey is important for shaping the course, it would be beneficial to have every student participate. However, the survey itself is short and there is no direct student interaction. Thus, the survey does not count towards DF participation. In a sense, the survey functions as the culmination (Friday to Sunday) of the W1DF interaction where students listen to each other and, at the same time, lobby for certain choices—i.e., the “top five” picks they think would be best.

Discussion forums [DFs]. For each discussion forum, the student will post their view or perspective with a concise post title that reveals their perspective (e.g., “Yes, . . .” or “No . . .”).¹ No fence sitting. If there is some ambivalence, at least choose which way you are presently leaning with respect to the primary question of the week: “Yes (mostly) . . .” or “No (leaning slightly) . . .” While the title of your post quickly summarizes your answer (or leanings), the content of your post should explain the “why” of your thinking.² The initial DF post must be completed by Thursday of the week (or earlier) and a response/reply to at least two other student’s posting in your group by Sunday of the same week (or earlier).

Q&As—Coffee with the Professor. There will be two occasions for a live Q&A coffee time with the professor. These live Q&As count as a DF should you wish to participate.

DF Grading: Quantity and Quality. The grade for student participation in the DFs and Q&A coffees will be based primarily upon *quality*—i.e., the curtesy, clarity, insight and well-reasoned nature of the student’s interaction as assessed by the professor. *Quantity*—i.e., the number of DFs set the “ceiling potential” for the highest grade possible. In other words, the quantity factor caps the grade potential. Here is the how the ceiling or cap works:

¹ W1DF postings could simply be titled, “My Top Five Picks”.

² These are not locked-in-stone positions; they are merely where your thinking is *at present* as you have reflected upon some of the lecture and reading materials for the week.

- 7 or more DFs (\approx two thirds) . . . “A” ceiling as a possible (not actual) grade³
- 5 or more DFs (\approx half) . . . “B” grade ceiling or cap
- 3 or more DFs (\approx one third) . . . “C” grade ceiling or cap

The professor reads all DF posts but generally does not respond to them (except through “Dr. Webb live (almost)” comments, the Syllabus forum, News items, etc. where some interaction might be helpful to share with the entire class). DF contributions are *not* graded individually in a week-by-week fashion. During the last week of the course (towards the end of the week—Friday to Sunday) the student will report to the professor the quantity/number of DFs (and specify which ones) they participated in; the professor will re-read all of the student’s postings (in one sitting) and assess the cumulative or overall quality of a student’s DF contributions. The professor will return a DF grade at the same time the final paper is returned.⁴

For a grading rubric and further explanation of the DFs/Q&As see the opening section of the course (i.e., material posted before or above the Week-1 material).

Due date: Each DF or Q&A is due **during the week** designated for that topic. The initial DF posting is due by *Thursday* and two responses to others in your group is due by *Sunday*.

2. Book Review (30%)

Students will contribute throughout the course by posting a 2-to-3-page, single-spaced book review that allows the class to hear “other voices” within on the topic of the week. No book reviews on the main textbooks are permitted since these are required reading for everyone.

Those students who have chosen to contribute a book review for a certain week/topic must also read and respond to at least two other reviews (if present) in that *same* week.

A grading rubric and more detailed instructions for book reviewers will be provided in the opening section of the course (i.e., material placed before/above the Week-1 section).

Due date: **Monday morning** of the week/topic chosen.

3. The Holy War/Genocide Debate (40%) Optional*

*Note: The holy war debate is optional. Instead of participating in this war-texts debate, students can choose to write a final research paper. See below.

For a spectrum of debate views on the holy war texts see the chart in Webb/Oeste, *Bloody, Brutal and Barbaric* (Introduction towards the end). **Traditional View** [Merrill/Gard/Longman + Beale] vs. **Anti-Traditional View** [Seibert/Cowles] will function as the core of the polar

³ Once again, a ceiling cap does *not* determine grade. For example, a student with 7 or more DFs *may* still receive a “B” grade or “C” grade (or lower) depending upon the *quality* of their contributions.

⁴ The professor may (or may not) ask for student input on this element of grading. Even if group input into the grading is sought, the professor’s evaluation will be determinative.

extremes Christian world for reading the biblical war texts: a pristine good vs. a tragic evil. Depending upon how many students chose the debate option (over a final paper), we may add other various **Up-the-Middle Views** [Copan/Flannagan, Boyd; cf. Webb/Oeste, etc.], **New-Atheism Views** [Dawkins, Hitchens, or Harris, etc.]. We may also split off Beale's view into a **Traditional View Plus** since it is close to but distinct from the Traditional View.

