

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Old Testament is born out of anguish: a lost paradise, slavery and oppression, exile. Trauma and pain shape the reality of Israel's faith. Yet in this pain, God responds. With that in mind, we'll explore Old Testament ideas about the human condition with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. We'll examine the biblical vision of a good life—one that nurtures wholeness without dismissing the reality of pain—and seek to understand trauma in a spiritual context. In reading a range of biblical texts on pain (narrative, poetry, prophecy) we'll discover and learn from Scripture, nurturing a holistic response to the inevitable struggle of being human.

This course will draw on Biblical Studies, including close reading of key relevant texts and bringing these into dialogue with pastoral theology and psychology. Together we will explore how Scripture can help inform and shape our responses to trauma and suffering, particularly in the life of communities of faith. As such, this course will be relevant for those wanting to deepen their understanding of the Old Testament and its relevance in the life of faith and for those with particular responsibilities for nurturing church communities and pastoral care.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:**

1. Articulate a basic understanding of trauma and how trauma theory can inform and enrich both our reading of Scripture and our pastoral responses
2. Articulate a nuanced understanding of the place of suffering within the Old Testament canon
3. Identify ways in which the Old Testament may shape a Christian response to the experience of psychological distress

## COURSE OUTLINE

**Day 1 May 23** 'What are human beings that you are mindful of them?' (Ps. 8.4) Being human in the Old Testament

**Day 2 May 24** The Old Testament as a text of trauma

**Day 3 May 25** Speaking of suffering: distress, prayer, and God-talk

**Day 4 May 26** Old Testament response to grief and trauma: from lament to festival

**Day 5 May 27** 'Comfort, O Comfort my people' (Isaiah 40.1): communities, narratives, and the possibility of healing

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Brueggemann, W. "The Costly Loss of Lament", in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, pp. 98-111 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

Bryan, J., "Narrative, Meaning Making and Mental Health", in C. C. H. Cook and Hamley I. (eds), *The Bible and Mental Health: Towards a Biblical Theology of Mental Health*, pp. 3-19 (London: SCM, 2020).

Gutiérrez, G., *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), pp. 3-17.

McConville, G., "Wholeness and Illness: A View from the Old Testament", in C. C. H. Cook I. and Hamley (eds), *The Bible and Mental Health: Towards a Biblical Theology of Mental Health*, pp. 20-32 (London: SCM, 2020).

Warner, M. "Trauma through the Lens of the Bible", in *Tragedies and Christian Congregations: The Practical Theology of Trauma*, edited by M. Warner, C. Southgate, C. A. Grosch-Miller, and H. Ison, pp. 81-91 (London: Routledge, 2020).

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Note: Aerio prices are in USD.

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses.

The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: [moodle.regent-college.edu/login](https://moodle.regent-college.edu/login)

