Theological and Spiritual Approaches to Moral Injury and Soul Repair
January 4-8, 2016, 9 am – 5 pm
Brite Divinity School, Soul Repair Center

Instructor: Rita N. Brock
Teaching Assistant: Kori Pacyniak

Course Description:
We will study the new concept of moral injury, primarily in military veterans, but also in other occupational contexts. Recent works by Veterans Affairs clinicians have suggested that moral injury may be a greater factor than post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in veterans’ poor mental health. We will explore the dynamics of moral formation, military training, and reintegration, precipitating experiences that lead to moral injury, pathways to recovery, the role of communities in the coming home process, and the theological, ritual, and spiritual implications of understanding moral injury as an aspect of trauma.

In examining military training, as well as the impact of combat on conscience, we will also bring to bear neuroscience research on trauma, moral thinking, empathy, and ritual. We will reflect on theologies of trauma and survival, aspects of gender in the military, the power of the arts and ritual in soul repair, and civilian moral responsibility for the aftermath of war.

The goal of the seminar will be to study these aspects of moral injury as they assist in helping communities in the work of soul repair after war, violence, and other conditions of extremity.

Course Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. Understand moral injury and its consequences especially in military veterans, but also in other professions.
2. Articulate and implement resources for addressing moral injury and supporting recovery.
3. Reflect upon and assess the relationship between Post Traumatic Stress and moral injury.
4. See the implications of using a hermeneutics of moral injury to inform understandings of literature, theology, and trauma studies.
5. Become more creative and effective in the use of the arts and ritual in supporting recovery.

Common Required Resources:
Books—to be discussed in order listed by number.

Monday:


Tuesday


6. Video at this site http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/resources/#audio Midland, Texas, Oct 2014:
   • Dr. Bill Gibson, PTSD: Not All Wounds Are Visible 75 min.

Wednesday

   “The Invisible War,” film, 90 min.

Thursday


9. Video at this site http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/resources/#audio Midland, Texas, Oct 2014:
   • Michael Yandell, Veterans Panel 20 min.

Friday


Additional Resources (see list below):

Grading Procedures:

• Completion of all requirements for the course will be expected to be done by March 7. Emphasis during the intensive week itself will be placed on participation in group work and discussion and on the timely completion of daily writing assignments. Requirements for 70970 and 80970:

Attendance & Participation – Attendance and active, informed participation at all class meetings. Some time will be spent in small group discussion, and each group will take leadership in leading class discussion and offer an opening ritual for the beginning of one class session.

Daily Reflection Papers – After each class, you should write a 250 word reflection paper on the readings and class discussion. To do this, set a timer for twenty minutes and write (or
type) **nonstop for the full time, without any pause.** Write while ignoring the mechanics of writing (spelling, punctuation, etc.). **DO NOT SKIP THIS FREE-WRITING STEP!** Then, read what you wrote. Select your best thoughts, reflect on why they matter to you, and compose a reflection paper of 250 words, based on key insights of the freewriting exercise. These papers will be the basis for class discussion.

- **Final Evaluation of the course** – At the end of the week, participants will evaluate the group and quality of the class meetings to determine the collective part of the grade based on class sessions. Students will be expected not only to evaluate their own performance for the week, but also the quality of the overall course process for the week.

**Projects** - After the intensive week concludes, projects, approved in consultation with the instructor, will be turned in on March 7 for completion of the course (extensions of this deadline will only be granted in emergency situations), with the following parameters:

  **For those registered for 70970 level credits:**
  A sermon, adult education lesson/curriculum, research paper, ritual, work of art, or other focused project, in consultation with the instructor and others in the class.
  Either individually or in groups, students will create an educational research project, in consultation with the class, that addresses some aspect of moral injury in relation to their vocational objectives. For example, a research paper of at least 3500 words, a sermon or sermon series with topics and sources, a series of blogs or newsletter articles, or other materials that demonstrate a clear grasp on moral injury from course materials and further research.

