

BSTH 4403
Topics in Biblical Theology
Forgiveness

Instructor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 1.0
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Hours	Mon. & Wed., 1:30–3:30 PM	Website	classes.tyndale.ca

Commuter Hotline Class cancellations due to inclement weather or illness will be announced on the commuter hotline at 416-226-6620 ext. 2187. Weather information is also posted at tyndale.ca/weather.

MyTyndale.ca This course may have materials stored on its website, such as handouts or readings that may be needed in order to complete assignments. Students are responsible for checking these course pages on a regular basis. Here, too, students are able to view their grades throughout the semester. For more information see Section 7.3.2, below.

Mail Students are responsible for information communicated through their campus mailboxes and student e-mail accounts. A mailbox directory hangs beside the mailboxes. For more information contact the Registrar's office.

1 COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the Academic Calendar:

A seminar style course involves the advanced study of a particular topic or figure in biblical theology that will change from year to year. It can be taken more than once for credit, provided that the topics are different. Students will be expected to contribute to the seminar by doing research and presenting the results to the seminar. Prerequisites: BSTH 101, 102, 201 and 270.

2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The basic goal of this course is to understand the current and historic significance of forgiveness. By the end of the semester students should be able to: define forgiveness; identify meaningful instances where it appears in art, literature, the Bible, theology, religion, politics, and other discourse; interpret and analyze such instances; compare and differentiate a variety of idioms for forgiveness, including ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian, religious and therapeutic, and so on; evaluate the utility of forgiveness and, where appropriate, criticize invocations of it that are maudlin, sentimental, or possibly even unethical; construct or explain models for the practice of forgiveness; produce a fine and well-supported thesis on forgiveness.

3 REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

All required textbooks are available in the Tyndale Bookstore.

[Hawthorne] Nathaniel Hawthorne. *The Scarlet Letter*. Ed. Thomas E. Connolly. New York: Penguin Classics, 2002.

[Horn] Dara Horn. *A Guide for the Perplexed: A Novel*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.

[Jones] L. Gregory Jones. *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

[Konstan] David Konstan. *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[Tutu] Desmond Tutu. *No Future Without Forgiveness*. New York: Image, 2000.

4 SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

Students must have access to a Bible. In some weeks it will be the primary object of study, while in others it will serve as a resource. I recommend *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) if you need to acquire one. Many serviceable English translations of the Bible exist, but the NRSV is a standard among biblical scholars. For this class the ESV and NJPS are acceptable alternatives.

Early in the semester we will watch and discuss the documentary *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* (2006, dir. Bob Hercules and Cheri Pugh), about Auschwitz survivor Eva Mozes Kor. I have asked the library to acquire a copy of the DVD.

Articles and book chapters from the vast literature on forgiveness (see Section 10 for a start) may be recommended and placed on the course website as the semester progresses. Within the first week please make a special point to read an old mystery story and a famous interview: G. K. Chesterton's "The Chief Mourner of Marne," from *The Secret of Father Brown* (1927, repr. in *The Father Brown Omnibus* [New York: Dodd, Mead, 1951]); and Jacques Derrida's "On Forgiveness," either in Michael Hughes' 2001 translation [5] or the French original, "[Le Siècle et le pardon](#)" (*Le Monde des Débats* 9 [1999], repr. in *Foi et savoir, suivi de Le Siècle et le pardon* [Paris: Seuil, 2000]).

