



**SCTR 128: Human Suffering and Hope**  
**Fall 2016**  
**MWF 2:15-3:20pm**

**Instructor:** Diana Gibson

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**Office Hours:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 10:45-11:35am, or by appointment

This course fulfills SCU's **RTC 3 and ELSJ core requirements.**

**Associated Pathways:** Human Rights in a Global World, Justice & the Arts,  
Paradigm Shifts & the Nature of Human Knowing, Applied Ethics

**Course Description:** This course will explore questions generated by the experience of human suffering and hope in light of Hebrew Scriptures and Christian New Testament. Attention will be focused on the concrete reality of both historical and contemporary suffering, and the role of God, God's will, human structures, institutional injustice, human responsibility, and the divine-human relationship. The investigation of social suffering will lead us to address human rights concerns as they apply to the inherent dignity of the human person being disregarded through the oppression of whole groups of people based on issues such as race, class or gender. A community-based learning placement (through Arrupe Partnerships for Community-based Learning) will give students the opportunity to ground their reflections of both suffering and hope in real life experiences.

**Required Texts:**

Kathleen O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*

Elie Wiesel, *the trial of God*, Schocken Books, 1995 edition with Introduction by Robert McAfee Brown and Afterword by Matthew Fox

Bible

Readings on Camino

**Prerequisite:** Students must have completed their RTC 1 *and* RTC 2 courses in Religious Studies *and* completed 88 quarter units in order to receive RTC 3 credit for this class.

**Professor's Availability:** I have an open door policy, and any time I am in my office you are welcome to stop by. I am happy to meet with you to discuss concerns, hopes or questions. I am also available by email. **Email:** [dcgibson@scu.edu](mailto:dcgibson@scu.edu) **Office:** Kenna 317  
**Office Hours:** Mon., Wed., Friday 10:45-11:30am or by appointment

### Course Goals

Students will be able to:

1. articulate diverse biblical and theological perspectives on suffering;
2. examine concrete experiences of human suffering (historical and contemporary, personal and global) and probe points of commonality as well as crucial uniqueness of such experiences;
3. recognize the role of institutional injustice, social marginalization and human rights violations as root causes of social suffering;
4. identify and explore diverse sources of strength and hope from religious traditions that have sustained communities and individuals in the midst of suffering and transformed powers and structures of evil causing suffering;
5. evaluate diverse insights and ethical responses to the reality of human suffering and the human spirit's struggle for dignity and capacity for hope.

**Core Learning Goals & Objectives for Religion, Theology & Culture 3:** Building on the first two courses, the third course in RTC applies insights from the study of religion to difficult, open-ended questions of vital interest to contemporary societies. From historical or current perspectives, this course takes critical engagement to a creative level either in theory or practice.

### Learning Goals

Critical Thinking: The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments.

Ethical Reasoning: Drawing on ethical traditions to assess the consequences of individual and institutional decisions.

Religious Reflection: Questioning and clarifying beliefs through critical inquiry into faith and the religious dimensions of human existence.

Perspective: Seeking out the experience of different cultures and people, striving to view the world through their eyes.

### Learning Objectives

**3.1** Identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions. (Critical Thinking; Ethical Reasoning; Perspective)

**3.2** Evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society. (Critical Thinking; Religious Reflection)

### Experiential Learning for Social Justice (ELSJ) Goals and Objectives:

The learning objectives for ELSJ include a demonstrated ability on the students' part to:

1. recognize and understand the benefits of life-long responsible citizenship and civic engagement in personal and professional activities (*Civic Life*);
2. interact appropriately, sensitively, and self-critically with people in the communities in which they work and to appreciate the formal and informal knowledge, wisdom, and skills that individuals in these communities possess (*Perspective*);
3. recognize, analyze, and understand the social reality and injustices in contemporary society, including recognizing the relative privilege or marginalization of their own and other groups (*Social Justice*); and
4. make vocational choices in light of both their greatest gifts and the world's greatest needs (*Civic Engagement*).