  **For those registered for 80970 level credits:**
  A research paper, indicating further sources utilized for the creation of a paper of at least 6000 words that furthers work toward the completion of the D. Min. degree project.

**Course Schedule:**
Because of the pace of an intensive course, we recommend that you read **all** the required reading and view the video resources before the class begins. The general flow of the will be (may be adjusted based on what happens each day):

- 9:00 – 9:15 Opening Ritual and Check in
- 9:15 – 9:45 Time in Squads
- 9:45-11:00 Morning Session I
- 11:00 – 11:15 Break
- 11:15 – 12:15 Morning Session II
- 12:15 – 1:15 Lunch
- 1:15 – 2:15 Afternoon Session III
- 2:15 – 2:45 Break
- 2:45 – 4:00 Afternoon Session IV
- 4:30 – 5:00 Time in squads

Monday: Moral Injury
Presentation: Rita Brock
Introduction to the class and its members, Discussion of Class Flow and Requirements
Introduction to Moral Formation, Military Training/Culture, and Moral Injury

Tuesday: Betrayal, Anger, Grief, and Isolation: the Struggle to Come Home
Guest Speaker: Michael Killam, Program Manager of Military Veterans Peer Network
Veterans Program at MHMRTC (Mental Health and Mental Retardation of Tarrant County), is a Vietnam Veteran of the US army, the largest branch of the US Military responsible for land operations. He was in the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, Delta Troop, 2nd of the first Air Calvary “Scouts” and was a POW in 1969. He served 2 years and 2 days, was wounded multiple times, and his highest rank was Buck sergeant. He retired at E2, Private.
Introduction to Deep Listening
Squad Discussions, Project Ideas

Wednesday: Gender and the Military, Moral Injury and Trauma
Guest Speaker: Kristen Leslie, an ordained United Methodist and Professor of Pastoral Theology and Care, Eden Theological Seminary, has a Bachelor’s degree from the College of Wooster, a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, and a Doctorate from Claremont School of Theology. Dr. Leslie’s research has focused on intercultural pastoral theology; womanist and feminist pastoral counseling; pastoral theological implications of sexualized violence, particularly on pastoral counseling issues for survivors of acquaintance rape; and ministry in higher education with young adults.

Thursday: Meaning and Theology
Presentation: Kori Pacyniak
Guest Speaker: Shelly Rambo, Associate Professor of Theology at Boston University Theological School, received her PhD in theology from Emory University’s Graduate Division of Religion in 2004, as well as master’s degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary and Yale University. A systematic and constructive theologian, she is interested in how classical themes in the Christian tradition interact with and inform contemporary discourses around suffering, trauma, and violence. Her current research explores the significance of resurrection wounds in the Christian tradition in connection to contemporary discourses about wounding, both in popular culture and in the study of trauma. Her teaching and research interests include: feminist theory and theology, postmodern theology, pneumatology, and trauma studies.
Theological, Textual, Spiritual Resources for Understanding Moral Injury and Recovery

Friday: Community and Sustaining Recovery
Using the Body TRE (Trauma Release Exercises)
Arts and Spiritual Ritual Practices
Decide final project topics
Community Responsibility
Friendships
Course Evaluation Process

Course Policies (Brite Divinity School Policies):

Inclusive Language: Please review the Student Handbook regarding inclusive language for people and God that will be followed in this course.

Disability Services: Brite Divinity School complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact TCU’s Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 11. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-7486.

Academic Misconduct (Sec. 5.6 of the Student Handbook) – The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the Student Handbook and the Office of the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs.

Email Notification: Only the official TCU student email address will be used for all course notification. Check your TCU email on a regular basis.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES for PROJECTS
(Complete list at www.brite.edu/soulrepair Resources page with additional resources.)

Essays:
2015


F. Shapiro and D. Laliotis, “EMDR Therapy for Trauma-Related Disorders,” pp. 205-228 in *Evidence Based Treatments for Trauma-Related Psychological Disorders*.


“Moral Injury in the Context of War,” Shira Maguen and Brett Litz


2014


2013


2012


2011


2009


Sexual Violence in the Military


“Service Women’s Action Network.” Service Womens Action Network.


