

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of Psychology
PSYCH 232: Psychology of Evil
T Th 11:30 A.M.-12:50 P.M., SJ2 1004
Winter 2023

Instructor Information

Instructor: Christopher T. Burris, Ph.D.

Office Location/Hours: SJU Sweeney Hall 2031; by appt. (in-person preferred)

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Updates: check “announcements” on LEARN frequently for course-related info and news

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 a course about evil. 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)

Readings (in **bold**) are available as UW Library e-reserves via the “get course reserves” link on the PSYCH 232 LEARN page.

- 10 Jan (T) – Introductions (us, you, and “It”);
- 12 Jan (Th) – What is “evil”? 1; **Govrin (2018)**
- 17 Jan (T) – What is “evil”? 2
- 19 Jan (Th) – What makes an “evildoer”? 1: **Bastian et al. (2015)**
- 24 Jan (T) – What makes an “evildoer”? 2: **Rowan & Dwyer (2015)**
- 26 Jan (Th) – What makes an “evildoer”? 3
- 31 Jan (T) – The “Mark of Cain” 1: **Merritt, Effron, & Monin (2010)**
- 02 Feb (Th) – The “Mark of Cain” 2
- 07 Feb (T) – **TEST ONE**

09 Feb (Th) – Becoming “evil” 1: **Moore & Gino (2013)**
14 Feb (T) – Becoming “evil” 2
16 Feb (Th) – Becoming “evil” 3: **Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus (2013)**
21 Feb (T) – **READING WEEK: NO CLASS**
23 Feb (Th) – **READING WEEK: NO CLASS**
28 Feb (T) – Becoming “evil” 4
02 Mar (Th) – Hate: **Rempel & Sutherland (2016)**
07 Mar (T) – Sadism: **Bulut (2017)**
09 Mar (Th) – Serial Killers: **Hodgkinson, Prins, & Stuart-Bennett (2017)**
14 Mar (T) – **TEST TWO**

16 Mar (Th) – Group-based “evil” 1: **Campbell & Göritz (2014)**
21 Mar (T) – Group-based “evil” 2
23 Mar (Th) – Group-based “evil” 3: **Pedrini & Villeneuve (2017)**
28 Mar (T) – Group-based “evil” 4
30 Mar (Th) – Group-based “evil” 5
04 Apr (T) – Responses to “evil”
06 Apr (Th) – **TEST THREE**

Optional Reading:

Burris, C. T. (2022). *Evil in mind: The psychology of harming others*. Oxford University Press.

For those of you wishing a deeper dive into many of the topics covered in this course, I invite you to have a look at my book. Although you should not rely on it as a substitute for class attendance, individual chapters (available through the UW Library) may be helpful in the event of illness, etc. To be clear, this is OPTIONAL reading and should not be confused with the ASSIGNED readings in the above schedule.

Evil in Mind is available directly from Oxford Canada (link below) or your favorite bookseller.

<https://www.oupcanada.com/catalog/9780197637180.html>

Course Requirements and Assessment

Tests. TEST 1 = 35%; TEST 2 = 40%; TEST 3 = 25%. All tests are multiple choice. Current guidelines allow for testing to be in-person and to make use of hard copies and scantrons, *so please bring your own 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 SONA research participation. I will post any information that the Research Experiences Group sends me to assist you. As an active researcher myself, I would ask that you *PLEASE TAKE ANY RESEARCH PARTICIPATION SERIOUSLY*. Careless completion of a study’s materials is a waste of everyone’s time and undercuts the research process.

Accommodations for Illness and Extenuating Circumstances

Please refer to (<https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/undergraduate/student-support/accommodations-illness-or-extenuating-circumstances>) for up-to-date guidance for dealing with short-term absences, pandemic-related absences, and other absences (accompanied by an uploaded Verification of Illness form).

Please note that you are expected to make use of available accommodations in good faith, and that any false claim is an academic offense subject to discipline under Policy 71.

If your absence means that you will miss a scheduled test, it is your responsibility to notify me as early as possible BEFOREHAND unless circumstances absolutely prevent you from doing so. **A make-up test is normally scheduled on the first school day after your accommodation expires**: It is your responsibility to notify me in advance of that date and to offer a range of possible time slots so we can reschedule you. Unless compelling extenuating circumstances (ideally supported by documentation) are presented, failure to reschedule your test as above may be subject to a 10% deduction for every school day that your rewrite is delayed. Make-up tests may differ in content and format from the original.

Please remember that PSYCH 232 has been scheduled as a regular, in-person course, so I expect you to attend all in-class lectures unless prevented from doing so. Attendance is definitely in your best interest, because the overlap between lecture and reading is usually moderate at most. Moreover, my slides are minimalistic outlines containing keywords and occasional figures or tables that aren't designed to be standalone learning resources (and therefore will not be posted or otherwise distributed).

If your absence means that you will miss one or more scheduled lectures, your first step is to find a classmate willing to provide you with the notes you missed. It's a good idea to connect with your fellow students early in the term, because asking for assistance with missing notes face-to-face is likely to be more compelling than sending out an email via LEARN. If your absence is *legitimate*, I will be happy to answer questions about the missed material once you've secured any missed notes.

Should a covid resurgence force suspension of in-person classes, we'll transition to online lectures/tests.

Electronic Device Policy

In-class use of electronic devices for non-class purposes hurts academic performance (yours and others' nearby): Such use is strongly discouraged. See: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/27/class-cellphone-and-laptop-use-lowers-exam-scores-new-study-shows>

Other Important Information

Intellectual Property: I very much want this class to be a good experience for you, and I am putting a lot of time, thought, and effort into that. You (or someone who cares about you a lot) paid so you could benefit from the firsthand experience that this class provides. To be clear, I'm sharing my work with YOU – so **it's not fair to me for you to sell or give away my lectures, slides, etc. to other people**. That's "unauthorized distribution of intellectual property," and *it's not okay*. I hope that makes sense.

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.

Please respect yourself, your fellow students, and your instructor. Don't be evil. Don't cheat.

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](#). 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](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

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](#).

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.

I hope that this course offers you something valuable – Good luck with it!