Course ID: TH 651  
Course Title: Trauma and Theology  
Winter 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Information</th>
<th>Instructor Information</th>
<th>Important Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Days: Thursday</td>
<td>Instructor: Christina Conroy, Ph.D.</td>
<td>First day of classes: Tue, January 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: 1-3:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:christina.conroy@ambrose.edu">christina.conroy@ambrose.edu</a></td>
<td>Last day to add/drop, or change to audit: Sun, January 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room: L2084</td>
<td>Phone: 403.410.2000 Ext. 6933</td>
<td>Last day to request revised exam: Mon, March 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab/Office: L2066</td>
<td>Office: Drop in Wednesdays 10-11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Last day to withdraw from course: Fri, March 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam: n/a</td>
<td>Last day to apply for coursework extension: Fri, March 30</td>
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<td>Last day of classes: Fri, April 9</td>
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Course Description
An interdisciplinary study of trauma and theology. The course addresses the unique challenges that the phenomenon of trauma poses to classical and contemporary Christian theology, and the insights of particular Canadian experiences of and research on trauma. These studies will deepen the student's ability, as a theologian, to respond to the complex challenges confronting traumatized persons and communities.

Following theologian Shelly Rambo’s approach, we ask the following questions: What are the unique challenges that the phenomenon of trauma poses to classical and contemporary Christian theology? What insights do we have from particularly Canadian experiences of and research on trauma? How do the insights of trauma studies deepen your own ability, as a theologian, to respond to the complex challenges confronting traumatized persons and communities?

The course follows four movements. The first explores theoretical and clinical studies of trauma. The second focuses on the human condition. The third examines questions about the nature and presence of God. The last explores questions about community and healing. Throughout the course, we continually press the questions:

This course is part of the Science for Seminaries grant funded by American Association for the Advancement of Science/Templeton Foundation in consultation with the Association of Theological Schools. The project helps a diverse group of seminaries integrate science into their core curricula. This course will include recent insights from neuroscience on memory and epigenetics, and includes a field trip to the Department of Neuroscience in Lethbridge on Wednesday, February 5. The goal of this integration is to help students faithfully engage with science in their faith communities.

Expected Learning Outcomes
Ambrose Seminary, we seek to nurture theological depth and breadth, cultivate a heart after God, foster vocational clarity and effectiveness, and inspire redemptive action. To this end, this course sets the following learning outcomes:

1. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of trauma from a variety of clinical and theoretical perspectives.
2. Students will gain a working vocabulary and theological lens for addressing experiences of trauma.
3. Students will learn to navigate challenging and pressing cross-disciplinary issues from a theological perspective.
4. Students will learn to navigate the skills and resources needed to develop ongoing constructive theological proposals helpful for their particular spiritual context.

Kindly note that though this course is not designed to invite personal experiences or narratives of trauma to the classroom, practices of self-care are encouraged. Given the nature of the topic, it is possible that discussions and readings will impact you in unanticipated ways. I encourage each member of the class to develop some kind of spirit/body practice to sustain you during the semester. This may be an artistic practice, physical exercise, prayer, singing in a choir, dance, yoga, sport, intentional time spent outdoors or in places of beauty. Remember that such sustaining practices do not deny pain, but resist participating in the further diminishing of goodness. Please take advantage of Wednesday afternoon Word and Table as a place of solace.

**Textbooks**

Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*
Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*
Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace, second edition*
Shelly Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*
Wendy Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*
David Wood, *What We Have Done*
Roxane Gay, *Hunger*

*Other articles, podcasts and resources listed below. More will be posted on Moodle.*

**Enacted Textbooks (experiences)**

- Field Trip to University of Lethbridge Neuroscience Facility. Wednesday February 5. This is an all-day trip and transportation and lunch will be provided.
- Movie Night: Once during the semester, students will be invited to the professor’s home to watch a movie that is related to some aspect of trauma. We can choose the angle. Suggestions are Crash (urban trauma), Memento (trauma theory), The Hurt Locker (war), The Dhamma Brothers, Lars and the Real Girl, or Buck (redemption). We will set the date of this together. Popcorn provided.