## Course Assessments

Intellectual Engagement (15%): Every student brings valuable perspectives and will develop unique insights on the topics we will explore. Active class participation is crucial, not just for you to do well, but for the class as a whole to succeed. Intellectual engagement includes:

- a) regular attendance, arriving on time, staying in class and attentive throughout the period;
- b) demonstration that you have read and reflected on assigned reading and come to class prepared with good notes, questions and your own critical thinking;
- c) consistent, thoughtful and engaged involvement in class and small group activities;
- d) active and regular participation in class discussions;
- e) an anonymous paper reflecting on a personal experience of suffering.

*Indirectly supports all course goals and RTC and ELSJ learning objectives.*

Reading Response Papers (20%): In place of quizzes, a midterm and/or a final, these short papers will be used to assess your attentive reading, comprehension and integration of course material.

*Assesses Course goals 1-5 and RTC learning objectives 3.1 & 3.2.*

Community-based Learning (20%): This essential component of the course offers community-based experiential learning for social justice. Your placement must be arranged (through Arrupe) and approved by the instructor by Friday of the first week of class. It will require one on-site orientation, 2 hours per week off campus for 8 weeks (16 hours total), and one online evaluation. Your placement must be approved by the instructor, and will offer direct contact with people experiencing or emerging from experiences of suffering. The clients and staff at the placements will serve as teachers and conversation partners as students examine, develop, and critique insights explored in class. *The clients and staff should be treated with the utmost care and respect.* The goals are to experience a slice of the gritty reality of the world, think critically about the causes of suffering, broaden your perspective on the vast array of human responses to suffering, and engage in civic life in a responsible and constructive way. Your attendance at your placement, as in class, is integral to your successful completion of this course. You must submit a completed and signed CBL Site Supervisor Evaluation Sheet by the end of the quarter. Additional course requirements include:

- a. create a lament based on your CBL experience integrating what we have learned about lamentations as finding voice to uncover suffering and injustice (10%);
- b. brief weekly journal entries or notes to be attached to final reflection/integration paper;
- c. final reflection/integration paper (3-4 pages) in which students will make connections with course material, recognize wisdom learned from the clients and staff, analyze social injustices that impact the lives of the people they meet, reflect on personal positions of privilege or marginalization, identify benefits of civic engagement, reflect on their own vocational choices in light of their unique gifts and the needs of the world, and connect the human suffering they have witnessed with our scriptural studies (10%);
- d. active engagement in class and small group discussions regarding your CBL.

*Assesses ELSJ Learning Objectives 1-4*

Multifaceted Final Project (45%): Students will work in groups of 5 or 6 on a given topic related to social suffering and hope. Topics will include human rights matters such as U.S./Mexico border issues, the death penalty, racism, sexual oppression, poverty and war. Each student will write a paper based on her/his individual research on the topic, including a critical book review, analysis of relevant scriptural insights, investigation of relevant human rights norms and questions, examination of diverse perspectives on the issue, and application of course insights to the contemporary topic. Papers will include an expression of theology as art (poetry, drama, music or visual art) or theology as praxis (plea, plan or example of action). (35% of your grade). As a group, students will lead a class period on the subject, choose and assign a short reading and related biblical texts, present material, and guide discussion (10% of your grade). *Assesses Course Goals 1-5, RTC objectives 3.1 & 3.2 and ELSJ objective 3.*