5 EVALUATION

5.1 GRADE STRUCTURE FOR BSTH 4403

1. Each week of class will typically begin with a **reading quiz**. These are designed to ensure that you have read the assigned material carefully, and will frequently set a jumping-off point for seminar discussions. Quizzes may not be made up in the case of absence, though in special cases they may be taken in advance.
2. Each week, after the Monday class but before 10 AM on Wednesday, you are to post a brief (200 word) response to a prompt on the Moodle **discussion forum** (see 7.3.2). If quizzes gauge comprehension, the forum provides an opportunity to critique or construct knowledge, and to share or probe experiences. Aim to take risks. Be creative, thoughtful, honest, courteous, and punctual. If you have time before the class on Wednesdays, read and comment on the posts of your classmates. In the first weeks at least I will score posts on a scale of 0 to 3.
3. In week 6 students are to present a **case study** to the class. In 12 minutes you must report on and analyze a specific instance of forgiveness in art, literature, film, history, theology, philosophy, or public discourse. Use half your time for description and summary, and half for analysis and critique. Presentations will be evaluated for the quality of the selection, and the depth of analysis. I will model the exercise with [Horn] (my selection; for other ideas see the first and last chapters of [Jones], or the bibliography below [10]). Answer questions for your case like: how is forgiveness understood? how is it deployed? how meaningful is it?
4. A comprehensive **final paper** is due at the start of the exam period as schedule by the Registrar (see Section 6.2). Write an essay entitled "On Forgiveness" that explores relevant themes from the course. Bolster course readings and discussion with your own research. The final paper should be at least 12 pages, not including a bibliography of at least 12 articles or book chapters (a source per page on average). Be prepared to submit a draft for **peer review** on the last day of class, and to read a 1,000 word excerpt from your final submission in the exam period.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is as follows:

Reading Quizzes	20%
Forum Posts	20%
Case Study	15%
Peer Review	5%
Final Paper	40%

Table 1: Distribution of Grades

5.2 GRADING SYSTEM AT TYNDALE

Tyndale University College provides the following general benchmarks for summative assessment. I may furnish more detailed rubrics for particular assignments. Note also (at right) the percentage ranges and grade point values for letter grade designations.

A, B – Excellent, Good These grades are earned only when evidence indicates that the student has consistently maintained above average progress in the subject. Sufficient evidence may involve such qualities as creativity, originality, thoroughness, responsibility and consistency.

	<i>percent</i>	<i>pts.</i>
+	90–100	4.00
A	85–89	4.00
–	80–84	3.70
+	77–79	3.30
B	73–76	3.00
–	70–72	2.70
+	67–69	2.30
C	63–66	2.00
–	60–62	1.70
+	57–59	1.30
D	53–56	1.00
–	50–52	0.70
F	0–49	0.00

C – Satisfactory This grade means that the student has fulfilled the requirements of the subject to the satisfaction of the instructor. These requirements include the understanding of subject matter, adequacy and promptness in the preparation of assignments and participation in the work of the class.

D – Poor This grade indicates that the accuracy and content of work submitted meets only the minimal standards of the instructor. Consistent performance at this level is considered inadequate for graduation.

F – Failing Work submitted is inadequate. Attitude, performance and attendance are considered insufficient for a passing grade.

6 POLICY ON ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS

All policy in Sections 6, 7 and 8 of this syllabus applies to this course in addition to policy in the current [Academic Calendar](#). In some cases the syllabus underscores the general policy, while in other cases it supersedes it.

For all matters not covered in this syllabus, refer to Section 5 of the Academic Calendar, “University College Academic Policies, Procedures, and Notices.” Students are strongly encouraged to read this document carefully at least once in their career at Tynedale, and to review it every year they matriculate.

6.1 ASSIGNMENTS

This is a university course. All papers and other writing assignments should therefore be written at the university level. Submissions must be typewritten and double-spaced, should be free from error, and in this course should follow the *SBL Handbook of Style* (refer to the free, online [SBLHS Student Supplement](#).)

If you ever struggle with composition—anything from the relatively simple matters of spelling, grammar and proper citation to deeper-level issues of tone, structure and argument—then please make use of the Writing Centre (see Section 8.1). Experienced writers know that drafts and peer feedback are integral to the writing process. Inexperienced writers are often unaware that their surface-level errors create credibility problems with their readers. When you [misspell common words](#), fail to know [how to use an apostrophe](#), or do not bother to cite your sources correctly, why should your readers trust you with more important matters like the facts and ideas under discussion?