**Course Schedule**

**Part One: Introduction to Trauma**

**January 9: Orientation to the Course**

Assigned Reading/Listening:

- Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery, chapters 1-3
- In class: Meghan McElhran, Trauma Change Resilience, TedxYYC, 2011 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8nMgY5dkT5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8nMgY5dkT5)

**January 16: Foundational Texts**

Assigned Reading/Listening:

Grief and compassion spring from author’s exploration of intergenerational trauma, CBC Saskatchewan, June 10, 2019 (audio included)
Choose three publications from traumacenter.org to discuss in class

January 23: Multiple Approaches
Assigned Reading/Listening:
· David Wood, What We Have Done.
· Statistics on PTSD after Afghanistan and Iraq (U.S.) https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/ptsd-overview/reintegration/overview-mental-health-effects.asp
· Maria Root. “Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality,” in Personality and Psychopathology, 229-265.
· “Psychological Responses to Racism Similar to Trauma Symptoms, Study Finds,” Medical News Today, 18 November 2011.
http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/237856.php
· Aboriginal Peoples and Historic Trauma: The Processes of Intergenerational Transmission, National Collaborating Centre of Aboriginal Health, 2015.
https://onbeing.org/programs/rachel-yehuda-how-trauma-and-resilience-cross-generations/
· other readings from Lethbridge Neuroscientists, TBD

February 5: Trip to Lethbridge Neuroscience Facility (8a.m.-6p.m. Transportation and lunch provided)

Part Two: Conversations in the Theology of Creation and Fall, The Human Condition: Who are we that we can wound and be so wounded?

February 6: Sin, Guilt and Shame
Assigned Reading:
· Augustine, City of God, books 11-19.
· John Calvin, Institutes, Book II, Chapter 5, section 1-4. Book I, Chapter 15 (optional); Book II, Chapter 1, section 4-11 (optional).
· Johann Choi, military chaplain AAR presentation, 2019 (posted with permission)

February 13: Narrative and Trauma
Assigned Reading:
· Serene Jones, Trauma and Grace, chapters 1, 2
· Shelly Rambo, Resurrecting Wounds, introduction
· Residential School Testimony, www.nctr.ca, selections
· Roxane Gay, Hunger, part I (chapters 1-9). *warning: narrative of rape
· Optional: Mel Cook Crate, Let me tell you about intergenerational trauma, Residential School Magazine, October 3, 2017
http://www.residentialschool.ca/let-me-tell-you-about-inter-generational-trauma/
Part Three: Conversations in the Theology of God: Where is God in the Suffering?

February 27
Assigned Reading:
· Douglas J. Hall, The Cross in our Context. Jesus in the Suffering World, chapters 4, 5, 6. (Recommended, chapters 1 and 2).
· Elie Wiesel, Night, pp. 45-62; foreword by Francois Mauriac, pp. vii-xii.
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/10/opinion/10safire.html

March 5
Assigned Reading:
· Wendy Farley, Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion
· In class: “He Has a Reason:” How Natural Disasters Test the Faithful.
http://www.npr.org/2017/09/04/548471362/-he-has-a-reason-how-natural-disasters-test-the-faithful
· peruse online Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma and choose an article to read

Part Four: Conversations in Theology of Redemption: Who are We to Be (in the aftermath)?

March 12, 19: Telling the Story of Trauma
Assigned Reading:
· Serene Jones, Trauma and Grace, chapters 4, 5, 6, 8.
· Shelly Rambo, Resurrecting Wounds, chapters 1 and 2.
· Judith Butler, Precarious Life, chapter 2 ("Violence, Mourning and Politics).

March 26, April 2
Assigned Reading/Listening:
· Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery, chapters 7-11
· Shelly Rambo, Resurrecting Wounds, chapters 3 and 5, conclusion

April 8
· Presentations

Requirements

1. Classroom Citizenship 10%

Christian character is practiced in the ordinariness of everyday life. Students are expected to nurture a loving, attentive posture towards his or her class citizens in a way that enables the flourishing of each participant. Our learning environment depends on people who have engaged the readings fully and thoughtfully, participate in the classroom environment in
meaningful way, and extend kindness and respect to everyone (authors, students, teachers, guests) despite differences, limitations, failures and successes. The expectation is that you will come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and topics at hand. Discussion involves speaking, active listening, and raising questions that will move the conversation towards deeper insights. The professor will consider your classroom attendance, your extracurricular classroom attendance, your treatment of others, your level of engagement and your demonstration of love of neighbor and enemy when determining your portion of this grade.

This term, part of the classroom citizenship portion includes each student leading the class in a short practice of beauty. This could be a specific prayer or visual exercise. Beauty is a spiritual practice that acts as a kind of defiance against harm by refusing to participate in the diminishing of others.

2. **Discussion Postings 20%**

In preparation for each class, you will write a one to two paragraph response to the assigned readings on Moodle. I encourage you to use these postings to respond to—and develop—an idea in the reading that impressed you, concerned you, or assisted you in deepening your understanding of trauma and theology. Some assigned readings will come with a reading guide. You may use this as a springboard for your questions.

- There are 10 possible weeks to submit and you must submit 8 entries. Take two passes from discussion as needed.
- Postings must be made before each class period in order to give your colleagues a chance to respond to your question.
- The goal of this response is to assist you in synthesis of the material, to develop your ability to identify a writer’s key point, and to practice expressing your ideas concisely. A long response is not a better response.