## Course Policies

1. **Class Preparation:** Students are expected to read all required material, take consistent notes, and arrive in class ready to discuss, raise questions, offer insights, and answer questions in a manner that reflects your thoughtful reading. Students are expected to stay in class throughout the class period, therefore please tend to personal needs before you come to class.
2. **Class Discussion:** You are expected to participate in all class as well as small group discussions with *active listening* and *respectful response*. Respectful, engaged discourse will be the rule for the class. Questions and exchange of ideas must always be for the purpose of enhancing our understanding and learning. Disagreements and differences will be encouraged, however disrespectful comments will immediately lower your grade. *Texting, side conversations, passing notes and napping are all signs of disrespect. Violations of this policy will lower your course grade.* Thoughtful and consistent participation in class discussions is *required* to attain an “A” grade. If you are having trouble finding ways to participate in this learning environment, please see me and I will be glad to discuss this with you.
3. **Electronic Devices:** No laptops, iPads or other mobile device use (including texting) is allowed in this class. Electronic devices must be stored away and are not allowed on your desk or lap.
4. **Academic Integrity:** Santa Clara University is implementing an Academic Integrity pledge designed to deepen the understanding of and commitment to honesty and academic integrity. The Academic Integrity Pledge states:

*I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.*

I ask that you affirm this pledge and apply these principles to your work in this class. The standards of the University preclude any form of cheating, plagiarism, forgery of signatures, and falsification of data. A student who commits any offense against academic honesty and integrity may receive a failing grade without a possibility of withdrawal. An offense may also dictate suspension or dismissal from the University. A thorough explanation of the policy can be found at [www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm](http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm)
5. **Attendance:** You are expected to arrive to class on time and attend every class session. *Frequent tardiness or missing more than three class periods will result in lowering your final grade.* If serious illness or family emergency requires you to miss more than 2 classes, you must meet with me to discuss. More than 6 absences (1/5 of class periods) will result in a failing grade unless reasons and make-up plans are approved by the professor.
6. **Late Work:** All papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated, and should be submitted to turnitin.com by the end of the due date. The grade for late work will be lowered, usually by 1/3<sup>rd</sup> letter grade for each calendar day that the paper is late. Exceptions will be granted only for *very good reasons*, and must be negotiated with instructor *before the due date*.
7. **Spelling and Grammar:** Spelling, grammar and sentence structure will affect the grade on your papers. Please *proofread your work carefully*. Follow the Writing Style Guidelines on our Camino Course page. Visit the Hub Writing Center for drop in assistance. See <http://www.scu.edu/provost/writingcenter/> for more information, drop-in schedule, location, and how to register for the HUB’s new appointment services.
8. **Disability Accommodation Policy:** If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours or by making an appointment. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations. While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources.

**Feedback:** Students will receive regular feedback from the instructor through comments on papers and are welcome to schedule meetings to discuss further. Students will assess their own experience of the course in a mid-quarter review and in the standard end-of-term narrative evaluation.

**Availability:** I have an open-door policy. You are welcome to stop by my office and anytime I am there I am happy to discuss concerns, questions or other issues. My office hours are listed on page 1, but you may make an appointment if needed. I am also available by email.

**Pathway Information:** This course is associated with four pathways: Applied Ethics; Human Rights in a Global World; Justice and the Arts; and Paradigm Shifts and the Nature of Human Knowing. If you choose to declare or have declared any of these pathways, you may use a representative piece of work from this course as one of the Pathway materials you will upload via ecampus during your junior or senior year. Therefore, it is recommended that electronic copies of your work be kept using Dropbox or Google Docs, in addition to your own computer or thumb drives, as secure places to save copies of your work. This may ensure that you will have a range of choices when you assemble your Pathway materials and write your Pathway reflection essay.

### **Grading Scale**

A (94-100) = Outstanding. Awesome. Takes my breath away!

A- (90-93) = Amazingly good. I want to stand up and cheer.

B+ (87-89) = Very good. I want to clap, but I'm still in my seat.

B (83-86) = Good, solid work. I'm impressed.

B- (80-82) = Good work, but I'm not excited.

C+ (77-79) = Above average. No complaints.

C (73-76) = Average. You've completed the assignment.

C- (70-72) = You have mostly completed the assignment, but not thoroughly. Something is lacking, or perhaps your grammar or composition needs work.

