

Philosophy 450/650 / EP&E 478: The Problem of Evil

Syllabus, 9/4/21 – preliminary version, subject to change

Fall 2021, Tuesdays 1:30-3:20, Phelps Hall, room 312

Profs. Keith DeRose, Miroslav Volf

DeRose office hour: Thursdays (on which Yale classes meet) 10:30-11:25, 410 Connecticut Hall

Volf office hour: Wednesdays 2:15-4:15; Sterling Div. Quad. SG64; email Volf or karin.fransen@yale.edu for appt.

course page will be: <http://campuspress.yale.edu/keithderose/450-650-f21/>

Yale Divinity School students, as well as students from the Graduate School, should take this course as Phil. 650. Yale College students should take it as Phil. 450 or EP&E 478.

Course Requirements: For Auditors: Auditors should do the readings for each meeting, and attend in participate in each week's discussion.

Course Requirements: For Those taking the course: Those taking the course should:

- do the readings for each meeting, and attend in participate in each week's discussion
- class size permitting [this will be decided after the first meeting of the class]: each student will lead about 50 minutes of a seminar, presenting one of the class readings (or a part thereof), and leading discussion of it
- Written work
 - Phil. 450 / EPE 478: Two distinct papers, each 2,500-3,500 words long (about 7-10 pages), on topics directly related to the topics of the course, and each preceded by a brief (about 100 words) topic proposal. Dates (all Thursdays):
 - Proposal for first paper: due Sept. 30
 - First paper: due Oct. 14
 - Proposal for second paper: due Nov. 18
 - Second paper: due Dec. 9
 - Phil. 650: Two options:
 - Two proposals and two papers, just like the Phil. 450 assignments above, with the same due dates, or
 - One paper, 5,000-7,000 words long (about 14-20 pages), due on Dec. 9, preceded by a short (about 100-150 word) proposal, due Nov. 18

The course will be centered on *Horrific Suffering, Divine Hiddenness, and Hell: The Place of Freedom in a World Governed by God* (3H), a book that one of the instructors (DeRose) is writing. A partial draft of the book (draft of 30 July 2021) is available at the course web page.

A good bit of the reading for the course will be that draft of the book. But as we move through the topics of the book, we will also be reading related works by other writers. What we read will be sensitive to student interest. Students are urged to look ahead in 3H, and in some of the other potential readings listed below, to find topics and works they might want to write their papers on, and that they might want discussed later in the seminar. (So students' reading should be along two tracks. First, you should

do the reading for the topics coming up for seminar discussion. But second, you should be reading around the topics that you want to do your writing on; usually this will involve doing readings that will be covered later in the seminar well in advance of when they come up for seminar discussion. Let us know as you become interested in potential topics.)

The **first meeting** (on Sept. 7) will be conducted without the supposition that students have read anything: We will introduce terms and topics that will be relevant to the seminar, explaining them mainly “from scratch”—not presupposing prior reading—but occasionally pointing students ahead to reading that will be done later. But students may find it helpful to read a brief introductory essay by KDR, “Might God Have Reasons for Not Preventing Evils?” as background preparation for the first meeting, and for the course.

Assigned Readings for early in the semester:

-3H, Part One (pp. 1-59)

-Marilyn Adams, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volumes, Vol. 63 (1989): 297-310 [link: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4106922>], plus Chapter 3, sect. 8 (pp. 53-55) of MMA’s later book of the same name, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Cornell UP, 1999). The book is available to Yalies as an on-line book at the Yale library, for those who might want to poke around in it; the section assigned above is available at the “Files” tab of the Canvas page for our course [F].

-Three essays by Karen Kilby, all from her book, *God, Evil, and the Limits of Theology*: “Evil and the Limits of Theology” [F], “Sin, Evil, and the Problem of Intelligibility” [F], and “Julian of Norwich, Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Status of Suffering in Christian Theology” [F].

Later Readings will include:

David Lewis, “Evil for Freedom’s Sake?”, *Philosophical Papers* 1993 [J]

Peter van Inwagen, chapters 1, 4, and 5 of *The Problem of Evil*, OUP 2006 [B]

John Hick, “Soul-Making and Suffering,” portion of *Evil and the God of Love* (originally published 1966) in Adams & Adams, ed., *The Problem of Evil*, OUP 1991 [F]. (Though we’re only assigning that portion as of now, the whole book seems available for free download at: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-1-349-18048-6>)

C.S. Lewis, “Hell” chapter of *The Problem of Pain*, [F]

J: Journal articles: these should be downloadable for free with a Yale internet connection. To find them, this is a good place to start: <http://wa4py6yj8t.search.serialssolutions.com/ejp/?libHash=WA4PY6YJ8T#/?language=en-US&titleType=JOURNALS>

B: The books that we’re reading portions of are available from Yale library as on-line books. Look them up on Orbis, and download the relevant parts, or buy paper copies from Amazon or some other place, if you like physical books.

F: these readings will be put up on the “Files” tab on the Canvas site for our course