[Aside: Depending upon (a) the choices for weeks 5—10 and (b) the number of students interested pursuing a debate assignment (instead of a final paper), the professor will consider setting up other live debates that are recorded via Zoom and posted for the class (e.g., these could possibly include, for example, the *homosexuality debate* or the *hell debate*).]

Due date: **Week 10 Zoom shoot; Monday Week 11 post debate.** [Note: For the holy-war debate, it would be wise to shoot the debate via Zoom during Week 10 because of coordinating several people's involvement. Then, the recorded debate will be ready for the professor to post on the Monday morning of week 11. Students doing a book review on war genocide/total-kill texts must post their own materials on the same Monday of week 11, preferably in the morning.]

4. Research Paper (40%)

For the major course paper students may choose to write on any one text or on a group of biblical texts that has/have a troubling ethical component. Alternatively, students may wish to critique the pros/cons of a single view that has developed within an understanding of these troubling ethical texts. At any point in the course, the professor would be happy to dialogue about potential paper topics. Simply post your questions (about potential topics) in the syllabus forum. Thanks.

The paper must strive for excellence in three areas: research, writing style and argumentation. A discussion of these three areas along with a grading rubric will be provided in the opening section of the course (just above the Week 1 section). The paper should be 15-20 double-spaced pages (bibliography not included) and conform to Chicago style. See next section.

Due date: **Friday August 2nd, 2024**

F. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

G. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Reflecting Upon Troubling Texts [DFs & Q&As]	30 %
Book Review	30 %
Research Paper or Debate	40 %
Total Grade	100 %

H. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Submissions. Kindly email only the final/exegetical paper as an attached file (either MSWord or PDF format) to the professor at: bwebb@tyndale.ca All other research-based assignments are submitted online through posting them within the course forums.

Late DF Submissions. The initial “assignment” post to an RB Forum is due between Monday and Thursday (midnight, Eastern Standard Time) of the week it is scheduled in the course. Two subsequent “critical interaction” posts are due by the end of the same week—i.e., by Sunday (midnight, Eastern Standard Time). Any further trailer interaction the following week is encouraged but optional. Only postings during the topic week will count towards the DFs portion of the course requirements.

Late Debate or Book-Review Submissions. The debate and the book reviews must be posted on the Monday of Week 11, preferably in the morning. Since these materials account for a significant portion of the week’s collective learning/instruction, late contributions will be penalized heavily (½ grade per day late).

Late FINAL PAPER Submissions, part I: ON OR BEFORE the “Last Day of Exams” [LDOE] Deadline. The last day of exams in a semester is the official deadline for any late submissions. After that day, the professor cannot accept late work without the explicit/written approval of the dean’s office (see below). If a student recognizes that a late submission on or before the LDOE deadline does not involve clear extenuating circumstances (defined below), they may submit the material to the professor as **(i) a late submission with penalty** until midnight of the LDOE. In this case there is no need to contact the professor for approval. For every day late, the grade will be reduced by 5 %, a half a letter grade (i.e. one day late: 82 % A- becomes 77% B+; two days late, 82 % becomes 72 % B-, etc.). Please note that the deduction for a partial day late counts that same as a full day late. On the other hand, if there are clear extenuating circumstances, the student may ask the professor for **(ii) a late submission without penalty** (or with partial penalty). By clear mitigating circumstances I mean something along the following lines. Suppose I as your professor were to take your circumstances to the class (hypothetically, not in reality) and ask them the following question, “Should I treat this student differently regarding late penalties than I would treat the rest of you based upon their particular [mitigating?] circumstances?” If the class were to respond with an overwhelming, “Yes, of

course,” then you have a case of clear mitigating circumstances. If you wish to ask for this sort of late submission without penalty (or with only partial penalty) where the submission is on or before the LDOE, please contact the professor. The student must take the initiative in this matter.