3. **Theological Analysis Paper 20% (February 27)**

Choose a text (Jones, Rambo) that provides a theological assessment of and response to trauma. Analyze the author’s key contributions to the way trauma and Christian theology speak to each other. Your paper should follow the course structure:

1. Provide a brief introduction to the book; note context, intended audience and purpose (.5 page);
2. Identify how the author defines trauma and his or her methodological approach to the study of trauma (.5 page);
3. Describe the author’s theological contribution (1-2 pages). You may choose to structure this following the main questions this course asks (who are humans, who/what/where is God in suffering, who are we in the aftermath).
4. Evaluate the implications, limitations, trajectory of the author’s insights. (1-2 pages) Use this section to develop your own theological voice as you challenge, affirm, or bounce off what the author has suggested. Include in this section further questions you would like to pursue.

4. **Hope Statement 10% (April 8)**

It is important to reflect on hope in the aftermath of trauma. After spending the semester in the middle of difficult subject matter, is there hope? If so, what constitutes hope? Try not to use sentimental language, but reflect deeply on the places you see a glimmer of light even in the presence of wounds and wounding. For this assignment, prepare a three-minute statement of hope that you can read out loud. Do not feel constrained by your statement—it is not binding or definitive, but a reflection of where you see a way to hope right now. Your three-minute hope statement will be presented to everyone in the last class.

5. **Integrative Project 40% (March 12, April 10)**

This assignment provides you with the opportunity to integrate the readings and discussions of the class into a project that reflects your vocational interests. Many of you have taken this class because you live or work in contexts for which the themes of the class are timely. Design your project with that context in mind. How would what you have come to know about trauma and theology be presented in that context? In other words, design a project with a particular audience in mind. It might be helpful for you to ask: What are the issues that matter to you most? And then: what medium might I use...
to best communicate these issues?

**Ideas:**
- An Ambrose Chapel. Planning the components of a chapel would give you the opportunity to explore what it looks like to respond in a worship setting to a mandated event, how to think liturgically about trauma and hope, and how to communicate effectively to a diverse audience. The March 24 Chapel (Week of Solidarity with the People Struggling Against Racism and Racial Discrimination) is an option.
- An editorial that you would submit to a newspaper or journal.
- A conference proposal and presentation.
- A media piece with artist’s statement and rubric.
- A fictional piece you plan to submit for publication.
- A public event. Design a community-based event around a particular issue related to trauma or restoration after trauma. Ideas include events related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Incarceration, residential schools, issues on the United Nations calendar such as International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery. These issues would need to be researched, and best practices assessed when it comes to who speaks for what, what medium is best for communication, etc.
- A visual data project. See online sources of visual data for inspiration.
- A proposal for a public memorial. Creating a proposal would include research on how memorials function, who gets input, the process of design, contracting, budget, relationship of the piece to the history and community, accessibility, etc.
- A play or musical composition.

➢ On March 12 submit an abstract of your project. I will work with you to put the necessary research pieces and evaluative measures in place. Depending on the project, you may need a mentor in the field of your interest. Final projects are due the week of final exams.

**Attendance**
A good classroom experience is a collaborative effort and a student’s absence detracts from the learning process of the whole. See the description of Classroom Citizenship for an expanded explanation for how we all shape the learning environment. Please arrive on time for every class. Attendance is taken in the first five minutes of class and you are considered absent if you are not present for attendance. It is a policy of this professor that a student cannot receive a passing grade if they have missed more than 1/3 of the class which is four classes in whole or in part. Absence includes missing first day of class, missing class due to extra-curricular commitments, or any required extra-classroom, evening lectures, etc. Students who have sports commitments or students who get fatigued at end of the semester need to budget their time so that some absences are saved for emergencies. For our student athletes, please submit your game schedule to the professor so I can work with you on this. For Ambrose athletes and musicians, kindly note that while your co-curricular related absences do count towards your four-absence limit, they will not detract from your citizenship grade. Apart from this exception, any lateness/absence will detract from your classroom citizenship grade, which is determined at the professor’s discretion. Within the four-absence limit, if you miss more than half any given unit in the course you will need to submit a research paper on the topic you missed in order to pass the class.

**Grades**
The following is an interpretation of class grades:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C+  Satisfactory  2.30  77-79
C   2.00  73-76
C-  1.70  70-72
D+  Poor   1.30  65-69
D  Minimal Pass  1.00  60-64
D-  Minimal Pass  50-59
F  Failure   0.00  below 50

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. Please contact the professor if you would like your end of semester rubric or comments.

Other
- This course seeks to be inclusive of all races, cultures, genders and abilities. Please be mindful that when writing papers, you should use terms like people, world, us, human being, humanity, etc. instead of the terms man, mankind, etcetera.