D (61-69) = I'll give it back to you and give you another chance, but only once, and that is if it is not a presentation or your final paper.

F (60 & below) = Failure. Let's not even go there.

**SCTR 128: Human Suffering  
Fall 2016 - Class Schedule**

Week 1: Reclaiming Our Humanity

Scripture: Psalm 6

*The greatest tragedy – in an earthquake or any other situation –  
is not the material damages it causes, but the destruction of what is human.*

*The greatest solidarity is to help rebuild that humanity.*

*The greatest hope is to keep walking, doing justice, and loving with kindness.*

– Jon Sobrino, *Where is God?*

**Monday:** *Theology as Art*

Introductions, Arrupe Community-based Learning Placements, Expectations

READ (in class): Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, “On Joy and Sorrow”

**Wednesday:** *Tenacious Hope*

READ FOR CLASS: Katherine Paterson, “A Stubborn Sweetness” on Camino

+ Psalm 6:1-10

**Friday:** *Suffering and Hope*

READ FOR CLASS: Ciudad Juarez articles (Camino) – Rafael Luevano, “The Theological Challenge of the Juarez-Chihuahua Femicides” and Damien Cave, “Where Others Fear to Tread, Angels Are Rushing In” (New York Times 11/10/2011)

+ Psalm 6:1-10

**DUE TODAY: Reader Response Paper #1**

Week 2: Dangerous Theology

Scripture: Luke 13:10-17; I Corinthians 12:26

*Instead of dealing with the timeless issues of being and becoming, of matter and form,  
of definitions and demonstrations,*

*[the prophet] is thrown into orations about widows and orphans,  
about the corruption of judges and affairs of the marketplace.*

*Instead of showing us a way through the elegant mansions of the mind, the prophets take  
us to the slums.*

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*

**Monday:** *Truth-telling as Dangerous Rhetoric*

READ FOR CLASS: (Camino) Walter Brueggemann, “The Costly Loss of Lament”

**Wednesday:** *In a World of Happy Faces - A Sheltered Place for Suffering*

READ FOR CLASS: O’Connor, *Tears*, Preface and chapter 1

**DUE TODAY: Reader Response Paper #2**

**Friday:** *Social Suffering & Controversial Compassion*

FIND, READ AND BRING TO CLASS: One news article on a contemporary example of social suffering; be ready to summarize briefly and pose 2-3 discussion questions

+ Kramer, *Dispossessed* (excerpts on Camino)

+ Luke 13:10-17; I Corinthians 12:26

Week 3: Lamentations, Voice & Witness

Scripture: Lamentations chapters 1, 2, 3 & 5

*We cut ourselves off from our own experiences by looking upon them as irrelevant and not worth talking about or, what is no less cynical, not communicable at all. We are losing dreams, those of the night, and those of the day, and increasingly we lose the visions of our life. – Dorothee Soelle*

**Monday:** *No one to comfort her*

READ FOR CLASS: O'Connor, *Tears*, chapters 2 OR 3 as assigned (Come ready to "walk" other students through the chapter that you read!)

+ EVERYONE READ Lamentations (in Bible), chapters 1 **AND** 2

**Wednesday:** *Becoming a witness*

READ FOR CLASS: O'Connor, *Tears*, chapters 4 OR 6 as assigned (Come ready to "walk" other students through the chapter that you read!)