6.1.1 DEADLINES

Assignments *must* be submitted on time. Even if the work is rough or incomplete, you must turn in something by the due date to receive any credit whatsoever. Unless I specify differently in class, papers and take-home exams are due by 11:59 PM on the due date. All other work is due at the start of the day’s class.

Note that, because no late work is accepted in this class, there is no scale of penalty for unexcused late assignments. If a truly extraordinary event keeps you from doing your best work, then let me know so that we can make special arrangements. I am guided by the Academic Calendar in what counts as extenuation. “Extensions are not granted for what best could be described as ‘poor time management’ or ‘over-involvement’ in an extracurricular activity.”

6.1.2 SUBMISSION AS PDFS

Papers and some other assignments in this course are to be submitted electronically through the course pages (Section 7.3.2). To preserve formatting, formal writing assign-

ments must be uploaded in Portable Document Format. There are many ways of creating PDFs; it is your responsibility to know how to do so on the computer platform you use, and to generate and submit your PDFs on time.

6.1.3 BACKUP

In the event of the loss of assignments post-submission—electronic systems fail, and my office has flooded before—students are required to keep backup copies of all assignments submitted.

Learning how to secure and preserve your work is a peculiar challenge of the digital age. Plan on the crash of your hard drive, and the theft of your laptop (the first is inevitable, the second quite probable). If you do not have a backup strategy, I recommend that you start with a free account on [dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com).

6.2 EXAMINATIONS

My examination policy follows that outlined in Section 5 of the Academic Calendar; however, much of the policy does not apply in this class because it requires a final paper in lieu of a comprehensive exam. [Apply to the Registrar](#) if an extension is required due to a documented illness or a conflict with another exam (more than three in 24 hours).

7 STUDENT EXPECTATIONS & GUIDELINES

7.1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Integrity in academic work is required of all students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity. It 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 in an assignment (including false references to secondary sources), improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism.

Tyndale takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to apply consequences for academic dishonesty. Consult Section 5 of the Academic Calendar for more information on the school's policy and its application to your work in this course.

7.2 ATTENDANCE

"Faithful attendance at classes is an important indicator of student maturity and involvement" (Academic Calendar). Remember, too, that you are responsible for everything that happens in every class. Your best policy is to attend and engage. Please do not ask me to repeat for your benefit anything I have said in a class you have missed.

Keeping a record of attendance is mandatory for faculty at Tyndale (in contrast to many other colleges and universities). The University College publishes guidelines for how attendance should bear on your final evaluation in a course, and I adhere to them. Note that four lates equals one absence.

What should you do if you miss an undue number of classes? First, if possible, arrange for a classmate to brief you on the material missed, or get my permission for a classmate to make a recording for you (see Section [7.3.4](#)). Second, promptly notify the Dean of Students in person or by phone. If illness is the cause you will need to submit a doctor's certificate upon return. The Dean of Students will notify your professors of the reason for the absence and suggest that they take this into consideration when assigning grades.

7.3 TECHNOLOGY

Technological innovation has brought students and educators a number of powerful new tools, and I encourage you to use them as you research, write, and collaborate. Some of these tools also call for disciplined use and management.

7.3.1 EMAIL

Email can be a chore, and you may prefer other channels of communication. As a matter of policy, however, students must use their myTyndale accounts for all course-related email correspondence. During term time you should check your school account at least once a day (optional on weekends). I myself aim to check my school email at the beginning and end of each workday. At other times my email client is often closed. I will try to answer your messages within 24 hours, though you should not expect replies on weekends.

Keep your messages topical and brief. I would vastly prefer to conduct any conversations of substance in person, or else over the phone. Please note and make use of my office hours. If these hours do not suit your schedule, I would happily receive an email from you requesting an alternate meeting time.

7.3.2 MYTYNDALE.CA / CLASSES.TYNDALE.CA

Tyndale's course pages are an efficient means of distributing articles, notes, slides, and other course-related materials. This is also where instructors log attendance and upload grades for assignments. Students are therefore required to check the site for updates about their classes as well as for any materials needed for lectures and assignments.

