

*Phil/Rel 265: God, Suffering, and Evil*  
Illinois College – Spring 2012

**Dr. Caryn D. Riswold**, instructor

**Office:** Kirby 212

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**Office Hours:** normally MW 2:45-4:00; Tu/Th 1:30-3:30 (and appointments as needed)

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**Class Times:** MWF 1:20 – 2:30pm

Bruner 3125

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**Course Description:** How can God be all-good and all-powerful if evil exists? The classic question of theodicy guides this course, with a study of classic and contemporary attempts to deal with the problem of evil in light of God's goodness and power. Sustained focus on one topic enables students to practice critical thinking in the study of philosophy and religion.

**Course Objectives:** Students completing this course will have basic knowledge and skills necessary in the academic study of religion:

- *Inquiry & Analysis:* knowing when information is needed, being able to identify, locate, evaluate, and responsibly use and share that information. Accomplished through two analysis paper assignments.
- *Creative & Critical Thinking:* exploring issues, ideas, artifacts and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion; combining existing ideas, images, and expertise in an original way; thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way. Accomplished through final exam essay on constructing one's own theodicy in response to semester material, and the *Sunflower* project.
- *Written Communication:* developing and expressing ideas in writing. Accomplished through two analysis papers and a written response to *The Sunflower*.
- *Oral Communication:* delivering a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge and foster understanding in the listener. Accomplished through two paper presentations, the *Sunflower* symposium session, and the "Dueling Lewis's Debate."

**Responsibilities of Student** ~ In order to meet these objectives, students are accountable for:

- All reading as assigned. Reading is essential for this seminar and the student is accountable at each class session for the texts noted in the syllabus. **BRING THE ASSIGNED TEXT TO CLASS** along with questions and reactions to it.
- Attendance and active participation for each class session is mandatory (50 points). *Excessive absences will negatively affect your grade and could lead to failure in the course.*
  - Active participation in every class period includes things like bring the assigned book to class, taking notes, looking at references in the texts, asking questions, responding to questions, and engaging in group discussion. This is particularly important for successful learning in a small seminar class. This type of activity is regularly observed by the professor, as it leads to success in learning, which is the ultimate goal of this course.
  - **Phones and related devices must be silenced, out of sight, and may not be used during class at any time for calls, texting, or anything else. In case of dire emergency, speak to the professor. You will be penalized for calls or texting during class.**
- Prompt submission of all assignments [described in detail later]:
  - Trilemma Exam 80 points
  - Origins Analysis Paper 75 points
  - Responses Analysis Paper 60 points

- *Sunflower* response & presentation 60 points
  - Final Exam 75 points
- Possible Points for the semester: 400 (above + 50 points for participation)**

### Required Texts:

- Mark Larrimore, ed. *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).
- C.S. Lewis. *A Grief Observed*. (Harper San Francisco, 1961).
- C. S. Lewis. *The Problem of Pain*. (Harper San Francisco, 1948, 2001).
- Emilie Townes. *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).
- Elie Wiesel. *Night*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2006).
- Simon Wiesenthal. *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. (New York: Schocken, 1998).

### Intellectual Integrity: Illinois College Honor Code

The Illinois College Faculty approved the Honor Code proposed by the Illinois College Student Forum in 2005, revised in 2007. The Honor Code, available in full at <http://www.ic.edu/academics/academichonesty.asp> states the following:

- Illinois College is a community founded upon trust. It acknowledges its students' diligence and assumes a general adherence to honesty. Cheating and plagiarism violate trust, honor and integrity. To maintain the cohesion of the Illinois College community, all students shall adhere to an academic Honor Code, (Article 1, section 1)
- The institution has no tolerance for breach of academic honor and integrity. (Article 3, section 1)
- When a professor encounters a student in violation of the Honor Code and is able to determine that the transgression is intentional, he or she will contact the Dean's office to determine whether this is the student's first offense. The instructor will then execute, from those listed under the section entitled Student Violation, at least one of the punishments that seems most appropriate. Then the professor shall, within five "class days," advise the Chairman of the Judicial Board and the Dean of the College, in writing, of the offense and his or her dispensation of a punishment. (Article 3, section 2)

***Blatant and flagrant offenses, discussed in the College's Honor Code statement, will result in failure in and withdrawal from this course. A Second Violation of the Honor Code may result in more serious penalties, as detailed in the Honor Code statement.*** Any questions about unauthorized aid or plagiarism should be directed to the instructor.