“United States Department of Defense: Sexual Assault Prevention and Response.” Research & Reports.


Books:


Working in a world of hurt fills a significant gap in the studies of the psychological trauma wrought by war. It focuses not on soldiers, but on the men and women who fought to save them in casualty clearing stations, hospitals and prison camps. The writings by doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers and other medical personnel reveal the spectrum of their responses that range from breakdown to resilience. Through a rich analysis of both published and unpublished personal from the First World War in the early twentieth century to Iraq in the early twenty-first, Acton and Potter put centre stage the letters, diaries, memoirs and weblogs that have chronicled physical and emotional suffering, many for the first time.


A series of advice for returning soldiers from a panel of highly qualified authors; this book brings a practical touch for those who may be dealing with moral injury. Some of the topics it addresses include reconnecting with loved ones combating war reactions, returning to work and community, and readjustment.

While physical readiness and training are vital in ensuring police officers and military personnel are able to react appropriately in stressful situations, just as essential, if not more so, in confronting dangerous or stressful situations is mental toughness. Military personnel and police officers are expected to be able to keep their cool under pressure, focus, and make difficult decisions under life and death circumstances. Warrior Mindset focuses on the concepts and psychological skills needed to develop the mental and psychological toughness military personnel and police officers need when confronting dangerous situations.


Kevin Benderman, a ten year army veteran who served in the initial invasion of Iraq and his wife, Monica Benderman detail his journey from an esteemed military sergeant, whose family ties to the military can be traced to the American Revolution to a conscientious objector who was dishonorably discharged, received a demotion in rank to private, and faced 13 months of imprisonment for refusing to redeploy to Iraq with his unit. He discusses how his decision to file for conscientious objector status was influenced by witnessing the deaths of fellow soldiers and civilians and by being given orders that compromised the safety of his soldiers and/or civilians. For example he explicates his shock on being commanded to shoot local civilian children who would climb on walls to watch what the soldiers were doing. He also elucidates that he was harassed by his superiors for filing for conscientious objector status and that proper military protocol was not followed in dealing with his application.


The stories of several military women who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. The collection of works tell stories of discrimination, and conscience in warfare. *The Lonely Soldier* has been key in spurring reform in the military’s handling of sexual assault and women’s rights.


Boudreau joined the military at seventeen but didn’t deploy into a war zone until he was in his 30s. He recounts the thirst he felt, from his first enlistment until his deployment, for action and to experience war. Before, during, and after deployment he had heard the oft-repeated phrase, “war is hell” and while he does not minimize the actual experience of being in a war zone, for Boudreau the decent into hell does not truly begin until one returns home. Boudreau recounts the high expectations and fascinations for war that many in the military have before deploying and how war permanently alters those who serve, often in ways that they and their families at first cannot comprehend. Boudreau
also discusses the importance of allowing veterans to tell their stories. However, veterans often find that if their stories don’t conform to the heroic narrative—if they express guilt or doubt about what they have seen or done, their stories are often dismissed by well-meaning civilians and by fellow service members and veterans.


Dr. Cantrell is a clinician specializing in PTSD and Chuck Dean served as a combat veteran in Vietnam and in 2004 was asked by the US Army to aid paratroopers in readjusting to civilian life after their deployment to Iraq. Cantrell and Dean provide detailed descriptions of the challenges military personnel face when adjusting to civilian life in order to provide the reader with enough information to recognize behaviors and symptoms that signal difficulties in readjusting to life outside of a combat zone. They identify and examine common pitfalls military personnel face when returning home. They also discuss how military personnel can capitalize on the skills and knowledge they gained through their military experience.


Even though the Vietnam War ended on May 1, 1975 Capps argues in his 1990, revised edition of *The Unfinished War* that the Vietnam War not only impacted the lives of those injured or family members whose loved ones were killed or went missing but the war also had lasting effects on American culture. The Vietnam War shattered the myth that justice and morality were linked with American military might. The Vietnam War also impacted religious and social institutions as Americans struggled with making sense and/or moving on from the Vietnam War. For example, Capps asserts that the rise in Protestant Conservatism and the heavy emphasis on individuality and placing confidence solely on oneself and not on collective institutions can be viewed as ramifications from the controversial war.


