



RTS COURSE SYLLABUS

Understanding Trauma: An Introduction to Biblical Care and Clinical Insight

Program: N/A

Location: RTS DC

Term: Winter Term 2026

Instructor: Eliza Huie, LCPC

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Dates: 2/19/26 – 2/21/26

RTS Mission: A mind for truth. A heart for God.

I. Course Description

This course introduces students to a thoughtful and biblically grounded understanding of trauma. Students will learn to distinguish carefully between trauma, traumatization, suffering, and deep loss, while developing a theological and pastoral framework for responding wisely and compassionately.

The course explores the intersection of Scripture and trauma, the embodied nature of traumatic experience, and the unique challenges trauma presents for Christians and those who care for them. Attention will also be given to the counselor's/pastor's experience of trauma-related ministry, including vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue. This course emphasizes the role of the church in fostering healing, resilience, and faithful life of obedience and trust. This course is designed to help students grow in a deeper understanding of trauma and how to respond with wisdom, care, and compassion.

II. Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to students will be able to:

- 1. Explain and apply key distinctions related to trauma**
Clearly articulate the differences between trauma, traumatization, suffering, and deep loss, and apply these distinctions to pastoral and ministry contexts.
- 2. Construct a biblically faithful response to trauma**
Develop and defend a theological and pastoral approach to trauma care that reflects Scripture's teaching on suffering, hope, formation, and redemption.

3. **Integrate embodied care into ministry contexts**
Demonstrate awareness of trauma's physiological and emotional effects and incorporate appropriate embodied considerations into pastoral and ministry care.
4. **Evaluate ministry practices through a trauma-informed lens**
Critically assess common ministry approaches and church environments to determine their potential impact on trauma survivors and propose informed, compassionate and faithful alternatives based on biblical wisdom and truth.
5. **Develop a personal framework for sustainable caregiving**
Identify personal risk factors for vicarious trauma and burnout and articulate a plan for ongoing self-care, supervision, and spiritual formation in ministry.
6. **Articulate the church's formative role after trauma**
Describe how the local church can cultivate environments that support healing, resilience, and faithful discipleship in the aftermath of trauma.

III. Required Materials

The textbook:

Trauma Aware: A Christian's Guide to Help and Care by Eliza Huie

Purchase here: <https://www.amazon.com/Trauma-Aware-Christians-Guide-Providing/dp/0736988920>

Additional required material:

The Journal of Biblical Counseling, *Psalms 129, 130, and 131: A Framework for Trauma Care* by Todd Stryd. Purchase here: <https://store.ccef.org/my-account/jbc/381/psalms-129-130-and-131-a-framework-for-trauma-care/>

The Journal of Biblical Counseling, *Foundations of Trauma Care for Biblical Counselors* by Darby Strickland. Purchase here: <https://store.ccef.org/my-account/jbc/362/foundations-of-trauma-care-for-biblical-counselors/>

IV. Optional Recommended Materials

For further study students may read:

The Heart of Trauma: Healing the Embodied Brain in the Context of Relationship by Bonnie Badenoch, 2018.

The Bible Keeps the Record of Trauma but is it Trauma Informed by Nate Brook, Christianity Today: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2022/11/bible-trauma-informed-christian-counselor/>

Puritan Resources for Biblical Counseling, by Timothy Keller, CCEF 2016

50 Biblical Counseling Resources on Trauma and Trauma Care by Bob Kellemen: <https://rpmministries.org/2025/01/50-bc-trauma/>

Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores, by Diane Langberg, New Growth Press, 2015.

Understanding Trauma: A Biblical Introduction for Church Care, by Steve Midgely, The Good Book Company, 2025

Foundations of Trauma Care, by Darby Strickland, P&R Publishing, 2025.

Take a Deep Breath: How Counselling Ministry Addresses the Body, by Todd Stryd, CCEF Journal of Biblical Counseling, 2018

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma, by Bessel van der Kolk, Viking Press, 2014.