### Department of Philosophy and Religion Honor Statement:

- Faculty in the department require students to include the following statement about academic integrity on work they submit for a grade:
- *This paper is my own work, all in my words unless specifically indicated. I have fully indicated all sources, cited directly or indirectly, in the in-text notes and the bibliography or works-cited list. (signed and dated)*
- This statement should be included with signature and date on all papers. In the case of email submissions, the statement should be included at the end of the paper, and receipt of it from the student's email address will constitute a signature. Students are also expected to adhere to the Honor Code on all quizzes and exams. For more information, please see <http://www2.ic.edu/philrel/honorcode.htm>

### Explanation of Written Requirements:

All written work is due on the date specified here. ***No extensions. No exceptions.*** *All late work is penalized by 5% per calendar day late.* Plan ahead. Details for most assignments will be discussed further in

class before they are due. All questions clarifying the assignment ought to be directed to the instructor well in advance of the due date. Technology problems can always be anticipated, so *do not work, print, or research at the last minute*. Failure to submit any one major assignment could result in failure in the course.

- *Trilemma Exam* *Friday, February 10*
  - This essay exam worth **80 points** will focus on the basic terms and issues involved in studying the problem of evil. It will cover everything read up to this point in the class. Grading will be based on adequate answers to questions about texts and concepts. Further details provided in class.
  
- *Origins Analysis Paper* *due and presented, Friday, March 1*
  - The theme of this section of the course is that the origin of evil lies somewhere in the origin of life, either the origin of human life and its related purposes, or the origin of the world itself. **The question: Whence evil?** Select *at least four texts, ancient and modern*, read for this section of the course that *either* share a theme *or* highlight different ways of responding to the same question. Compare and/or contrast the texts in detail as a way to show responses to the main question.
  - This medium-length analysis paper (**at least 2000 words, ~7-8 pages**) should have an introduction with a main point or thesis, along with evidence from texts, organized and clear discussion of the issues involved when considering the origins of evil, consideration of shared themes across authors, and your conclusion based on the evidence.
  - For the **class presentation**, prepare a **seven-minute summary** of your paper that highlights the paper's main point, how the selected texts illustrate the main point, and a concluding statement about what you see as the most important issue in responding to the question about the origin of evil. Be prepared to answer questions, and to ask them of others.
  - This paper is worth **75 points**, and will be graded on the basis of a clearly articulated main point or thesis (10 points), demonstrated understanding of the issues for responding to the "Whence evil?" question (15 points), evidence and use of examples from texts to explain issues and support the main point (15 points), consideration of shared themes/differences across authors (10 points), organization and clarity of writing (10 points), and the in-class presentation (15 points).
  
- *Responses Analysis Paper* *due and presented, Monday, March 26*
  - The theme of this section of the course is that there are various responses to tragedy found in protests, laments, and personal experiences. **The question: What, then, shall we do?** Select *at least four texts, ancient and modern*, read for this section of the course that *either* share a theme *or* highlight different ways of responding to the same question. Compare and/or contrast the texts as a way to show responses to the main question.
  - This short analysis paper (**at least 1500 words, ~5-6 pages**) should have an introduction with a main point or thesis, along with evidence from texts, organized and clear discussion of the issues involved when considering responses to evil, consideration of shared themes across authors, and your conclusion based on the evidence.
  - For the **class presentation**, prepare a **seven-minute summary** of your paper that highlights the paper's main point, how the selected texts illustrate the main point, and a concluding statement about what you see as the most important issue in responding to the question about the reality of evil. Be prepared to ask & answer questions.

- This paper is worth **60 points**, and will be graded on the basis of a clearly articulated main point or thesis (8 points), demonstrated understanding of the issues for the variety of responses to the realities of evil and suffering (12 points), evidence and use of examples from texts to explain issues and support the main point (12 points), consideration of shared theme/differences across authors (10 points), organization and clarity of writing (8 points), and the in-class presentation (10 points).
  
- *Sunflower Response & Presentation* *Monday, April 16*
  - Write your response to the questions posed in and by Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower*. This project will involve *several stages* including in-class prompted writing, re-vision after discussion, evaluation of other responses, and presentation of your own response in a class symposium. Format details of symposium session to be discussed in class.
  - The final draft of the written response will be **at least 900 words (~3-4 pages)**, and will be worth **40 points** graded on the basis of demonstrated understanding of issues in Wiesenthal's story (10 points), considered and direct response to the questions posed to the reader at the end of the story (10 points), clarity and organization of writing (10 points), and incorporation of at least two other authors' responses from the book's *Symposium* (10 points).
  - The class symposium presentation will be worth **20 points**, graded based on the quality of its organization (8), clarity and focus (5), and oral delivery style including eye contact, effective speaking, demonstrated preparation, and use of time (7 points).
  