In a series of emails, Joshua Casteel who served as an US Army interrogator and Arabic linguist in the 202nd Military Intelligence Battalion, chronicles his struggle with reconciling his role as an interrogator at Abu Ghrabi and his evangelical Christian faith.


An important read for anyone in ministry or leadership who wishes to be able to promote an environment that prevents sexual violence and promotes healing for victims. Addressed to the church in particular, the information in *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited* provides a incredibly useful tool for any sort of leadership development, boundary training, or child protection policy.


Grossman examines humanity’s resistance to killing, the psychological toll killing can take on the human psyche, and the various ways that a person’s resistance to killing can
be overcome, at least temporarily, through modern conditioning, for example, replicating in a realistic manner combat conditions and training servicemembers to respond appropriately to threatening situations. In the last section of his book, Grossman focuses on how media violence is desensitizing children to violence and that children’s repeated exposure to violence through TV shows or video games serves as a form of conditioning, contributing to instances of bullying and school violence.


A compelling series of testimonies and stories on women in combat, and the fight not to identify as a female soldier, but as a soldier, fully competent and capable just like any other soldier. It touches the fight faced by women all over the world, and is highlighted by the extreme nature of combat and the military in general.


Brett Litz and his team have compiled a great insight as to what military counseling could look like under an Adaptive Disclosure model that they outline. This method of counseling has the potential to change how counseling could occur within a military context. The book is beautifully drawn in a way that facilitates freedom of adaptation but still gives a solid framework.


Karl Marlantes maintains that while young men and women are well prepared and trained to fight war on a technical and tactical level, they are woefully unprepared emotionally and spiritually. He acknowledges that such preparation cannot not be taught at an institutional level but needs to be done by each individual. He recounts his own experience in Vietnam, as a twenty three year old second lieutenant responsible for the lives under him and his struggles to find peace with what he witnessed and experienced in war.


Camilo Mejía chronicles his five month deployment on the frontlines in Iraq and his dawning realization that the war was unjust. He recounts his attempts to apply for conscientious objector status, his very public opposition toward the Iraq war, and his experience spending nine months in jail after being charged and convicted with desertion.


A nonfiction memoir of a chaplain’s experiences in war in the form of a gripping narrative with an enlightening picture of the anguish experienced by this Chaplain.

A comprehensive text for women’s health and mental health needs after deployment. It provides the medical field with information to treat and prevent illness amongst female soldiers. It discusses issues on deployment, reproductive health, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), implications of traumatic brain injury, and many more crucial topics when making informed decisions of the effects on women in combat.


First to use the term moral injury, clinical psychiatrist Jonathan Shay highlights the parallels between Homer’s “Iliad” and the experience of Vietnam veterans wrestling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Shay contends that Homer focuses on two events that frequently occur in continuous heavy combat: “betrayal of what’s right by a commander, and the onset of a berserk state” (xiii). Shay’s primary purpose in writing the book is not to provide a classical exegesis of the text but to inform the public about the trauma of war and the need for the public to care about the stories and experiences of veterans in the hopes of taking measures that lessen psychological injury.


Dr. Sherman uses this work to explore the internal war soldiers face daily. She combines ethics, psychology, and military experience to draw a holistic picture of what veterans are facing. She discusses the types and causes of withdrawal that many veterans go through, and more importantly begins a discussion and proposes solutions as to how to treat many of these people and their symptoms. The novel wrestles with feelings of brokenness and betrayal shared by many military personnel, and moral anguish which is common to almost all.