+ EVERYONE READ Lamentations (in Bible), chapters 3 **AND** 5

**DUE TODAY: Reader Response Paper #3**

**Friday:** *Reclaiming our Humanity*

**DUE TODAY: Anonymous Paper**

Week 4: Lamentations & the Tears of the World

Scripture: 2 Samuel 21:1-14; Luke 19:41-42; Lamentations 2:18-19;  
2 Corinthians 4:7-10

*There are deep, complex reasons for our inability to hear the content of our neighbors' cries, both nearby and faraway. My claim is that our depleted humanity thwarts our vision. Because we will not see our own personal and communal sufferings, we have no room for the suffering of others. We have no experiential basis for compassion, few resources for solidarity, no urging passions to live justly, and little incentive to see beyond our own upkeep. – Kathleen M. O'Connor*

**Monday:** *Witnessing as Transformation*

READ FOR CLASS: K. O'Connor, *Lamentations*, chapters 7 & 8

**Wednesday:** *Weeping as a Political Act*

READ FOR CLASS: K. O'Connor, *Lamentations*, chapter 10

+ 2 Samuel 21:1-14; Luke 19:41-42

**Friday:** *I was supposed to have learned despair. But I can't help hoping.*

READ FOR CLASS: "Sister Dianna Ortiz" from *Cloud of Witnesses* (Camino)

+ "Epilogue" from Sr. Dianna Ortiz's *The Blindfold's Eye* (Camino)

+ Lamentations 2:18-19; 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

**DUE TODAY: Reader Response Paper #4**

Week 5: Reimagining God

Scripture: Jeremiah 8:18, 21-22, 9:1; John 10:10; Romans 8:31, 35, 38-39

*Why do people venerate a God whose most important quality is power,  
whose interest is subjection, whose fear is equality?*

*In light of Auschwitz, it seemed inconceivable to me to retain love and omnipotence  
with the [same God image]. ...*

*An all-powerful God who imposes suffering, who looks down on Auschwitz from above,  
must be a sadist.*

– Dorothee Soelle

**Monday:** *A God of Pathos*

READ FOR CLASS: Elizabeth Johnson, “The Crucified God of Compassion” in *Quest for the Living God* (on Camino)

+ Jeremiah 8:18, 21-22, 9:1

**Wednesday:** *Passion Narrated*

READ FOR CLASS: Soelle, *Theology for Skeptics* (excerpt on Camino)

+ John 10:10

**Friday:** *Compassion ... IS ... God*

READ FOR CLASS: Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart*, Ch. 3 (Camino)

+ Romans 8:31, 35, 38-39

**DUE TODAY: Reader Response Paper #5**

Week 6: the trial of god

Scripture: Exodus 3:7-8; Isaiah 54:7-8

**Monday:** *Act 1*

READ FOR CLASS: Wiesel, Introduction (Brown) and Act 1

+ Exodus 3:7-8; Isaiah 54:7-8

**Wednesday:** *Act 2*

READ FOR CLASS: Wiesel, Act 2 & 3

**Friday:** *Act 3*

READ FOR CLASS (again): Wiesel, Act 3

+ Isaiah 54:7-8

**DUE:** Lament from Community-based Learning

Week 7: and God in all this?

Scripture: Job 38:4-12, 40:4-5, 42:7; Isaiah 43:1-7; Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9; Acts 17:26-28a

*In the Nazi period in Germany God was small and weak.*

*God was in fact powerless, because God had no friends.*

- Dorothee Soelle, *Theology for Skeptics*

**Monday:** *Divine Abandonment*

READ FOR CLASS: the trial of god: re-read Introduction (Brown) plus Afterword (Fox)

+ Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9; Job 38:4-12, 40:4-5, 42:7

**Wednesday:** *Divine Presence*

READ FOR CLASS: Excerpts from Elizabeth O’Connor, Etty Hillesum, Dietrich

Bonhoeffer, Nikos Kazantzakis (on Camino)



**Friday:** *Divine Solidarity*

READ FOR CLASS: Jon Sobrino, "Theodicy and the Crucified God" in *Where is God?* (Camino, pp. 137-146)

+ Isaiah 43:1-7; Acts 17:26-28a

**DUE TODAY: Reader Response Paper #6**

Week 8: Love Becomes Biased

Scripture: tba

*Who is on the cross, and why is he or she there?*

-- Sharon G. Thornton, *Broken yet Blessed*

**Monday:** *God Needs Friends*

READ IN CLASS: Provocative Poems and Paragraphs (as assigned on Camino)

