

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of Psychology
PSYCH 232
Psychology of Evil
Winter 2020
4:00-5:20pm T R, SJ2 1004

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Christopher T. Burris, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: by appointment (let me know when you can meet and what you'd like to talk about, and we'll schedule something)

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Course Description

Psychological perspectives concerning definitions, causes, and consequences of institutional and personal evil, as well as symbols and interpretations of evil in both religious and secular contexts, will be considered.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

I hope you'll walk away from this course with a psychologically informed understanding of:

- 1) what "evil" means to people, and why;
- 2) when, why, and how various forms of human-on-human nastiness occur;
- 3) why people feel the need to minimize or justify their own nastiness, and how they do it;
- 4) the impact that all of the above has on perpetrators, victims, and observers.

Note: You shouldn't be surprised to encounter disturbing descriptions and images in this course. I think it would be irresponsible not to deal with the subject matter head-on in this way. That being said, I intend to present no more of such things than is educationally useful.

Course Schedule (topics and readings)

UW Library e-reserves (listed by author below) can be accessed via the course's LEARN page.

- 07 Jan (T) – Introductions (us, you, and "It");
- 09 Jan (R) – What is "evil"? 1; **Govrin (2018)**
- 14 Jan (T) – What is "evil"? 2
- 16 Jan (R) – What makes an "evildoer"? 1: **Bastian et al. (2015)**
- 21 Jan (T) – What makes an "evildoer"? 2: **Rowan & Dwyer (2015)**
- 23 Jan (R) – What makes an "evildoer"? 3
- 28 Jan (T) – The "Mark of Cain" 1: **Merritt, Efron, & Monin (2010)**
- 30 Jan (R) – The "Mark of Cain" 2
- 04 Feb (T) – **TEST ONE**

- 06 Feb (R) – Becoming "evil" 1: **Moore & Gino (2013)**

- 11 Feb (T) – Becoming “evil” 2
 13 Feb (R) – Becoming “evil” 3: **Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus (2013)**
 18 Feb (T) – **READING WEEK: NO CLASS**
 20 Feb (R) – **READING WEEK: NO CLASS**
 25 Feb (T) – Becoming “evil” 4
 27 Feb (R) – Hate: **Rempel & Sutherland (2016)**
 03 Mar (T) – Sadism: **Bulut (2017)**
 05 Mar (R) – Serial Killers: **Hodgkinson, Prins, & Stuart-Bennett (2017)**
 10 Mar (T) – **TEST TWO**
- 12 Mar (R) – Group-based “evil” 1: **Campbell & Göritz (2014)**
 17 Mar (T) – Group-based “evil” 2
 19 Mar (R) – Group-based “evil” 3: **Pedrini & Villeneuve (2017)**
 24 Mar (T) – Group-based “evil” 4
 26 Mar (R) – Group-based “evil” 5
 31 Mar (T) – Responses to “evil”
 02 Apr (R) – **TEST THREE**

Course Requirements and Assessment

TEST 1 = 40%; TEST 2 = 35%; TEST 3 = 25%. All tests are multiple choice. Bring pencils/erasers on test days. ***Be prepared to present identification (your WAT card) during tests.*** Tests are weighted based on how much material they cover; they are not cumulative. All material covered in class and in the assigned readings is testable. Test marks will be posted on LEARN as soon as possible. In order to be fair to everyone, ***the mark received for a test stands*** – it will not be dropped or re-weighted. There is no final exam.

Extra Credit: Up to 4% extra credit is available via research participation in the SONA system (helpful links will be posted on the course’s LEARN page). ***PLEASE TAKE ANY RESEARCH PARTICIPATION SERIOUSLY*** – careless completion of a study’s materials is a waste of everyone’s time and seriously undercuts the research process.

UW Policy regarding Illness and Missed Tests: UW Examination Regulations

(www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) state that: 1) A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html. 2) If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor. 3) The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations. 4) Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

Thus, you are entitled to test rescheduling for *legitimate* medical, compassionate, or religious grounds. ***Whenever possible, please inform me PRIOR to the scheduled test to arrange an alternate writing time.*** A make-up test should normally be scheduled on the first school day after your documentation expires, with the obvious provision of access to missed material (see Attendance Policy below). When arriving to write a make-up test, please have the appropriate documentation in hand to support a medical, compassionate, or religious claim. Make-up exams may differ in format from the original.

Attendance Policy

Whether or not you choose to attend class is entirely up to you, but you are responsible for all material covered. Should you miss class, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to find a classmate who would be willing to provide you with the notes you missed. If your absence is *legitimate*, then we will be happy to answer questions about the missed material once you have consulted with a fellow student. To make the most of consultation time outside of class, come prepared with specific questions about the material.

Electronic Device Policy

In-class use of any electronic devices for non-class-related purposes is discouraged, as it distracts other students and interferes with your own ability to absorb the material.

Other Important Information

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.

How to Do Your Best:

0) Make the decision to do your best and commit to it! There is no substitute.

1) Come to class! Be alert, ask questions – either in class or later. Do more than mindlessly write down whatever appears on an overhead: *Think* about the material – try to come up with your own examples and illustrations by applying the material to people you know, media happenings, etc.

2) Do the readings! Ideally, read them at least once before the relevant week's lecture, and at least once after that lecture. *Think* about the material – write down questions, observations, possible examples, etc. as you read.

3) Look for connections! We will deal with a lot of specific phenomena, but there some big themes will keep recurring throughout the term. Look for them. Look also for connections between lecture and assigned readings. Think about what *this* idea or study might relate to *that* phenomenon, for example.

4) Test yourself! Don't assume that certain concepts are "easy" or "common sense." Can you explain an idea from class to someone in a way that that person will understand? Can you reproduce the structure of ideas I use to organize my lectures? Can you create a structure of ideas that accurately summarizes a reading's main points? Can you recognize sets of information in lectures or readings that might make good multiple-choice options, and can you explain how members of a set are similar or different?

Putting the above suggestions into practice is my best advice for doing your best work in this class. ***I have also prepared the "MC Survival Guide" (downloadable through LEARN) that offers you specific tips for preparing for the tests.*** Remember: I am happy to see you succeed, but YOU have to do the work!

Final Words: Good luck! I hope that this course is a worthwhile experience.