**FYSM 1210 – The Presence of Evil and the Possibility of Ethics**

Department of Philosophy, Carleton University

Winter 2024

0.5 credit

In-Person Course: classes will **not** be recorded or be made available in any way asynchronously.

Class Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30am-12:55PM EST

Lecturer: Dr. Kate Lawson

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10-11am or by appointment.

Office Location: 3A52 Paterson Hall

E-mail: kate.lawson3@carleton.ca

Teaching Assistant: N/A

*I will do my best to respond to your emails within 48 hours Monday-Friday. I will not respond to emails on evenings and weekends, so please be sure to ask your questions with ample time.*

**Course Description:**

This introductory philosophy course will examine our ethical duties as humans alongside the problem of evil in our world. From Sophocles’ *Antigone* in ancient Greece, to Hannah Arendt's coverage of the trial of Nazi Adolph Eichmann after the Second World War, to contemporary political turbulence, this course will offer ways to think through some of the most challenging aspects of humanity. We will use philosophy texts as a jumping in point for how to flourish at university, cultivating the tools necessary to succeed in a humanities degree while we consider some of the greatest existential issues of our times.

Course Preclusions: None

Prerequisite(s): None

**Learning Outcomes:**

• the ability to work effectively in a university humanities class. This includes competence in using the library for research, writing an essay, paying attention in class, doing readings, taking effective notes, and studying for tests and exams.

• to understand and be able to reconstruct arguments in favour of different concepts of ethics and evil in the history of philosophy and our contemporary world.

• to be able to critically analyse, relate, and juxtapose different approaches to notions of ethics and evil philosophically.

• to be able to defend, in consideration of a broad range of philosophical arguments, your own personal approach to how to live an ethical life.

**Course readings and texts:**

All required readings for this course will be made available to you online through Ares.

If you want to purchase a physical copy of any of the books in which our reading selections are found, the corresponding editions can be easily found and purchased online. *This is not required*.

*Please do the day’s reading* before *attending class. This will help you to understand the lecture and engage more thoroughly with the material during our class discussions.*

**Reading List:**

Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right use of school studies with a View to the Love of God,” in Waiting for God (NY: Harper Perennial, 2009), 59-65.

Curzer, Howard, 'Aristotle and Moral Virtue', in Nancy E. Snow (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 6 Dec. 2017), <https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199385195.013.14>: pp. 104-113.

Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Terence Irwin, second ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), Book VII, Ch 10, 1145a 15- 1152a 36; pp. 99-114.

Kim, Halla. “Some historical Background to Kant’s Moral philosophy,” and “Morality in the Age of Enlightenment,” in Introduction in Kant and the Foundations of Morality. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015): 12-15 and 19-22.

Kant, Immanuel. “Section 2: The Categorical Imperative,” Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: With an Updated Translation, Introduction, and Notes. Edited by Allen W. Wood. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2018):  AK4:421-AK4:425 OR pp.34-38.

Bykvist, Krister, “The Basic Elements of Utilitarianism,” in Utilitarianism: A Guide for the Perplexed. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2010), 16-19.

Nozick, Robert, “Experience Machine,” Anarchy, State, and Utopia. (New York, N.Y: Basic Books, 1974), 42-45.

Beauvoir, Simone de. “Ambiguity and Freedom,” in The Ethics of Ambiguity. (Secaucus, N.J: Citadel Press, 1948) 7-34.

Antigone: The Woman Who Said “No.” Place of publication not identified: ARTE France, 2016. (video)

Deraspe, Sophie, Marc Daigle, Nahéma Ricci, Nour Belkhira, Rawad El-Zein, and Sophocle. Antigone. Montréal: Maison 4:3, 2019. (movie)

Almossawi, Ali. An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments. (New York: The experiment, 2013), 10-26 and 36-43.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, Richard Pevear, and Larissa. Volokhonsky. “Rebellion” in The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 236-246. (You may also read “The Grand Inquisitor,” pp. 246-264 but that is optional).

Augustine. Confessions. Translated by Henry Chadwick. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): Book 2. iii.9, pp. 28-29 and Book 7. iii.7, pp.115-116 and x.19-xxi27, pp.125-132.

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Helen Zimmern, “Chapter 5: The natural history of morals,” in Beyond Good and Evil. Modern Library publishers, 1917), 94-118.

