

RS 121: Evil / Winter 2020

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of Religious Studies
MW 11:30-12:50 p.m., SJ2 2007

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:00 am or by appointment. I have an open door policy, so do not hesitate to ask if we might have a conversation.

Teaching Assistant: Douglas Wilson **Office:** PAS 1052. **Phone:** 519-903-6696

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Office hours: Wednesdays from 1-2pm.

DEVICE RULES AND ETIQUETTE

Phone use (including texting) is not permitted. A first offense will result in a warning. Each subsequent offense will mean a deduction of 2 marks on your class participation grade.

The use of laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices is strongly discouraged. Please ensure that your device use does not distract other students.

Why do I have this policy? Because [research](#) shows that laptop and device use in class harms the effectiveness of teaching and learning both for the user and the people around them. Please respect the right of other students to learn without distractions. By the way, students who believe *most strongly* that they can multitask while learning attain the *lowest scores* on tests of learning and retention.

This course is about the death and suffering of millions, even tens of millions, of people. It is about slavery, colonialism and imperialism, war and genocide, intentional mass starvation, the threat of nuclear weapons, and ecological destruction. While modern society has brought many advances, it has also given us the power to dominate, exploit, and kill on an unprecedented scale. Much of the evil of the 20th and 21st centuries would be impossible without modern technology, bureaucracy, ideology, and the political, economic, and social structures of a modern society.

We will examine how religious communities respond to these new forms of evil. Specifically, we will look at a number of religious thinkers who attempt to understand modern societies and the unique forms of evil they produce. These thinkers turn to ancient writings, ideas, values, and practices to address the problem of evil in the modern world. They come up with some startling suggestions. For example, many of them find that their own traditions often contribute to the problem. They also find sources of wisdom and goodness in these traditions in order to offer solutions to the evil they see around them. Finally, they allow us to analyze the nature of the evil in the world and in each one of us. As this is a first-year course in Religious Studies, we will also learn how Religious Studies scholars look at religion and the specific traditions we will be examining.

REQUIRED READINGS AND VIEWINGS

Elie Wiesel, *Night*. (ISBN 9780374500016)

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace is Every Step*

Articles on e-Reserves

Assigned web pages and electronic articles

Assigned video presentations

The assigned reading list may appear intimidating. Do not be concerned about the number of readings from religious scriptures. Each passage is only a few paragraphs long. Other documents, such as the Doctrine of Discovery, are also quite short, usually only a few pages long. The book *Night* can be read in a few hours.

GRADES, TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Five of Six Tests (10% each for 50% total).

Midterm tests are all short multiple choice tests, except for Test 6, which has a written component.

Test One: January 22. Covers material from January 6 to January 20

Test Two: February 5. Covers material from January 22 to February 3

Test Three: February 26. Covers material from February 3 to February 24

Test Four: March 11. Covers material from February 26 to March 9

Test Five: March 23. Covers material from March 9 to March 18

Test Six: April 1. Multiple choice questions cover material from March 23 to March 30; written component will address the overall theme of the course.

Your Top Five. I will count your five best scores. **You must write all six tests**, and the lowest score will be automatically dropped.

Two Assignments (15% each for 30% total). 750 words max. each.

Assignment One: Due January 29

Assignment Two: Due March 16

Late penalty for assignments: One mark out of 15 per 24-hour period, including weekends, beginning at 11:30 am on the due date.

Always contact your instructor before the deadline if you are going to be late. With email and voicemail, there is no excuse for not contacting your professor.

Required for your assignment: Failure to follow these instructions could lead to late penalties or a mark of zero on the assignment.

1. Back up your work frequently. Computer problems are NOT acceptable excuses for late assignments. If you have your work backed up and your printer fails, you can at least hand it in electronically.

2. Keep an electronic or paper copy of all your work for at least 12 months after the course ends. This is a good idea for all your courses but it is a requirement for RS 121.