Late FINAL PAPER Submissions, part II: AFTER the “Last Day of Exams” [LDOE] Deadline. Any submissions after the LDOE require a formal process of appeal to the Registrar’s Office (not to the professor). Requests for such extensions beyond the LDOE must be (a) submitted in writing using the Tyndale Extension Forms, explaining the reason why the extension is needed and (b) submitted to the registrar before the LDOE unless there are reasons why this was not possible. No assignments will be accepted after the LDOE unless the student has a valid reason for an extension. In that case, the student must apply for an extension to the dean/registrar (again, not to the professor). Extensions will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, the hospitalization of yourself or a member of your immediate family, or an illness for which you require treatment by a physician. Reference to a heavy workload, other assignments, professional or ministry obligations or holidays do not constitute legitimate grounds for an extension.

For proper citation style, consult the [tip sheet, “Documenting Chicago Style”](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially ch. 14. For citing scripture texts, refer to sections 10.44 to 10.48 and 14.238 to 14.241 from the *Chicago Manual of Style* or reference the [tip sheet, “How to Cite Sources in Theology”](#).

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the [Academic Integrity website](#) for further details.

Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#). Citation and other [tip sheets](#).

Students should also consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

Research Ethics

All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the [Tyndale Research Ethics Board \(REB\)](#). Check with the Seminary Dean’s Office (aa@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

I. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Abbreviations:

W1DF = Week #1 Discussion Forum

Week 1 Syllabus

W1DF: Lobby for your "top five" pics; listen to what others think.

Survey: Pick five topics for weeks 6—10 (see below).

Slavery texts: severe beatings, treating people as property, fragmenting families?

God Portrait: God Most Holy

Week 2 *Women* texts: Inequality and disturbing treatment of women?

W2DF, two parts:

(a) Primary: Must women unilaterally submit to/obey men?

(b) Secondary: Cutting off a wife's hand—is it just (or unjust) justice?

God Portrait: The Lopsided God

Week 3 *Rape* texts: Grabbing captured virgins as trophy wives? Marrying your rapist?

W3DF, two parts:

(a) Primary: Does God sanction or condone *war* rape?

(b) Secondary: Are the *domestic* rape texts just?

God Portrait: The Suffering God; Tears in Heaven

Week 4 *Corporal Punishment* texts: Beating children? To spank or not to spank?

W4DF, two parts:

(a) Background/personal-horizon questions: How were you disciplined as a child?
How do, did, or would you discipline your own children?

(b) Primary question: Does a parent have to spank their children to be obedient to the Bible?

God Portrait: The Uneasy War God; David's Bloody Hands

Weeks 5 Coffee and Q&A with the Professor: "Let's Talk."

W5DF [Zoom]: a live interaction about the topics discussed so far and/or about where we are headed in the next few weeks.

Weeks 6 – 10 *Students pick the troubling texts/topics for the next five weeks.

Yes, you get to shape almost half of this course. We will do a survey towards the end of the first week (open Friday to Sunday) which will shape what texts/topics we wrestle with as a class during weeks 6–10. The top five picks by the class will be the topics for weeks 6–10.

Don't worry. Even if we do not collectively pick one of the topics you would have chosen for these five weeks (i.e., it does not make the collective cut), there will be (a) a trailer section to the course that will provide you with extra, no-obligation "weeks/topics" of materials on a number of these other, not-picked troubling texts. Also, (b) you are certainly welcome to choose one of these remaining, not-picked troubling-text topics for your final paper.

Here are the topic options for weeks 6 – 10. Hit the survey link on the first week of the course (open Friday to Sunday of Week 1) and choose your top five picks.

Homosexuality Texts: What is the ultimate sexual ethic for Christians today? Should we maintain the same prohibitions as the ancient biblical texts? Are there cultural elements we need to factor into the discussion? Can evangelical churches genuinely welcome and embrace homosexuals?

Hell Texts: How can a loving God cast people into a place of never-ending torment? Forever and ever? Does this kind of justice not seem a wee bit over the top?

Polygamy, Levirate Marriage: Why does God seem to tacitly support and even bless these forms of sexuality but not homosexuality? What are some of the pragmatic

factors in the ANE world that contributed in that ancient setting towards the (greater) acceptance of polygamy than in our world?

Premarital Sex and Virginity Expectations: Is the Bible simply out of touch with the times? Is “wait until marriage” or “get married now” something we should endorse? ANE/GR vs. Contemporary Western Context. What are the differences (and similarities) between these two worlds that profoundly impact how we apply the biblical text today?