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Horace Barnett Samuel, “First Essay: Good and Evil, Good and Bad,” in The Genealogy of Morals, (New York: Boni and Liveright, inc., 1918), 1-39.

Razack, Sherene. “Those Who ‘Witness the Evil.’” Hypatia 18, no. 1 (2003): 204–11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3811048>.

Arendt, Hannah, “The Accused,” in Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 2006), 46-60.

Arendt, Hannah, “The Expert on the Jewish Question,” in Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 2006), 71-79.

Arendt, Hannah. “Thinking and moral consideration: A lecture,” Social research 38, no. 3 (1971): 417–446.

Trotta, Margarethe von, Barbara Sukowa, Axel Milberg, Bettina Brokemper, Pamela Katz, Johannes Rexin, and Janet McTeer. Hannah Arendt. United States: [publisher not identified], 2013. (movie)

Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Bullshit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

**Evaluation**

**Late Policy:**

This class has a strict late policy.

All quizzes, assignments, and the final essay are due through submission on Brightspace.The portal will close upon the appointed hour and as such, you will not be able to submit after that point. DO NOT leave your submission to the last few hours.

If you require special accommodation or an extension due to accessibility issues, you must reach out to the **Paul Menton Centre** at the beginning of the semester to set up the accommodation. While it is not necessary, once you have this set up with the PMC, I would appreciate if you let me know if and when you will be needing an extension or an accommodation on a particular project so I can be sure that I have it all set up for you.

Otherwise, extensions may be granted but only under extenuating circumstances. Vacation, travel, and work loads for other courses do not apply. Similarly, you must be present in class to write the final exam. Barring extenuating circumstances, no extensions will be given.

**Content quizzes:** 6 quizzes worth 5% each for a total of **30%**

Quizzes will be made available to take on Brightspace.

**#1:** Virtue Ethics and Deontology. Available from Wednesday Jan17, 1PM- Sunday Jan 21 at midnight.

**#2:** Utilitarianism, and Ambiguity. Available from Wednesday Jan 24, 1PM- Sunday Jan 28 at midnight.

**#3:** Logical Fallacies. Available from Monday Feb 5, 1PM- Friday Feb 9 at midnight.

**#4:** Antigone, Augustine, and Ivan Karamazov. Available from Wednesday Feb 14, 1PM- Sunday Feb 18 at midnight.

**#5:** Nietzsche, and Razack. Available from Monday Mar 4, 1PM- Friday March 8 at midnight.

**#6:** Aesthetics and Bullshit. Available from Wed Mar 20, 1PM- Sunday March 24 at midnight.

**Written Assignment: Applying Ethical Structures (5%):**

Applying Ethical Structures. A written response to a prompt posted online about virtue ethics, deontology, and utilitarianism.

Approximately 250-350 words in length.

Submit as a word document or PDF.

Times New Roman, 12-point font, Chicago or MLA.

Full rubric will be posted on Brightspace.

Available on Brightspace to submit any time between Wednesday Jan 31 at 1PM and Sunday Feb 4 at midnight.

**Essay Outline Assignment (5%):**

Remember to attend the essay writing **workshops on Jan 31 and Feb 14** in order to be prepared for this assignment.

It is not worth a lot of your grade in itself, but it will be the building block for your final essay, which will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Full rubric will be available on Brightspace.

Essay Outline Due via Brightspace by midnight on Mon Feb 26.

**Annotated Bibliography Assignment (10%):**

Annotated Bibliography for your final essay.

This assignment will build on the **feedback given from your essay outline assignment** and the information presented at the **writing workshops on Jan 31 and Feb 14**.

Due on Wed March 13 at midnight via Brightspace submission.

**Written Assignment: The Banality of Evil (10%):**

Evil as Banal, a written response to Hannah Arendt.

Approximately 250-350 words in length.

Submitted in word document or PDF.

Time New Roman, 12-point font, Chicago or MLA.

Full rubric will be posted on Brightspace.

Available on Brightspace to submit any time between Monday March 18 at 1PM and Monday March 25 at midnight. 10%

**Final Essay**: **20%**

Due Monday April 8, midnight through Brightspace submission. Based on your annotated bibliography and essay outline.

Approximately 1000-1250 words in length.

Typed in word or PDF.

Time New Roman, 12-point font, Chicago or MLA.

Full rubric will be posted on Brightspace.

