

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-16

Philosophy 2065F: Philosophy of Evil

Fall term Tue 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Office Location: StH (Stevenson Hall) 2157
Classroom: TC (Talbot College) 342	Office Hours: upon appointment – send me an email
Instructor: Dr. Tommaso Bruni	Telephone: 519-661-2111 x80590 E-mail: tbruni2@uwo.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Traditionally, evil has been a problem for those wishing to assert the existence of a benevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient God. However, evil is a problem even beyond religion.

After the attacks of 11 Sep 2001, US President G. W. Bush vowed to “rid the world of evil” and declared Iran, Iraq, and North Korea part of a purported “Axis of Evil.”

US President Obama’s reaction to a 2012 mass shooting in Aurora, CO was: “Such evil is senseless, beyond reason.”

But what is evil? Is it a force against which to wage war? Or is it an inevitable tendency of human beings, a part of human nature that cannot be uprooted?

Further questions include the following:

Can the prospect of evil justify torture, which can be considered evil in itself? Can national interest justify evil? Can we desire evil for its own sake or can we desire it only because we do not recognize it as evil? To whom or what can evils be done? Can evil result from thoughtlessness? Should evil be forgiven? If so, under which circumstances?

We will explore these questions (and others) by critically engaging answers put forth by ancient, medieval, and contemporary philosophers. We will particularly focus on contemporary theorists such as Hannah Arendt, Primo Levi, Michael Walzer, Michael Stocker, Paul Formosa, Todd Calder, and Claudia Card.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will have obtained a solid grasp of the material discussed in the course description and will have learned to think critically about this topic.

In addition, students will develop good argumentative skills and learn to write with clarity and concision.

Finally, students will learn to examine important philosophical questions, such as the highest good of human beings, the nature of justice, the role of the state, the meaning and value of our relationships with one another, and the existence of God, in relation to the nature of evil and in relation to themselves and the society in which they live.

COURSE PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

None. Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

COURSE MATERIALS

Oksenberg Rorty, A. (Ed). (2001). *The Many Faces of Evil*. New York: Routledge.

Vaughn, L., and McIntosh, J. S. (2013). *Writing Philosophy. A Guide for Canadian Students*.

Second Canadian Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Custom Course Pack (available at UWO bookstore).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Class Participation	10%
In-class Quiz no. 1	15%
In-class Quiz no. 2	15%
Paraphrase of a Passage (1 page)	5%
Essay no. 1 (about 900 words)	25%
Essay no. 2 (about 1,100 words)	30%

There will be no Final Exam.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.