

Trauma, Moral Injury, and Crisis Ministry  
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**Class Number:** D08

Week One, June 5-9, 2017

1:30 - 4:00, Room S202

**Course Description:**

This course invites participants into the study of three distinct but overlapping forms of human suffering. Trauma is the experience of threat to one's being and/or identity that exceeds a person's resources for coping with the threat. Moral injury has been identified recently by scholars and clinicians as a psychological wound involving violation of conscience/deeply held values, either by someone in a position of legitimate authority or by one's self, in a high stakes situation. It is often, though not exclusively, associated with military combat situations. Crises are turning point-moments of extreme difficulty or distress which bring to the foreground fundamental questions about life matters such as relationships, purpose/vocation, the existence and presence of God in human affairs. Engaging practical theology's multi-disciplinary approach to these three complex phenomena, we will utilize perspectives from theology, psychology, sociology, biology, and art as frameworks for understanding and responding. We will explore basic skills of crisis intervention and trauma-informed pastoral care. Readings for the course: Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 2010. A couple of short articles will be made available online.

**Schedule of Work:**

Day 1, Monday June 5<sup>th</sup>

Introduction to the Course and Each Other

A practical theological method for the study of trauma/moral injury/crisis  
Dynamics of Stress

Day 2, Tuesday June 6<sup>th</sup>

Basics of Trauma Theory  
Collective Trauma

Read: Jones, Ch. 1-3

Additional Recommended Reading: Alexander C. McFarlane and Bessel A. van der Kolk. (2006). "'Trauma and Its Challenge to Society.'" *Traumatic*

*Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society.* pp.24-46.

Day 3, Wednesday June 7<sup>th</sup>

Moral Injury

Memorialization: balm or blast?

Read: Wood, David. (03/18/2014). "The Grunts: Damned if They Kill, Damned if They Don't, Huffington Post." *Huffington Post*. Available at: <http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury/the-grunts>

Additional Recommended Reading: Jonathan Shay, "Moral Injury," in *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 2014, Vol. 31, No. 2, 182–191.

Day 4, Thursday June 8<sup>th</sup>

The dynamics of crisis

Crisis ministry

Read: Denise Massey, 2008. "Facing Trauma with Parishioners: Emotionally Intelligent Caring," in *Review and Expositor* 105, no. 2: 261-276.

Day 5, Friday June 9<sup>th</sup>

Pastoral care and deep suffering

Post-traumatic growth; resiliency

Read: Jones Chs. 7 & 9

Additional Recommended Reading: M. Jan Holton. (2010). "Chapters 1, 4, and 5." *Building the Resilient Community: Lessons from the Lost Boys of Sudan*.

**Self-Care note:** The study of stress, trauma, moral injury, and crisis can be difficult. This subject matter has the potential to trigger participants' own memories and experiences of these things. An important part of pastoral caregiving involves self-awareness and reflexivity, because the caregiver's person becomes a primary instrument of incarnational care. There will be times when course participants are asked to reflect on their own experience in this class or to take note of their own internal responses/experiences, for purposes of helping to build capacities for reflexivity in pastoral practice, and for a more integrative learning process. It is important to note, however, that this course is an academically oriented, summer study course in pastoral theology focused on the study of pastoral care in situations of trauma, moral injury and crisis. While encouraging mutual support, compassion, respect, and understanding among all participants, the

classroom is not intended as a therapeutic milieu for dealing with trauma, crisis, or moral injury among students. Professor Mercer is available for support of students around academic matters related to the course, and will of course provide general support and assist students in finding therapeutic resources if needed, but does not engage in counseling with students in the class. Students are encouraged to access their own support networks and care providers as needed. Course participants are responsible for their own levels of self-disclosure, keeping in mind that the goal of self-disclosure is the enhancement of the learning of everyone in the course.