

**RE 104B (Winter 2002)
EVIL AND ITS SYMBOLS**

I. TEACHING GROUP

INSTRUCTOR

Michel Desjardins
Office: Woods 5-107
Phone: 884-0710, ext. 3323
Email: mdesjard@wlu.ca

ASSISTANTS

Margaret Leask (dmleask@look.ca)
Keith Callbeck (re104b@yahoo.com)
Carolyn Reimer (carolynreimer@hotmail.com)

II. OFFICE HOURS (ALL IN WOODS 5-107)

Michel Desjardins	Thursdays, 10:00-12:00 am, 2:00-4:00 pm, and by appointment
Margaret Leask	Wednesdays, 10:30 am-12:30 pm, and by appointment
Keith Callbeck	Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 pm, and by appointment
Carolyn Reimer	Tuesdays, 12:00-2:00 pm, and by appointment

Written messages can be left for members of the teaching group in the Religion and Culture department office, Woods 5-115. For general questions, please contact the instructor; email queries will usually generate the quickest response.

III. CLASS TIMES AND LOCATION

LECTURE Mondays 7:00-9:00 pm, 1E1

TUTORIAL One 1-hr session to be chosen from the following:

- T1 (Tuesdays 10:00-10:50 am), STM 12 [M. Leask]
- T2 (Tuesdays 10:00-10:50 am), STM 11 [C. Reimer]
- T3 (Tuesdays 5:30-6:20 pm), Woods 2-112 [M. Leask]
- T4 (Tuesdays 5:30-6:20 pm), Woods 2-205 [K. Callbeck]
- T5 (Wednesdays 5:30-6:20 pm), Woods 2-112 [M. Leask]
- T6 (Wednesdays 5:30-6:20 pm), Woods 2-205 [C. Reimer]
- T7 (Wednesdays 7:00-7:50 pm), Woods 5-304 [M. Leask]
- T8 (Wednesdays 7:00-7:50 pm), Library 126 [K. Callbeck]
- T9 (Thursdays 5:30-6:20 pm), Woods 2-112 [M. Leask]
- T10 (Thursdays 5:30-6:20 pm), Woods 2-205 [C. Reimer]

IV. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND FORMAT

This course invites you to explore Western understandings of evil. What and whom do we call “evil,” and why? How have Jews, Christians and Muslims — and scholars interested in those traditions — conceptualized evil? In what ways have ideas about evil changed and remained the same over the centuries?

Lectures each week will offer theoretical and historical contexts, with textual, visual and aural examples. Tutorials will explore selected texts and themes arising from two novels: *Fugitive Pieces* and *Instruments of Darkness*. The midterm will explore the historical understanding of witches.

V. TEXTBOOKS

The following are available for purchase at the WLU Bookstore:

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*. McClelland and Stewart, 1996
[also available on 3-hr/overnight reserve loan at the WLU library]

Nancy Huston, *Instruments of Darkness*. McArthur and Co., 1997
[also available on 3-hr/overnight reserve loan at the WLU library;
the French version is also available on reserve]

P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witchcraft in Europe and the New World, 1400-1800*. Palgrave, 2001

VI. COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION

EXPECTATIONS

We expect you to attend the lectures and tutorial sessions regularly, take a good set of notes, do the readings (those listed on the Course Outline below are preferably to be done before class), discuss ideas with your classmates outside class, and drop by the office to talk with us in person about matters that interest or concern you. We also expect you to take your reading and writing seriously, adhere to deadlines, and think, for yourself — make every effort to understand what you read and hear from others, while you clarify and develop your own thoughts.

For our part, we will make every effort to prepare conscientiously for every session, treat your questions and ideas with respect, and assess your written work fairly and constructively. Do let us know if you think we're not meeting these expectations.

EVALUATIONS

You will be evaluated in three separate ways: a midterm examination, a journal, and a final examination.

1. Midterm (worth 30% of your final grade)

The midterm, to be written in class Monday, February 11, will be based exclusively on P. G. Maxwell-Stuart's book *Witchcraft in Europe and the New World, 1400-1800*. The lecture that evening will run from 7:00 to 8:30; the 90-minute midterm will begin, in the same classroom, at 9:00.

Dr. Margaret Leask will prepare and assess the midterm. All questions concerning the midterm are best directed to her, during office hours or via email. We will let you know (in class and via email) a week or two before the midterm what sorts of questions to expect. Allow yourself time to read the book at least twice. It is short (110 pages) and accessible.