Class Participation (15%)

Class participation in discussion is important. The first rule of class participation is showing up to class. Hence regular attendance is expected. **Students are allowed two unexcused absences, after which they will lose three marks out of 15 per absence up to a total of 15 marks.**

If you miss more than two classes, you can earn extra class participation grades by attending approved lecture events on campus. I will email announcements for approved speaker events, but students may propose lectures as well.

The class participation grade will also include short (10-minutes) writing assignments based on the assigned readings and lecture material as well as contribution to class discussions.

Public Lecture response (5%) 500 words max. Due January 27.

You must attend a public lecture and write a response. Since we will be dealing with sexism in this course, I am assigning the following lecture. To allow students to attend this lecture, I am cancelling the lecture on Monday, January 20th.

You've Come a Long Way Baby! Or have you?

Dr. Sheila Ager, Dean University of Waterloo Faculty of Arts

Date/Time: Friday, January 24, 2020 - 7:30pm

Location: Vanstone Lecture Hall, St. Jerome's University Academic Centre

Notes: Complimentary parking - accessible - refreshments served prior to the lecture.

Tickets: All lectures at St. Jerome's University are provided on a complimentary basis. Please [register in advance](#). You *will not be required* to show your ticket at the door.

A professor in the University of Waterloo's Department of Classical Studies and the first woman to serve as the Dean of Arts, Dr. Sheila Ager argues that, when it comes to the status of women, the ancient world is not as far away as one might think. Starting with ancient Athens, she demonstrates that old prejudices and ancient discriminatory practices persist in the world's societies and religions.

Policy regarding Illness, Missing Tests, and Failure to Meet Requirements

With regards to tests and assignments, I follow the same policy as that found in the [UW Examination Regulations](#):

- 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.
- If you fall sick on the day of the test, contact your instructor at the first possible opportunity.
- If a student has a test deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test on the first Friday following the test date.
- 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 or hand in assignments.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative test or examination time or to modify an assignment deadline.
- If you need an accommodation for other reasons (for example, a family crisis or you are representing St. Jerome's or the University of Waterloo at a sports event or academic competition), please see me.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

You may consult the University of Waterloo's [Academic Integrity Office](#), which has a useful page for students.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. 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 professor, 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 offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71 (Student Discipline).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome's University.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals.

Note for Students with Disabilities: The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, 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 the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

The Writing and Communication Centre: The Writing and Communication Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines. WCC staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Dana Porter Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre.

Wellness and Mental Health: At the University of Waterloo, we offer a number of services to assist individuals in coping with their mental health issues:

- [HERE 24/7](#) is your front door to the addictions, mental health and crisis services provided by 12 agencies across Waterloo Wellington.
- [Counselling Services](#) is a team of professionals that provides programming and services to help you lead a healthy and balanced life. They strive to provide a secure, supportive environment for students of all orientations and backgrounds.
- [Mentor Assistance Through Education and Support](#) (MATES) is a one-to-one student peer support program offered by the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) in consultation with Campus Wellness. MATES provides support to students who are hoping to build social skills, or are experiencing personal or academic concerns or low-intensity mental health and wellness challenges.

Class and Reading Schedule

Dates—with exception of assignment due dates and test dates—are subject to change.