Sherman uses a mixture of philosophical and psychoanalytic analysis as well as interviews with veterans to examine the struggles military personnel undergo as they wrestle with understanding the morality of what they have experienced during war. Furthermore, she details the inner turmoil that results from their endeavor to integrate their civilian selves (who they were before they entered the military and/or went to war and who they are expected to be once they return) with their roles and experiences as service members. Sherman asserts that the dichotomy between their civilian lives and their roles as service members, between their understanding of what is “right” and/or “moral” and what they are expected and need to do during war (which may or may not fit in with their notions of morality) are not easily separated. How can service members hold onto their sense of humanity in the face of violence and moral ambiguity? How can they deal honestly with the realization that their expectations of war may not always live up to the reality, without becoming consumed with guilt and shame? For example she details the story of Ted Westhusing, a brilliant and intelligent officer whose “moral idealism” clashed with “the reality of a corrosive war” and who unable to reconcile his high standards with the reality of war died by suicide (240).

The military heavily prepares their service members for deployment to a war zone but very little preparation is given for their reintegration to civilian society. One might wonder why any preparation is needed since homecoming is often portrayed as a joyous experience. As Slone and Friedman explicate during the deployment not only did the service member change but so did friends and loved ones left behind. The purpose of this book is to provide practical information for military personnel and family and friends on the challenges that might occur during the reintegration process. Some military personnel may struggle with depression, PTSD, and alcoholism and might need professional help. The authors are quick to stress that such challenges should not be viewed as a sign of weakness.


A series of short reflections from an Army Chaplain on the perspective he has gained from serving in a warzone, filled with quick devotional type thoughts that invoke a greater understanding of a soldier’s daily task.


Verkamp contrasts the nature of war and the treatment of returning warriors as practiced in the early medieval period with the treatment veterans receive today. On the one hand in the early medieval period, warriors who killed even for sake of king and/or religion were considered to be sinners, on the other hand there were rituals in place that not only offered the returning warriors penance and an opportunity to reestablish their place in the society, but the rituals served as an acknowledgement of all that they had been through. However, in the modern period, such rituals are nonexistent and warriors are left to grapple with their guilt and pain while often having their guilt dismissed by psychiatrists and religious leaders. Verkamp draws from a variety of sources including St. Augustine, Athanasius, Ernest Hemingway, and Albert Camus in his analysis.

*Novels and Other Fiction:*


*Audio*  
- Conversation with Karl Marlantes with NPR’s Steve Kraske
- Rear Admiral Kibben’s “Coming Home” from the Pathways to Hope Conference

*Video*  
- CBS Documentary on Moral Injury Aired on Oct. 4, 2015
- “Bringing Our Veterans All the Way Home” Midland, Texas, Oct 2014
• **Rev. Dr. Rita Brock, Understanding Moral Injury**
• **Dr. Bill Gibson, PTSD: Not All Wounds Are Visible**
• **Rev. Dr. Joretta Marshall, Forgiving Communities**
• **Michael Yandell, Veterans Panel**
• **Lisa Dunster, Veterans Panel**
• **The Human Cost of War: IVAW Testimony** by Jacob David George
• **Soul Repair from Moral Injury after War**, Rita Brock, Rothko Chapel, Feb 20, 2014
• **Moral Injuries in War, an interview with Chaplain (Col.) Herman Keizer, Jr. U.S. Army (ret.)**
• **Invisible Wounds: Helping Those Dealing with Moral Injury**
• **Truth Commission on Conscience in War Testimonies**
  - **Tyler Boudreau Testimony**
  - **Jake Diliberto Testimony Part One** and **Part Two**
  - **Camilo Mejia Testimony Part One** and **Part Two**
  - **Camillo Mac Bica Testimony Part One** and **Part Two**
  - **Herman Keizer Jr. Testimony Part One** and **Part Two**
  - **Joshua Casteel Testimony**
  - **Logan Mehl-Laituri Testimony**
  - **Chris Hedges Testimony**
  - **Celeste Zappala Testimony Part One** and **Part Two**
• **Pamela’s Story, Soul Repair Center Launch, November 2012**
• **Logan’s Story, Soul Repair Center Launch, November 2012**
• **Michael’s Story, Soul Repair Center Launch, November 2012**
• **Camillo’s Story, Soul Repair Center Launch, November 2012**