If you are unable to write the midterm due to illness or other *serious* reason, please contact Dr. Leask and ensure that you also get a medical note (or equivalent) within 48 hours of the midterm.

2. Journal (worth 30% of your final grade)

Starting in the second week of the course, you will meet weekly outside of lecture time, in small (ca. 20-25 people) tutorial groups. Some of these groups will be facilitated by Margaret Leask, others by Carolyn Reimer, and the rest by Keith Callbeck. Your tutorial leader will help you work through two novels, and will assess your critical engagement with this material.

Tutorial sessions for Weeks 2 through 6 will explore Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*, while Weeks 7 through 11 will explore Nancy Huston's *Instruments of Darkness*. Throughout this time we would like you to keep a journal in which you reflect on these readings, asking questions such as: What does this (section of the) novel say about "evil"? Which elements of the novel do you find most engaging, and why? Where do you stand in relation to the points of view expressed in the novel?

Set aside time each week to read a section of the book (your tutorial leader will determine the sections under review each week). Keep a written record of your thoughts and questions, reactions and reflections, and highlight those parts of the readings that you find difficult. Tutorial discussions will allow you to expand on your written journal contributions.

Your tutorial leader will assess your journals based on the quality of your critical engagement with the ideas from the readings. There are no "right" and "wrong" answers; there *are* thoughtful and sloppy contributions. Here's what we expect:

* Each week (beginning with Week 3, ending with Week 11) you will submit to your tutorial leader, during your tutorial session, a *typed* copy of your week's journal reflections (500 to 1000 words; keep a back-up copy on file), for which you will receive 1 percent (x 10 weeks = 10% of your final grade). Late submissions will not be accepted; all submissions (the ones, at least, that are not gibberish!) will receive full grades.

* In Week 5 and again in Week 11, at your tutorial session, we expect you to submit your entire journal to date. This journal will contain the weekly contributions you already submitted + a 1000-1500 word concluding reflection that addresses the question: "What did I learn about evil from this novel, and what did I learn about myself in the process?" The quality of your concluding reflection will be assessed by your tutorial leader, then your journal will be returned. Each of the two journals will be worth 10% of the final grade. Late submissions will not be accepted (in case of unforeseen problems — e.g., alien abduction — contact your tutorial leader).

3. Final Examination (worth 40% of your final grade)

The Final Examination will take place sometime during the official university time period (April 11-30). It will be exclusively based on the class lectures, including the biblical readings noted in Weeks 2, 4 and 5 (the other web links listed in the "Readings" are there to help you understand the lecture material concerning topics that may be unfamiliar to you; their contents will not be directly tested). The Instructor will compose and assess the Final Examination. You can count on a mix of short-answer and essay-type questions — and more information on the expectations before the course ends. The best way to prepare, from day one, is to ensure that you do all the readings, attend classes regularly, and take the opportunity to have your questions answered to your satisfaction.

The Instructor will distribute his weekly lecture notes to you via email (he will need your email address for this; note that if your yahoo or hotmail accounts have exceeded their storage allocation these notes will likely bounce back, so ensure that the Instructor has your correct address, and that your account is accessible). Please address all questions concerning lectures and the final examination directly to the Instructor; he will be happy to stay as long as need be after each lecture period, answer all email queries, and meet with you in person either during office hours or by special arrangement.

One of the questions on the final examination will be: "What did you learn about 'evil' in this course?" This question is not intended to elicit a course summary; rather, it is intended to spark serious reflection on what each of you learned, and taught yourselves, about the topic, with ample use of supporting examples taken from the readings and the lectures. Try to build an answer week by week.

Note that the Instructor is *highly* allergic to gender-exclusive language (e.g., please use "humanity" rather than "mankind"), and to the failure to distinguish between "it's" (= it is / e.g., "It's cold outside") and "its" (= the possessive form of "it" / e.g., "The dog wagged its tail"). There's no excuse for the misuse of these terms in university, even on final examinations.

Laurier's Study Skills Program has printed a series of excellent pamphlets intended to help you learn — e.g., "Reading Habits," "Listening in Lectures," "Strategies on Writing Essay Examination Questions." You'll find these in Health Services; it's worth a visit. If you are unable to write the final examination due to illness or other *serious* reason, please contact the instructor and ensure that you also get a medical note (or equivalent) within 48 hours of the examination.