- *Final Exam* *9:00am – 11:00am ~ Monday, May 7, 2012*
  - This final essay exam is worth **75 points** and will draw on material from *A Troubling in My Soul* and *A Grief Observed* to invite consideration of the role of experience in constructing theodicy. It will include an opportunity to creatively and critically articulate your own theodicy, which will be assessed based on the degree to which you explore and synthesize material from the semester in an innovative manner. Exam format discussed in class.
  
- *All grades for assignments and for the semester are earned according to the following scale of points and percentages:*

97-100 = A+ (388-400)	74 - 76 = C (296-307)
94 - 96 = A (376-387)	70 - 73 = C- (280-295)
90 - 93 = A- (360-375)	67 - 69 = D+ (268-279)
87 - 89 = B+ (348-359)	64 - 66 = D (256-267)
84 - 86 = B (336-347)	60 - 63 = D- (240-255)
80 - 83 = B- (320-335)	59 - 0 = F (000-239)
77 - 79 = C+ (308-319)	

*Schedule of Reading and Assignments:*

**I. Definitions: The Trilemma and Attributes of God**

*Wed. 1/18*      Introductions... the class, the texts, the participants... the questions today

*Fri. 1/20*      **R:** Lewis, Problem of Pain ch. 1-3      **D:** The problem stated, power, and goodness.

*Mon. 1/23*      **R:** Lewis, Problem of Pain ch. 4-5      **D:** Humanity, wickedness, the fall

- Wed. 1/25*     **R:**     Lewis, Problem of Pain ch.6-8     **D:** Human pain, hell
- Fri. 1/27*     **R:**     Introduction to Larrimore, xiv-xxx  
**R:**     “Haiti – Where Was God?” by Ben Witherington  
<http://blog.beliefnet.com/bibleandculture/2010/01/haiti---a-case-study-for-theodicy.html>  
**R:**     “Poll: Most Americans Don’t Blame God for Disasters” <http://blog.beliefnet.com/news/?p=2634>
- Mon. 1/30*     **R:**     Seneca, “On Providence” (PE 19-22)  
Sextus Empiricus, “God” (PE 35-37)  
Augustine, “City of God” (PE 53-61)  
Pseudo-Dionysius, “On the Divine Names...” (PE 62-68)
- Wed. 2/1*     **R:**     Anselm, “On the Fall of the Devil” (PE 77-81)  
Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologica” (PE 95-102)
- Fri. 2/3*     **R:**     Immanuel Kant, “On the miscarriage of ...” (PE 224-230 **only**)  
John Stuart Mill, “An Examination of ...” (PE 271-276)
- Mon. 2/6*     **R:**     C.G. Jung, “Aion” (PE 341-345)  
Karl Barth, “God and Nothingness” (PE 348-354)
- Wed. 2/8*     **R:**     William R. Jones, “Is God a White Racist?” (PE 362-364)  
Dorothee Soelle, “A Critique of Christian Masochism” (PE 365-370)  
Nel Noddings, “Women and Evil” (PE 381-386)
- Fri. 2/10*     **Trilemma Exam in class**

## **II: Origins/Genesis: Creation and Nature, Sin, the Fall, Human Life**

- Mon. 2/13*     **R:**     Genesis 1-11     **D:** The primordial history of God, nature, and humanity
- Wed. 2/15*     **R:**     Plato, “Timaeus” (PE 3-7)  
Ovid, “Phaethon” (PE 11-18)  
Hildegard of Bingen, “To the Congregation ...” (PE 82-87)  
Liturgy, “*Stabat mater*” (PE 103-106 **only**)
- Fri. 2/17*     **R:**     John Milton, “Paradise Lost” (PE 155-162)  
Thomas Robert Malthus, “An Essay on ...” (PE 237-240)
- Mon. 2/20*     **R:**     Nicolas Malebranche, “Dialogues on Metaphysics...” (PE 179-183)  
G.W. Leibniz, “Theodicy ... Essays on ...” (PE 196-200 **only**)  
Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Man” (PE 201-203)  
Voltaire, “The Lisbon Earthquake” + Rousseau, “Letter to Voltaire” (PE 204-215)

*Wed. 2/22*     **R:**     David Hume, “Dialogues concerning ...” (PE 216-223)  
Arthur Schopenhauer, “The World as Will and ...” (PE 262-268)  
Charles Darwin, “to Asa Gray” (PE 269-270)

*Fri. 2/24*     **R:**     Irenaeus, “Against Heretics” (PE 28-34)  
John Keats, “to George and Georgiana ...” (PE 248-250)