My own use of this platform varies from semester to semester, and from course to course. At times I may ask you to use the forums, quiz module, or other parts of the system. At a minimum I will use the site as a repository for course materials, and as a destination for your submission of PDFs (Section 6.1.2).

7.3.3 LAPTOPS AND OTHER DEVICES

Use of laptops is forbidden in my classroom, except to facilitate presentation. I implement this policy because of the cognitive costs of multitasking, with the aim of giving you and your peers the best chance of success. I also hope to foster a culture of keen intellectual engagement.

As [cognitive psychologists at McMaster and York Universities demonstrated in 2013](#), "laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." There is little new in their finding that the allegedly multitasking student does less well in class (11% worse on the quiz in their experiment). This effect has been shown many times. Rather, their novel discovery is that classmates *without* laptops who sat with a *view* of another student's screen did worse than the students who had a computer (17% worse than those with no laptop in sight).

Prohibiting laptops is not the only possible response to these findings. However, there is evidence that [writing by hand](#) brings a number of cognitive benefits, and a [2014 Princeton University study](#) "found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand." If you are a heavy laptop user then consider this an opportunity to experiment with different technologies in the classroom.

As for the myriad networked devices that many of us carry, it's a simple matter of professionalism to keep these things silent and out of sight. E-readers and tablets are permitted *only if they are used to display the assigned reading*. If this is how you choose to read, let me invite you to put the machine in airplane mode while class is in session.

7.3.4 RECORDING OF CLASSES

Students must request permission from the professor of any class that they would like to record. Where permission is granted, students are expected to supply their own equipment. In general I prefer *not* to have my classes recorded, and I am not at all friendly to being recorded without my knowledge. In cases where I grant permission, I stipulate that the recordings must be for personal use only. They should not be shared with other students, even with students in the same section, and they absolutely must not be posted online or otherwise distributed.

If a student is not able to attend a lecture and would like to have it recorded, it is the responsibility of the student first to obtain the professor's permission, and then to find another student to record the lecture. I will not make the recording for you.

8 STUDENT SUPPORT

8.1 TYNDALE WRITING CENTRE

Through a combination of tutorials, workshops and resources, Tyndale's Writing Centre offers a comprehensive program of writing support to Tyndale students, including individual 30-minute tutoring sessions. Students may bring essays that have been graded (and, at least for my classes, essays that have not yet been submitted for a grade) and will receive detailed suggestions for improving their writing. This service, at no charge to students, is available by appointment.

Professors may recommend that a student go to the Writing Centre for help: students are strongly encouraged to follow such recommendations. The Academic Standards Committee may require an undergraduate student who is experiencing difficulty in his or her academic program to go to the Writing Centre for assistance and support. Many top students also elect to go.

8.2 TYNDALE UC TUTORING PROGRAM

Tyndale University College is committed to helping its students achieve academic success. For this purpose, students in need of academic assistance may request peer tutoring, free of charge, in each academic department. This includes students on academic probation, students who have received failing grades in a course or courses, or students who have been referred for tutoring by their instructor.

For more information on scheduling tutoring appointments, or for those interested in becoming peer tutors, students may contact the Office of the Senior Vice President Academic or their respective University College department chairs.

8.3 ACCOMMODATION

Students with documented disabilities may be granted special accommodation for exams, and in some cases for other assignments. It is even possible to get permission to use a laptop in class (Section 7.3.3), although I will need to be convinced of the use case. It is up to the student to contact the Dean of Students as early as possible in the semester—not later than the second week—and to document the need. The Dean of Students will then advise each of the student's professors of the accommodations that may be required. Please note that special arrangements for assignments need to be made with me well in advance of assignment due dates (Section 6.1.1). Timely requests shall not unreasonably be denied.

