**[DRAFT: Changes and additions will be made before the start of class!]**

**The Problem of Evil**

PHIL 450/650, REL 939, EP&E 478 Spring 2015

Thursdays, 1:30-3:20; LC105

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**Description**

The evils of our world can seem to present strong reasons for disbelieving in the existence of God. This course will examine the main forms that this problem for theism takes, and some of the proposed ways of solving, or at least mitigating, the problem.

**Objectives**

The course aims to help students gain an in-depth understanding of prominent atheistic arguments from evil and prominent theistic responses. Successful students will understand how debates concerning the problem of evil interact with various debates in value theory, epistemology, action theory, normative ethics, and other areas of philosophy. Additionally, the course will give students opportunities to critically engage contemporary philosophical work and to practice and improve in philosophical writing and communication.

**Format, reading expectations, intended audience**

This is a seminar, and a significant portion of the class time will consist of guided discussion aimed at critically assessing the views and arguments presented in the week’s readings. Because time will not be spent summarizing the readings, and because the success of the seminar depends on student participation, it is critical that students complete the week’s readings in advance of the seminar. The class is intended for graduate students and undergraduates with previous experience in philosophy courses.

**Reading materials and course website**

All readings may be accessed via links from the online syllabus or will be available as pdf files in the course reserves section of the ClassesV2 site.

**Assignments and grading**

Assignments include four 2-3 page response papers, a final paper proposal, and a final paper (see assignment details below). The bulk of the grade will be determined by the final paper, though the quality of the response papers and seminar participation may also affect your grade. All written work must be completed to pass the class. Attendance at seminar meetings is mandatory; unexcused absences are grounds for failing the course, even if one's written work is good.

Response papers: Each student must write 4 response papers, at least two before Spring Break. These should be submitted using the dropbox on classesv2 by 5 p.m. on the day before class. Response papers should notsummarize a reading, but should develop some sort of critical or constructive response. These response papers will help us to involve students in seminar discussions (so you should be ready to comment on your response paper in class), will provide us an opportunity to give you early feedback, and may serve as springboards for a final paper. Response papers will be graded with a check, check minus, or a check plus. All checks can only help your grade.

Final paper:A 1-2 page proposal for the final paper is due on April 9th. The paper itself is due on April 30th. Undergraduate papers should be 12-15 pp.; graduate student papers should be 15-20 pp. The proposal and paper should be submitted using the classesv2 dropbox.

**Provisional schedule**

Week 1 (Jan. 15th): Introduction to arguments from evil and the seminar topics

Keith DeRose, “Might God Have Reasons for Not Preventing Evils?” (manuscript). [15 pages]

Week 2 (Jan. 22nd): The free will defense, part I

John Hick, “Soul-Making and Suffering” in The Problem of Evil, ed. Marilyn and Robert Adams (OUP, 1990), 168-88.

David Lewis, “Evil for Freedom’s Sake?” Philosophical Papers22.3 (1993): 149-72. [[Link]](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.tandfonline.com_doi_pdf_10.1080_05568649309506401&d=AwICaQ&c=-dg2m7zWuuDZ0MUcV7Sdqw&r=70hdc3GubnULDupmLmSyiiI8Kbd9pOcO5V40YR81sQk&m=VmZ9Te-tiYsnXjONVJ-rKYrjxQ5ZN7JUDJv-6Q4AIc8&s=UfAlCIF1dr3BN33dwT4CHuDcs5s2k9CpjpqtxkV9YfA&e=)

C. S. Lewis, ch. 8 (on Hell) from The Problem of Pain.

Week 3 (Jan. 29th): The free will defense, part II

To be added.

Week 4 (Feb. 5th): The free will defense, part III

To be added.

Week 5 (Feb. 12th): Animal pain I

Michael Murray, Nature Red in Tooth and Claw (OUP, 2008), Intro and chs. 1-3. Note: Skim chapter 1, though note last paragraph for terminology. [[Link](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199237272.001.0001/acprof-9780199237272)] [106 pages]

Week 6 (Feb. 19th): Animal pain II

Murray (continued), chs. 4-7. [[Link](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199237272.001.0001/acprof-9780199237272)] [94 pages.]

Week 7 (Feb. 26th): The Multiple Universes Defense (and the Arbitrary Universe Defense)

Timothy O’Conner, “Theism and the Scope of Contingency,” Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion 1, 134-149. [15 pages]

Klaas Kray, “The Theistic Multiverse: Problems and Prospects,” in Scientific Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion (Palgrave Macmillon: New York, 2012), 143-62. [16 pages]

Jason Megill, “Evil and the Many Universes Response,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 70.2 (2011): 127-38. [12 pages]

Week 8 (March 5th): Skeptical Theism, part I

To be added.

Week 9 (March 26th): Skeptical Theism, part II

To be added.

Week 10 (April 2nd): Skeptical theism, part III

To be added.

Week 11 (April 9th): Skeptical theism and the problem of divine trust

Hud Hudson, “The Father of Lies?” Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion5 (2012): 117-32. [16 pages]

Erik Weilenberg, “Skeptical Theism and Divine Lies,” Religious Studies 46.4 (2010): 509-23. [12 pages]

Ian Wilks, “Skeptical Theism and Empirical Unfalsifiability,” Faith and Philosophy 26.1 (2009): 64-76. [13 pages]

Michael Bergmann, “Commonsense Skeptical Theism,” in Reason, Metaphysics, and Mind (OUP, 2012), 9-37. [29 pages]

Week 12 (April 16th): Moral skepticism problems for theodicy and the argument from evil

Sharon Street, “If Everything Happens for a Reason, Then We Don’t Know What Reasons Are: Why the Price of Theism is Normative Skepticism” in Challenges to Moral and Religious Belief: Disagreement and Evolution (OUP, 2014). [16 pages]

Daniel Howard-Snyder, “Epistemic Humility, Arguments from Evil, and Moral Skepticism” in Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion 2 (2009): 17-57. [37 pages]

Thomas Crisp, “An Evolutionary Objection to the Argument from Evil,” Evidence and Religious Belief, 114-132. [19 pages]

Week 13 (April 23rd): Theodicy and affective attitudes

Pittard, “Hoping for the Worst and the Problem of Evil,” manuscript.

Nick Trakakis, “Theodicy: The Solution to the Problem of Evil, or Part of the Problem?” Sophia 47 (2008): 161-91. [29 pages]