**Final Exam: 20%**

Remember to attend the **Exam Review in class on Monday, Mar 18.** Please come to this review with your questions about all course content.

**The exam will take place in class on Wednesday, Mar 20.** It should take about 1 hour to complete but you will have the full 1.5 hours of class.

If you have special accommodations and need to write your exam in another room or with a computer, please be sure to reach out to me so that we can set this up with the accommodations office.

**Class Schedule**

**Monday, Jan 08**

Introduction to the course: Expectations, grades, syllabus, the notion of evil in the world and the concept of ethics.

**Reading:** No reading.

**Wednesday, Jan 10**

**University Tools: Reading and paying attention as keys to critical thinking.**

**Reading:** Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right use of school studies with a View to

the Love of God,” in Waiting for God (NY: Harper Perennial, 2009), 59-65.

**Watch:** David Foster Wallace "This is Water." <https://youtu.be/ms2BvRbjOYo?si=HnzrHn2qzJBejJHp>

**Monday, Jan15**

**Setting the scene for ethics. What are ethics and what are the main ethical systems in “western” philosophy: Virtue Ethics.**

**Readings:** Curzer, Howard, 'Aristotle and Moral Virtue', in Nancy E. Snow (ed.), *The*

*Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 6 Dec. 2017), <https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199385195.013.14>: pp. 104-109.

And

Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Terence Irwin, second ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), Book VII, Ch 10, 1145a 15- 1152a 36; pp. 99-114.

**Wednesday, Jan 17**

**Setting the scene for ethics. What are ethics and what are the main ethical systems in “western” philosophy: Deontology or Kantian Ethics.**

**Reading:** Kim, Halla. “Some historical Background to Kant’s Moral philosophy,” and “Morality in the Age of Enlightenment,” in Introduction in *Kant and the Foundations of Morality*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015): 12-15 and 19-22.

And

Kant, Immanuel. “Section 2: The Categorical Imperative,” *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: With an Updated Translation, Introduction, and Notes*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2018): AK4:421-AK4:425 OR pp.34-38.

**Content Quiz #1 on Brightspace:** Virtue Ethics and Deontology. Available from Wednesday Jan17, 1PM- Sunday Jan 21 at midnight.

**Monday, Jan 22**

**Setting the scene for ethics. What are ethics and what are the main ethical systems in “western” philosophy: Utilitarianism.**

**Reading:** Bykvist, Krister, “The Basic Elements of Utilitarianism,” in *Utilitarianism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2010), 16-19.

AND

Nozick, Robert, “Experience Machine,” *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. (New York, N.Y: Basic Books, 1974), 42-45.

**Wednesday, Jan 24**

Other Ethical Possibilities: Existentialism.

**Reading:** Beauvoir, Simone de. “Ambiguity and Freedom,” in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. (Secaucus, N.J: Citadel Press, 1948) 35-45.

**Content Quiz #2 on Brightspace:** Utilitarianism, and Ambiguity. Available from Wednesday Jan 24, 1PM- Sunday Jan 28 at midnight.

**Monday, Jan 29**

Other Ethical Possibilities: Antigone.

**No reading, but please watch:**

*Antigone: The Woman Who Said “No.”* Place of publication not identified: ARTE France, 2016.

And

Deraspe, Sophie, Marc Daigle, Nahéma Ricci, Nour Belkhira, Rawad El-Zein, and Sophocle. *Antigone*. Montréal: Maison 4:3, 2019.

**Wednesday, Jan 31**

**University Tools: How to write a Humanities Essay**

Writing Center Speaker

No reading for today’s class

**First Written Assignment: Applying Ethical Structures.** Available on Brightspace to submit any time between Wednesday Jan 31 at 1PM and Sunday Feb 4 at midnight.

**Monday, Feb 5**

**University Tools: Understanding and Avoiding Logical Fallacies**

**Reading:** Almossawi, Ali. *An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments*. (New York: The experiment, 2013), 10-26 and 36-43.

**Content Quiz #3 on Brightspace:** Logical Fallacies. Available from Monday Feb 5, 1PM- Friday Feb 9 at midnight.

**Wednesday, Feb 7**

What is Evil?

**Reading:** Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, Richard Pevear, and Larissa. Volokhonsky. “Rebellion” in *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 236-246. (You may also read “The Grand Inquisitor,” pp. 246-264 but that is optional).