V. Assignments and Grading

- Attend all lectures.
- Read *Trauma Aware: A Christian's Guide to Help and Care*. It is best to read this book before the first class. Read the two assigned *Journal of Biblical Counseling* articles (By Todd Stryd and Darby Strickland).
- Final exam writing assignment. Once students have completed the course and all assigned reading, a 6–8-page Integrative Paper will be required summarizing what students learned and how they will apply it to a given case study. This assignment evaluates the student's ability to critically assess their conceptual understanding of trauma, engage course materials with discernment, and apply a trauma-aware and biblically informed frameworks to a case study in a manner appropriate for graduate level theological training. This paper will serve as the final exam for this class.

Final paper requirements.

A. Write a well-organized, personally insightful paper. Your paper will include two parts. The requirement for each part of your paper is listed below. All papers should be 6-8 pages double spaced in a 12-point Times New Roman font. Note-page count does not include cover page or any notes pages.

Part One- Conceptual and Theological Analysis of Trauma (3-4 pages):

Students will critically examine the development of their understanding of trauma in light of course reading and in-class instruction and discussion.

This section should address the following:

- A brief reflection of any pre-course conceptual framework for understanding trauma
- Key concepts from the course and required readings that strengthened, revised, refined, or challenged this framework

- How an integrated understanding of trauma reflects a more holistic view of the person
- Biblical implications of trauma care that reflect a theological foundation of suffering, embodiment, sanctification, and how that impacts student's pastoral care, counseling, or ministry contexts
- Identification of ongoing tensions, limitations, or areas for further development related to understanding trauma

Part Two- Applied Case Study of Integrated Care (3-4 pages):

Students will apply a trauma-aware framework to a case study, demonstrating analytical reasoning, biblically based engagement, clinical awareness, and compassionate integration of care.

This section should address the following:

- Case summary specifically highlighting where trauma related dynamics are influencing the individual's presentation and responses. (Assume I know the case study well so please do not rewrite it in your summary.)
- Rationale for a trauma-aware care, including unique priorities, pacing, counselor's disposition or approach, and specific goals for engaging
- Engagement of biblical theology in shaping care without reductionism or proof-texting
- Show integration of clinical and whole person understanding of care
- Reflection on how the case informs your developing theology and practice of care for the traumatized

Course Grading

- Student attendance and participation (30%)
- Mandatory readings. (30%)
- Final written paper: Exam (40%)

Grading System

Grade point averages on RTS transcripts will be determined on the basis of work done only at Reformed Theological Seminary.

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|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| A | (97-100) | 4.00 |
| A- | (94-96) | 3.66 |
| B+ | (91-93) | 3.33 |
| B | (88-90) | 3.00 |
| B- | (86-87) | 2.66 |

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|-----------|-----------------------|-------------|
| C+ | (83-85) | 2.33 |
| C | (80-82) | 2.00 |
| C- | (78-79) | 1.66 |
| D+ | (75-77) | 1.33 |
| D | (72-74) | 1.00 |
| D- | (70-71) | 0.66 |
| F | (below 70) | 0.00 |
| I | (incomplete) | – |
| W | (withdraw) | – |
| S | (satisfactory) | – |
| P | (passing) | – |

The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination. A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to “F.”

The grade “W” indicates that a student has withdrawn from a course after the drop deadline. This grade is granted by the academic dean only in extenuating circumstances.

The grade “P” is only used as a Pass/Fail option and is limited to the Field Education course.

A grade of C or better is required to continue in the sequence of language courses (does not apply to RTS Charlotte).

If a course is retaken, the original grade remains on the transcript and is included in the GPA. For all RTS courses that have exceeded standard degree time limits and are now ineligible to be applied to a degree, these courses will be shown on a separate transcript and will not be applied to the student’s GPA.

A Note about AI: RTS has developed a comprehensive Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy which is accessible to the student in the Catalog (p. 49). Please refer to and adhere to that policy. Illegitimate uses of AI are subject to penalties in line with the severity of the violation, ranging from letter-grade reductions, a grade of F for a course, or academic probation.

VI. Assignment Rubrics

Rubrics for assignments will be given in the class.