9 COURSE OUTLINE

Readings should be completed before the start of the week for which they are assigned. We will adhere to the schedule in Table 2 as closely as possible, though I reserve the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

Wk. Topic	Reading (chapters)	Date
1. False Forgiveness	Chesterton, Derrida	5, 7 Jan.
2. Credible Forgiveness?	Konstan 1, Jones 2	12, 14 Jan.
3. Before Forgiveness	Konstan 2–3	19, 21 Jan.
4. OT Ritual and Prayer	Konstan 4, 1 Kings 8	26, 28 Jan.
5. Forgiveness in Genesis?	Genesis 25–50	2, 4 Feb.
6. Case Studies & a Novel	Horn (all)	9, 11 Feb.
— No Class: Reading Week		16–20 Feb.
7. Jesus and Forgiveness	Mark 2; Luke 7, 15; Matt 18; Jones 7	23, 25 Feb.
8. “Our Father” in the Church	Origen, Gregory, Ephraim, etc.	2, 4 Mar.
9. Medieval Forgiveness	Konstan 5, TBA	9, 11 Mar.
10. Puritan Forgiveness	Konstan 6, Hawthorne (all)	16, 18 Mar.
11. Tutu’s Social Theology	Tutu (all)	23, 25 Mar.
12. Practicing Forgiveness	Jones 4–6	30 Mar.
📝 Peer Review (bring a significant draft to the last class)		1 Apr.
— No Class: Reading Days		6–7 Apr.
📝 Final Paper (due at start of the exam period, TBA)		8–15 Apr.

Table 2: Schedule of Readings

See the Registrar’s website for a list of other [important dates](#). The last day to add a class, or to drop one without penalty, is ordinarily the end of the term’s second week.

10 COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

In addition to various introductory articles on “Forgiveness” in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible & Theology* (OEBT), *Encyclopedia of the Bible & its Reception* (EBR), *Religion Past & Present* (RPP = RGG), and *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ABD), refer to the following titles.

- [1] Anderson, Gary A. *Sin: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- [2] Bash, Anthony. *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- [3] ———. “Did Jesus Discover Forgiveness?” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 41/3 (2013): 382–399.
- [4] Boda, Mark, and Gordon T. Smith. *Repentance in Christian Theology*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2006.
- [5] Derrida, Jacques. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Trans. Michael Hughes. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.
- [6] Greenberg, Moshe. *Biblical Prose Prayer as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- [7] Griswold, Charles L. *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

- [8] ———, and David Konstan. *Ancient Forgiveness: Classical, Judaic, and Christian*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- [9] Hågerland, Tobias. *Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins: An Aspect of His Prophetic Mission*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- [10] Harrison, James R. *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003.
- [11] Hofius, Otfried. "Jesu Zuspruch der Sündenvergebung: Exegetische Erwägungen zu Mk 2,5b." *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 9 (1994): 125–143.
- [12] Holmgren, Margaret. *Forgiveness and Retribution: Responding to Wrongdoing*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- [13] Jankélévitch, Vladimir. *Forgiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- [14] Jones, L. Gregory. *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995.
- [15] ———, and Célestin Musekura. *Forgiving as We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2010.
- [16] Konstan, David. *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- [17] Lamb, Sharon, and Jeffrie G. Murphy. *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [18] Luijten, Eric. *Sacramental Forgiveness as a Gift of God: Thomas Aquinas on the Sacrament of Penance*. Leuven: Peeters, 2003.
- [19] Maier, Johann. "Sühne und Vergebung in der jüdischen Liturgie." *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 9 (1994): 145–171.
- [20] Moule, C. F. D. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: And Other New Testament Themes*. London: SPCK, 1998.
- [21] Musekura, Célestin. *An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness*. New York: P. Lang, 2010.
- [22] Pettigrove, Glen. *Forgiveness and Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- [23] Ramelli, Ilaria. "Unconditional Forgiveness in Christianity? Some Reflections on Ancient Christian Sources and Practices." In *The Ethics of Forgiveness: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Christel Fricke, 30–48. London/New York: Routledge, 2011.
- [24] Schimmel, Solomon. *Wounds Not Healed By Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [25] Tutu, Desmond. *No Future Without Forgiveness*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- [26] ———, and Douglas Abrams. *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.
- [27] Volf, Miroslav. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005.