**DUE: Completed critical book review and outline of remainder of final paper.**

**Wednesday-Friday:** Student-led classes on research topics

Week 9: Suffering, Hope & Human Solidarity

Scripture: tba

*Christ is a name which for me expresses solidarity, hence suffering with, struggling with. Christ is the mysterious power which was in Jesus and which continues on and sometimes makes us into "fools in Christ," who, without hope of success and without an objective, share life with others.*

*Share bread, shelter, anxiety, and joy.*

-- Dorothee Soelle, *Theology for Skeptics*

**Monday - Friday:** Student-led class on research topics

**DUE FRIDAY: Reader Response Paper #7**

**\*\*\*Thanksgiving Week Holiday\*\*\***

Week 10: Tenacious Hope and Acts of Healing

Scripture: Isaiah 25:6-9; Romans 8:22-25

*God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.*

-- Dag Hammarskjold, *Markings*

**Monday:** *Threatened with Resurrection*

READ FOR CLASS: Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart*, "Kinship" (Camino)

+ Isaiah 25:6-9; Romans 8:22-25

**Wednesday:** *Reimagining Ourselves*

**DUE: Final Paper**

**Friday:** *Primary Wonder*

**DUE MONDAY, December 5, by 5pm**

**Community-based learning reflection paper**

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## Community Based Learning (CBL) Information

Rooted in a faith that does justice, the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education partners with local community organizations whose members and clients serve as co-educators for Santa Clara University students. Informed by and in conversation with Catholic social tradition, the Center facilitates community-based learning opportunities that underscore commitments to the common good, universal human dignity, justice as participation, and solidarity with marginalized communities.

In the Arrupe Weekly Engagement Program, Ignatian Center staff, Santa Clara faculty, community partners, and students reflect on both classroom and placement learning, yielding tangible benefits to the community as well as an integrated educational experience.

For information on how to sign up for your placement, see <http://www.scu.edu/ic/cbl/signup.cfm>

Transportation: You may use your own car, Zipcar, carpool, public transportation, bike or in some cases, walk to your placement. Each student enrolled in this class can receive up to 16 hours of free Zipcar use. For more information about Zipcars, see <https://www.scu.edu/map/zipcar/cbl-affiliate-membership/>

### Fall 2016 Community-based Learning Calendar:

**Sign-Ups:** Monday-Friday, Sept. 19 - 23, 10am-2pm in Sobrato Commons

**Orientations:** Generally Sept. 26- 30 (please note, some placements will require an Agency orientation and an SCU orientation. See "Engagement Opportunities" pdf on website for details)

**Weekly Engagement in Community:** Oct. 3-Dec. 2. Placements are generally 2 hours each week from weeks 3-week 10 of the quarter. Students must complete 16 hours total of weekly engagement with their assigned community partner agency.

### Week 10: CBL Site Supervisor Sheets:

Each student must submit a completed and signed CBL Site Supervisor Evaluation to your professor directly after last day of session.

### Community-based Learning Policy

All students enrolled in an ELSJ-approved course must satisfactorily complete the university- approved community-based learning engagement component of the course. Usual practice will involve 16 or more engagement hours during the quarter (unless otherwise indicated by the course instructor).

Note: Time students spend on orientation(s) related to the community-based learning engagement DOES NOT count towards the required participation hours. Student participation in community-based learning engagements must be regular and consistent over the quarter, as instructed by the course instructor and/or community placement site supervisor.

Students must submit a CBL Site Supervisor Time & Evaluation Sheet completed in full and signed by your site supervisor to the course instructor by the last day of class. Student performance at the community-based learning engagement must be appropriate at all times. Receipt of a passing grade in this course is contingent upon successful completion of the community-based learning component of the course, as outlined above.