**Trigger warning**, this chapter depicts graphic evil actions against animals and children. Please do not read if you think this will be too upsetting. But if you don’t read it, be sure to come to class so that you can get the gist of what is happening philosophically. We will not discuss the details of these acts in class, but will focus on the philosophical importance.

**Monday, Feb 12**

St. Augustine and the Origins of Evil

**Reading:** Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): Book 2. iii.9, pp. 28-29 and Book 7. iii.7, pp.115-116 and x.19-xxi27, pp.125-132.

**Wednesday, Feb 14**

**University Tools:** Determining a strong essay question, writing a good working thesis, and finding secondary sources.Preparation for essay outline assignment.

**Content Quiz #4 on Brightspace:** Antigone, Augustine, and Ivan Karamazov. Available from Wednesday Feb 14, 1PM- Sunday Feb 18 at midnight.

**Monday, Feb 19**

Winter Break- No Classes

**Wednesday, Feb 21**

Winter Break- no classes

**Monday, Feb 26**

**Contextualizing Evil across History**

**Reading**: Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Helen Zimmern, “Chapter 5: The natural history of morals,” in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Modern Library publishers, 1917), 94-118.

**Essay Outline Assignment:** Essay Outline Due via Brightspace by midnight on Mon Feb 26.

**Wednesday, Feb 28**

**The development of Evil and Morality**

**Reading**: Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Horace Barnett Samuel, “First Essay: Good and Evil, Good and Bad,” in *The Genealogy of Morals*, (New York: Boni and Liveright, inc., 1918), 1-39.

**Monday, Mar 4**

**Contextualizing Evil: Canadian, Feminist, decolonial perspectives**

**Reading:** Razack, Sherene. “Those Who ‘Witness the Evil.’” *Hypatia* 18, no. 1 (2003): 204–11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3811048>.

**Content Quiz #5 on Brightspace:** Nietzsche, Razack, and Evil. Available from Monday Mar 4, 1PM- Friday March 8 at midnight.

**Wednesday, Mar 6**

**The Banality of Evil: Setting the Scene for Eichmann in Jerusalem**

**Reading:** Arendt, Hannah, “The Accused,” in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 2006), 46-60.

**Monday, Mar 11**

**The Banality of Evil: The Traits of Banality in Eichmann**

**Reading**: Arendt, Hannah, “The Expert on the Jewish Question,” in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 2006), 71-79.

**Wednesday, Mar 13**

**Overcoming banality.**

**Reading**: Arendt, Hannah. “Thinking and moral consideration: A lecture,” *Social research* 38, no. 3 (1971): 417–446.

**Annotated Bibliography Assignment:** Annotated Bibliography for your final essay. Due on Wed March 13 at midnight via Brightspace submission.

**Study for the final Exam.**

**Monday, Mar 18**

**Exam Review:** Please come to class with your questions about all course content.

**Wednesday, Mar 20**

**In-class Exam:** If you have special accommodations, and need to write your exam in another room or with a computer, please be sure to set this up with the accommodations office.

**Monday, Mar 25**

**Aesthetics and Evil: How art can act as propaganda or rebellion.**

**No Reading, but please watch**: Trotta, Margarethe von, Barbara Sukowa, Axel Milberg, Bettina Brokemper, Pamela Katz, Johannes Rexin, and Janet McTeer. *Hannah Arendt*. United States: [movie], 2013.

**Wednesday, Mar 27**

**Pushing Back Against the Aesthetics of Evil: Understanding Bullshit.**

**Reading**: Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Bullshit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

**Content Quiz #6 on Brightspace:** Aesthetics and Bullshit. Available from Wed Mar 20, 1PM- Sunday March 24 at midnight.

**Monday, April 1**

**University Tools:** **Learning how to participate in class and to engage in both sides of an argument.**

**Informal in-class debate on Art and Evil.**

**Second Written Assignment:** Evil as Banal, a written response to Hannah Arendt. Available on Brightspace to submit any time between Monday March 18 at 1PM and Monday March 25 at midnight.

**Wednesday, April 3**

Meetings with Dr. Lawson about your final essay- please bring your outline, bibliography, and be prepared to discuss your final paper.

**Monday, April 8**

**Final Class**- discussion about the course, submission of the final papers, final questions about the presence of evil and the possibility of ethics.

**Final Essay is due by midnight**, Monday April 8 via Brightspace.