*Mon. 2/27*     **R:**     John Hick, “An Irenaean Theodicy” (handout)

*Wed. 2/29*     *Individual paper conferences as scheduled in Kirby 212*

*Fri. 3/2*         **Origins Analysis Paper due in class; Presentations**

### **SPRING BREAK**

### **III. Responses/Job & Psalms: Protest and Lament**

*Mon. 3/12*     **R:**     Job                     **D:** Biblical protest theodicy

*Wed. 3/14*     **R:**     Moses Maimonides, “Guide of the Perplexed” (PE 88-94)  
Geoffrey Chaucer, “Patient Griselda” (PE 115-122)  
Martin Luther, “Preface to Job, the Psalter” (PE 134-139)

*Fri. 3/16*     **R:**     Immanuel Kant, “On the miscarriage ...” (PE 230-234 **only**)  
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, “The Brothers Karamozov” (PE 277-282)

*Mon. 3/19*     **R:**     Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord” (PE 291-292)  
Josiah Royce, “The Problem of Job” (PE 293-298)  
W.E.B. DuBois, “A Litany at Atlanta” (PE 308-311)

*Wed. 3/21*     **R:**     Hermann Cohen, “Religion of Reason out of ... Judaism” (PE 313-317)  
Simone Weil, “The Love of God and Affliction” (PE 334-340)  
Emm. Levinas, “Useless Suffering ... end of theodicy” (PE 376-379 **only**)

*Fri. 3/23*     **R:**     Psalms 16, 22, 73, 88, 116     **R:** “Biblical & Contemporary Lament” by Nancy C. Lee  
*Online:* [http://www.sblsite.org/assets/pdfs/TB7\\_LamentContemporary\\_NL.pdf](http://www.sblsite.org/assets/pdfs/TB7_LamentContemporary_NL.pdf)

*Mon. 3/26*     **Responses Analysis Paper due in class; Presentations**

### **IV. Case Study: The Holocaust**

*Wed. 3/28*     **R:**     “Introduction to the Holocaust”  
*Online:* <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>

- R:** “Jehovah’s Witnesses: Victims of the Nazi Era”  
**Online:** <http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/jehovahs/jehovahsw.php>
- R:** “Homosexuals: Victims of the Nazi Era”  
**Online:** <http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/hms/homosx.php>
- Fri. 3/30*    **R:** Wiesel, preface to new translation, and part one: p. vii-xv; 1-46  
**D:** The Holocaust and evil
- Mon. 4/2*    **R:** Wiesel, part two, p. 47-115    **D:** Faith and the experience of evil  
**R:** *Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech*, p. 117-120
- Wed. 4/4*    **R:** Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*, p.1-98    **D:** Hearing the story, the question; pre-writing
- Fri. 4/6*    **NO CLASS ~ Easter Break**  
*Mon. 4/9*    **NO CLASS ~ Easter Break**
- Wed. 4/11*    **R:** *Sunflower Symposium*, p. 101-200    **D:** Considering responses; re-vision
- Fri. 4/13*    **R:** *Sunflower Symposium*, p. 200-274    **D:** Evaluating responses
- Mon. 4/16*    **Our *Sunflower* Symposium ~ Presentations & Response Essay due in class**

## V. Experience and Theodicy

- Wed. 4/18*    **R:** Martin, “Biblical Theodicy and Black Women’s Spiritual Autobiography” (IS 13-32)  
**R:** Wood, “Take My Yoke Upon You” (IS 37-46)
- Fri. 4/20*    **R:** Phelps, “Joy Came in the Morning Risking Death for Resurrection” (IS 48-62)  
**R:** Copeland, “Wading Through Many Sorrows” (IS 109-124)
- Mon. 4/23*    **R:** Williams, “A Womanist Perspective on Sin” (IS 130-147)  
**R:** Kirk-Duggan, “African American Spirituals” (IS 150-166)
- Wed. 4/25*    **R:** Hunter, “Women’s Power – Women’s Passion” (IS 189-198)  
**R:** Cannon, “The Wounds of Jesus” (IS 219-229)
- Fri. 4/27*    *Campuswide Celebration of Excellence ~ Attend sessions!*
- Mon. 4/30*    **R:** *A Grief Observed*    **D:** Experience and loss, re-connecting with *The Problem of Pain*
- Wed. 5/2*    *In-class Debate: Dueling Lewis’s (preparation instructions given in advance)*
- Monday, May 7, 2012 ~ 9:00am-11:00am ~ Final Essay Exam**