Singleness/Celibacy: Do Paul and Jesus’ perspective on singleness break from the strong Edenic pattern? If so, what legitimizes that? Should singleness be seen in an elevated sense today?

Divorce and Remarriage: How should our handling of sexuality in the divorce and remarriage texts help us rethink the homosexuality question?

Menstrual Laws: Why did women have a different length of impurity based upon the gender of the baby? How do these texts speak to us today?

Imprecatory Prayers: Is it okay to pray for bashing my enemy’s baby to death, or smashing their teeth or giving them back double whatever evil they have given?

Sex/Intercourse Prohibition (death penalty): Is the prohibition of sex during menstruation for married couples completely transcultural and binding on Christians today? Partially? None at all? Why death in the OT [seems like overkill]?

Collective [Family] Punishments: Making the entire household—wife, children, servants and animals—pay for the sin/crime of one person (e.g., Achan)? Having successive generations endure hardship/punishment (3rd or 4th generation) for the sins of previous generations?

Natural Disasters: Is it fair for God to judge the entire earth (drowning even newborns) during the flood for the sins of some/many adults?

Cosmic Catastrophes: What about the apocalyptic catastrophes (seals, trumpet and bowls) in the book of Revelation?

Marriage—the Core Concepts: What concepts are “core” to a biblical understanding of marriage? What concepts are peripheral, cultural or less-than ultimate ethic even if found within Scripture?

Betrothal, Arranged Marriages, Bride Price, Patrilocal Setting, Age Differential, Dowry, etc.: Frequently within the patriarchy of the biblical text and the ANE world we encounter to the practice of arranged marriages, a price set for acquiring the bride, the physical movement of the bride to live in the location of her husband’s household (and within his larger family/clan), and almost twice the age difference at marriage (males 25-30 vs. females 12-14), an itemization of what property/goods (dowry) the wife was bringing into the marriage, etc.

Women as “Gardens” and Men as “Seed Sowers” in Producing Offspring: ANE/GR vs. Contemporary Western Context. How do ancient-world procreation concepts impact topics of sex, marriage and family in the Bible?

Other topic/texts? Specify. You may want to suggest other topics or biblical texts that you would like to propose as “troubling texts” that we cover collectively in the course (weeks 6–10), separately in the trailer section (after the 12 weeks as optional downloading for later) or as a good paper topic for students to pursue.

Week 11 War Texts, part I: Genocide—killing women and babies in the name of Yahweh?

Debate: Traditional View vs. Anti-Traditional View [Debate shot via Zoom on Week 10; Posted on the Monday of Week 11]

Book reviews: Adding Other Voices [Up-the-Middle View(s) and New-Atheism View(s)].

W11DF: Look at the spectrum of views in the Introduction of *Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric*. Primary question: What position/view across the spectrum are you gravitating towards at this point? Why?

Week 12 War Texts, part II: Divergent God portraits?

W12DF: How do you reconcile the God of war [Yahweh] and Prince of peace [Jesus in the Gospels]? How do you reconcile the Jesus of the Gospels [non-violent; put down your sword Peter] with the Jesus of Revelation [a sword-wielding apocalyptic warrior]?

Last Lecture: “The Big Why” [Why does God use an incremental ethic?]

Closing Zoom Coffee and Q&A with Professor: “Let’s Talk [Again].” [optional]

Post-Course, Trailer Topics [Extra Weeks]

The “trailer weeks” or “trailer topics” will appear in a section *after* the official 12th week. The course obviously does *not* go beyond the 12th week in time. Furthermore, engaging these materials is completely optional. Students may want to choose from these topics for a final paper or simply download the odd trailer “week/topic” for future interest.

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

([Tyndale Library](#) supports this course with [e-journals](#), [e-books](#), and the [mail delivery of books](#) and circulating materials. See the [Library FAQ page](#).)

- Allender, Dan B and Longman III, Tremper. *God Loves Sex. An Honest Conversation about Sexual Desire and Holiness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014.
- Ames, Frank Ritchel. "Women and War in the Hebrew Bible." Ph.D. diss., University of Denver, 1998.
- Assante, Julia. "The Erotic Reliefs of Ancient Mesopotamia." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2000.
- Avalos, Hector. *The Bad Jesus: The Ethics of New Testament Ethics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015.
- Bahrani, Zainab. *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
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