VII. CALENDAR DATES, SERVICES AND REGULATIONS

January 11: Final day to drop this course with no tuition charge

January 18: Final day to drop this course at 10 percent tuition charge

March 8: Final day to drop course without denotation of "Withdrawn" on official transcript and for tuition adjustment

April 8: Final day to drop course without failure

April 11-30: Final examinations (the date for RE 104 to be set later)

Foot Patrol: For a walk or ride home after class, call 886-FOOT.

The Writing Centre provides access, free of charge, to individual writing instruction. To make an appointment, just drop by the office (Room 2C5-ABC), or contact the co-ordinator (Emmy Misser; 884-0710, ext. 3339; <emisser@wlu.ca>); for more guidance on writing style, see also R&C's **Style Sheet and Guidelines** <<http://www.wlu.ca/~wwwrandc/index.shtml>>.

The Special Needs Office provides information for, and assists students with, disabilities at Wilfrid Laurier University. Staff at the Office are committed to assure students equal access and support services for programs, facilities and services in the university community. These disabilities include, but are not limited to: sight, hearing, learning, chronic pain, head injuries, mobility, psychological/psychiatric. Do not hesitate to consult with them, preferably early in the term. The Office is located in 1C11 on the bottom floor of the Arts building (884-0710, ext. 3086).

The Information Technology Services Help Desk is there to help you to get a computer account, and with Internet access (Woods 1-305; 884-0710, ext. 4357; help@mach1.wlu.ca).

Academic Misconduct at Laurier can have serious repercussions. The University (<http://www.wlu.ca/~wwwregi/2000-2001/sec_276.htm>) defines and explains it as follows: "an act by a student, or by students working on a team project, which may result in a false evaluation of the student(s), or which represents a deliberate attempt to unfairly gain an academic advantage. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following acts which are presented as examples or a guide since not every possible circumstance can be anticipated: plagiarism, which is the unacknowledged presentation, in whole or in part, of the work of others as one's own, whether in written, oral or other form, in an examination, report, assignment, thesis or dissertation; cheating, which involves the using, giving, receiving, or the attempt to use, give or receive unauthorized information during an examination in oral, written or other form; or, copying an essay, examination or report, or allowing someone else to copy one's essay, examination or report; submitting the same piece of work, or a significant part thereof, for more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved in each course; or, submitting an essay or other work which has been submitted elsewhere, previously or at the same time, without the written permission of all academic units or institutions involved in the submissions; impersonating another person in an examination or test."

VIII. COURSE OUTLINE

1 Introduction and Context

January 7 Review of the syllabus, orientation to understandings of "evil"

2 Judaism

January 14 The Hebrew Bible (Christian "Old Testament") and images of evil

Readings: Genesis, chapters 1-3, and the book of Job / use any Bible or see
<<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?language=English&version=RSV&passage=Genesis>> and
<<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?language=English&version=RSV&passage=Job>>

3 Judaism

January 21 Hitler, the Holocaust and healing

Readings: <<http://remember.org/>>;
<<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html>>
Discussion of A. Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*

4 Christianity

January 28 The New Testament, Jesus and evil

Readings: Mark 5:1-20 [= chapter 5, verses 1 through 20] and Matthew 4:1-11; use any Bible,
or see <<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?version=RSV&passage=all>>

5 Christianity

February 4 Apocalypticism

Readings: the book of Revelation; use any Bible or see
<<http://bible.gospelcom.net/bible?Revelation>>;
For general information on apocalypticism see
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/>>

T Your first Journal is due this week

6 Witchcraft

February 11 Witches and evil

Readings: <<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~jup/witches/>>;
<<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem/index.html>>;
<<http://www.hist.unt.edu/witch.htm>>

T Your midterm is written today

{No classes and tutorials, the week of February 18-22 → Reading Week}

7 Islam

February 25 The Qur'an, Muslim origins and Satan

Reading: <<http://www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/>>

8 Islam

March 4 Media and film representations of Islam as evil

Reading: <<http://www.canadianislamiccongress.com/index.jsp>>

9 Structural Evil

March 11 Religious and other societal evils

(Pre-) Viewing: F. McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*

10 Structural Evil

March 18 Corporate and environmental evils

Readings: <<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/8148/nestle.html>>;
<<http://www.babymilkaction.org/pages/boycott.html>>

GUEST LECTURER: Ellen Desjardins

11 Psychological Approaches to Evil

March 25 C. G. Jung, S. Freud and R. Girard, A. Miller

Reading: <<http://www.cgjungpage.org/>>

T Your second Journal is due this week

12 Recapitulation

April 1 Course Review + Final Examination Preparation