

EVIL AND GOD

Religious Studies 4060 / 6060
Spring 2010

Instructor: Vincent Lloyd (vlloyd@gsu.edu; 404.413.6116)
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45
34 Peachtree Street, 11th Floor
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11-12:30, and by appointment

What is evil? Does the existence of evil in the world challenge belief in God? When we encounter famine, disease, hurricanes, torture, war, or poverty, who (or what) do we hold responsible? How can bad things happen to good people? The course will examine how these questions are approached in religious thought, and also in philosophy, literature, and film.

Objectives:

By the end of the course the student should be able to:

- 1) Identify various philosophical approaches to the problem of evil, and discuss their advantages and disadvantages
- 2) Describe how evil has been understood by some major religious thinkers and philosophers.
- 3) Approach a work of literature or art and discuss how it grapples with issues of evil.

Workload:

Conventional wisdom holds that, for each hour a student spends in class, she or he should spend three hours on coursework outside of class. That means that, for our class, you should anticipate spending about 8 hours outside of class on coursework. If you find yourself spending significantly more or significantly less time, please speak with the instructor.

Grading:

1/4: Two Papers [undergraduates: 4-5pp; graduate students: 6-7pp], due 2/11 and 3/25

1/4: Discussion Leading

1/4: Final Film Activity [and supplementary activity for graduate students]

1/4: Class Participation Activities, including Discussion Questions

Note: I compute averages of letter grades, not percentages.

Textbooks for Purchase:

- 1) Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006
- 2) Voltaire, *Candide: Or Optimism* (Penguin Classics), translated by John Butt, Penguin
- 3) Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering*, translated by Everett R. Kalin, Fortress Press, 1975

Additional books graduate students are to purchase:

- 4) Emilie Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006
- 5) Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, translated by Werner S. Pluhar, Hackett Publishing Company, 2009
- 6) Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, Columbia University Press, 2007

Other Required Readings:

Are available through the GSU library's "e-reserves" (go to <http://www.library.gsu.edu/services/> and click on "Find Course Reserves" from the left column). You must bring a paper copy of the readings to class during the relevant week.

Discussion Questions:

Each Tuesday you should bring to class five well thought out (and typed up) questions about the reading that you would like to discuss in class.

Discussion Leading:

From the third week of class, Thursday classes will be kicked off by pairs of students. When it is your turn to lead the discussion, please prepare some opening remarks, a handout outlining what you thought was most interesting and/or important about the reading, and a number of questions for the class to discuss.

Graduate Students:

In addition to slightly altered assignments, graduate students have additional readings each week. I will meet at a time to be arranged with the graduate students to discuss these readings.

Reading Schedule:

--schedule is subject to change

--asterisks indicate supplementary readings, required for graduate students

Week 1:

Thu, 1/14: Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" (e-res)

Thu, 1/14: Peter van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, Lecture 1

Week 2:

Tue, 1/19: Job (NRSV) (e-res)

Thu, 1/21: René Girard, “Job as a Failed Scapegoat” (e-res)

Thu, 1/21: Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job*, Part I; Conclusion (e-res)

Week 3:

Tue, 1/26: Augustine, *City of God* (selections) (e-res, under Larrimore)

Thu, 1/28: Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People” (e-res)

****:** Robert Merrihew Adams, “The Sacred and the Bad” from *Finite and Infinite Goods* (e-res)

Week 4:

Tue, 2/2: Kant, *Religion without the Bounds of Reason Alone* (selections on e-res); ****** (all)

Thu, 2/4: John Milbank, “Evil: Darkness and Silence” (e-res)

****:** Slavoj Žižek, “A Hair of the Dog that Bit You” and “Kant with (or against) Sade” (e-res)

Week 5:

Tue, 2/9: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (selections on e-res in Larrimore)

Thu, 2/11: Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (e-res)

Thu, 2/11: **Paper #1 Due**

****:** Nelson Pike, “Hume on Evil” (e-res)

Week 6:

Tue, 2/16: Voltaire, *Candide*, pp. 3-45

Thu, 2/18: Voltaire, *Candide*, pp. 46-94

****:** Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought* (selections)

Week 7:

Tue, 2/23: J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (e-res)

Thu, 2/25: Alvin Plantinga, “God, Evil and the Metaphysics of Freedom” (e-res)

****:** Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, Lectures 2-3

Week 8:

Tue, 3/2: Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, Lectures 4-6

Thu, 3/4: Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, Lectures 7-8

****:** Marilyn McCord Adams, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God” (e-res)

Week 9:

Tue, 3/16: Fyodor Dostoevsky, “The Grand Inquisitor” (e-res)

Thu, 3/18: Heinrich von Kleist, “The Earthquake in Chile” (e-res)

****:** John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (selections) (e-res)

Week 10:

Tue, 3/23: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (selections on e-res)

Thu, 3/25: Nikolai Gogol, “St. John’s Eve” (e-res)

****:** Nikolai Gogol, “The Fair at Sorochyntsi” (e-res)

Thu, 3/25: Paper #2 Due

Week 11:

Tue, 3/30: Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women’s Experience of Evil...*, Ch. 1 (e-res)

Thu, 4/1: Emily Townes (Preface; 1, 7, 8 on e-res); ****:** all

****:** William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?*, Chapters 1 and 2 (e-res)

Week 12:

Tue, 4/6: Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering* (selections); ****:** all

****:** Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Tragic” (e-res)

Week 13:

Tue, 4/13: Hannah Arendt, selections from *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (e-res)

Tue, 4/13: Stanley Milgram, “Behavior Study of Obedience” (e-res)

Thu, 4/15: Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem, “An Exchange of Letters” (e-res)

****:** Charles Mathewes, “Evil as Privation: Hannah Arendt’s Augustinian Ontology” (e-res)

Week 14:

Tue, 4/20: Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, Chapter 3 (e-res); ****:** all

Tue, 4/20: Jacqueline Rose, “Deadly Embrace” (e-res)

Thu, 4/22: Jodi Dean, “Resolve: Speaking of Evil” (e-res)

Week 15:

Tue, 4/27: Ian Parker, “The Gift”; Tracy Kidder, “The Good Doctor”

Thu, 4/29: Stanley Hauerwas, “Should Suffering Be Eliminated?” (e-res)

****:** Phil Zimbardo and Zeno Franco, “The Banality of Heroism”

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**Tue, 5/4: Film Project Due**