- Please let the professor know if you have a preferred name or pronoun. I will do my best to address you in the way you feel most comfortable.

- Beverages are allowed in class. Food is not. Please eat before coming to class. If this is difficult because of your schedule, please make special arrangements with the professor.

- Computers are allowed in class unless it becomes clear that students are using their computers to access interests and obligations not directly related to the class. If such a discovery is made, the class will switch to paper only.

- Late assignments will lose one-half of a letter grade per day for up to one week. After one week you will not receive a passing grade for the assignment, although:
  - You must submit all assignments in order to receive a passing grade for the course.
  - All written assignments must be submitted electronically to the course Moodle page unless indicated by the professor.
  - All written assignments should have a title page containing pertinent assignment and course information.
  - All written assignments should be double-spaced using a 12-point sans serif font that conforms to the standards and best practices of universal design. San serif fonts include Calibri and Arial. Universal design researches the kinds of colors and fonts that are accessible to readers of varying abilities. See http://accessibility.arl.org/standards-best-practices/ for a discussion of current guidelines.
  - All written assignments must use formatting that complies with the Chicago/Turabian style guide which is available in the library and online. Formatting includes footnotes and bibliography.
  - All electronic submissions must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents (.docx) only.
  - All written assignments must be saved with a file name that begins with the student’s surname followed by the name of the particular assignment. (e.g. Conroy - Reading Assignment 1.docx)
  - Any word limits designated in assignment descriptions include the entire assignment: the text, the bibliography, footnotes, etc.
Failure to submit assignments according to guidelines above may result in you being required to resubmit the assignment according to the proper format. The resubmitted assignment will be subject to the penalties of late submission.

You must wait 24 hours after receiving a grade for your assignment before contacting the professor to ask about the grade. Though a rubric is often used to grade assignments, the professor may or may not provide the rubric in advance or as a form of feedback.

In order to gain a guaranteed citizenship point for reading the syllabus up until this point, do the following: Perform a google image search for an insect and send it to the professor with the subject line “best insect ever” at christina.conroy@ambrose.edu. You can also use this email address to book a time slot for office hours or ask a question about the course. Kindly note that I reply to email only during regular Monday-Friday work hours.

Life happens. Please come and speak with me if you are going to be absent or late, if you are not well, if there is anything I should know that affects your classroom citizenship, or if there are circumstances preventing you from successfully fulfilling the requirements of this class. We are in this together. You are welcome to make an appointment to meet with me, to drop by during my office hours, or to speak with me after class.

Ambroise University Academic Policies:

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. If students do not wish to use their Ambrose accounts, they will need to forward all messages from the Ambrose account to another personal account.

Registration
During the Registration Revision Period students may enter a course without permission, change the designation of any class from credit to audit and/or voluntary withdraw from a course without financial or academic penalty or record. Courses should be added or dropped on the student portal by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. After that date, the original status remains and the student is responsible for related fees.

Students intending to withdraw from a course after the Registration Revision Period must apply to the Office of the Registrar by submitting a “Request to Withdraw from a Course” form or by sending an email to the Registrar’s Office by the Withdrawal Deadline; please consult the List of Important Dates on the my.ambrose.edu website. Students will not receive a tuition refund for courses from which they withdraw after the Registration Revision period. A grade of “W” will appear on their transcript.

Students wishing to withdraw from a course, but who fail to do so by the applicable date, will receive the grade earned in accordance with the course syllabus. A student obliged to withdraw from a course after the Withdrawal Deadline because of health or other reasons may apply to the Registrar for special consideration.

Exam Scheduling

Electronic Etiquette
Students are expected to treat their instructor, guest speakers, and fellow students with respect. It is disruptive to the learning goals of a course or seminar and disrespectful to fellow students and the instructor to use electronics for purposes unrelated to the course during a class session. Turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Laptops should be used for class-related purposes only. Do not use iPods, MP3 players, or headphones. Do not text, read, or send personal emails, go on Facebook or other social networks, search the internet, or play computer games during class. Some professors will not allow the use of any electronic devices in class. The professor has the right to disallow the student to use a laptop in future lectures and/or to ask a student to withdraw from the class if s/he does not comply with this policy. Repeat offenders will be directed to the Dean. If you are expecting communication due to an emergency, please speak with the professor before the class begins.

Academic Policies
It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the Academic Calendar. 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.

Extensions
Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a course Extension from the Registrar’s Office. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise “due to circumstances beyond the student’s control.”

Appeal of Grade
An appeal for change of grade on any course work must be made to the course instructor within one week of receiving notification of the grade. An appeal for change of final grade must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office in writing and providing the basis for appeal within 30 days of receiving notification of the final grade, providing the basis for appeal. A review fee of $50.00 must accompany the appeal. If the appeal is sustained, the fee will be refunded.

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.

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