Jan. 6	Evil in the Modern Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Evil in the Modern Age” module on Learn website (found under CONTENTS tab).
Jan. 8	Evil in the Modern Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Evil in the Modern Age” module on Learn website (found under CONTENTS tab).
Jan. 13	The Holocaust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Pew Research Centre, “Jews.” • Watch “The Path to Nazi Genocide.”
Jan. 15	Judaism and the Holocaust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Elie Wiesel, <i>Night</i>. • Selected readings in English from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Genesis 12, 15, 17
Jan. 20	Class Cancelled	
Jan. 22	Judaism, the Holocaust, and Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test One • The Ten Commandments: Exodus 20:1–17 • Read Michael Lerner: “God: A Jewish Renewal (Kabbalistic-Mystical-Neo-Hasidic) Approach to God.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Stop at this sentence: “So who is God? In my Jewish Renewal account, God is the Force of Healing and Transformation that calls the world to love and mutual caring.” • Read Michael Lerner, The Ten Commitments
Jan. 24	Sheila Ager lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date/Time: Friday, January 24, 2020 - 7:30pm • Location: Vanstone Lecture Hall, St. Jerome's University Academic Centre
Jan. 27	Roman Catholicism, Innovation, and Modern Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture Response due • Pope Paul VI, Nostra Aetate • Genesis 1-3 • Luke 6, 15 • Matthew 5, 25
Jan. 29	Roman Catholicism, Innovation, and Modern Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment One due • Gregory Baum, “John Paul II and Structural Sin,” from <i>Essays in Critical Theology</i>.
Feb 3	Imperialism and Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert J. Miller, The Doctrine of Discovery • 21 Things You May Not Have Known about the Indian Act
Feb 5	Imperialism and Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Two • J.R. Miller, “The State, the Church, and Indian Residential Schools in Canada,” in <i>Religion and Public Life in Canada</i>, ed. Marguerite Van Die, pp. 109-129.
Feb. 10	Colonization and Indigenous peoples in Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, “The Legacy,” in What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation, pp. 103-111. • “Response of the Churches to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.”

Feb. 12	Gandhi, Colonialism, and Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahatma Gandhi selections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Brute Force” ○ “How Can India Become Free?” ○ “Italy and India” ○ “Passive Resistance” ○ “What is True Civilization?”
Feb. 17-21	Study Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Day and Study Break
Feb. 24	Ideology, Modernity and Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the “Ideology and Evil in Modern Society,” module on Learn website (found under CONTENTS tab).
Feb. 26	Ideology, Modernity and Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Three • Read the “Ideology and Evil in Modern Society,” module on Learn website (found under CONTENTS tab).
Mar. 2	Economic Liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Linda McQuaig, “Nudists and Capitalists,” from <i>All You Can Eat: Greed, lust, and the new capitalism</i>.
Mar. 4	Economic Liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Linda McQuaig, “Nudists and Capitalists.”¹
Mar. 9	Pope Francis on the economic and ecological crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read #52-60 and #202-216 of Apostolic Exhortation <u>Evangelii Gaudium</u> of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops. • Read #10-26 and #65-75 of <u>Laudate Si’!</u>. (<i>On Care for our Common Home</i>).
Mar. 11	Ivone Gebara on the economic and ecological crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Four • Ivone Gebara, Women and spirituality: a Latin American perspective, <i>The Way</i>, 38 no 3 Jul 1998, p 240-251.
Mar. 16	Introduction to Buddhism and Thich Nhat Hanh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment Two due. • Readings from the <i>Dhammapada</i>: • http://www.buddhanet.net/dhammapada/d_buddha.htm • http://www.buddhanet.net/dhammapada/d_mind.htm
Mar. 18	Buddhism and the Ecological Crisis: Thich Nhat Hanh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plum Village, “<u>Five Mindfulness Trainings.</u>” • Plum Village, “<u>The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings.</u>”
Mar. 23	Buddhist eco-feminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Five • bell hooks, “Feminist Politics: Where we stand.” • Stephanie Kaza, “Acting with Compassion: Buddhism, Feminism, and the Environmental Crisis,” from <i>Ecofeminism and the Sacred</i>.
Mar. 25	Buddhist eco-feminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Kaza, “Acting with Compassion.”
Mar. 30	Vandana Shiva videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://vandanashivamovie.com/videos/
April 1	Final class test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Six (No fooling!)

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/27/class-cellphone-and-laptop-use-lowers-exam-scores-new-study-shows>

The Myth of Multitasking

New study shows that splitting attention between lecture and cellphone or laptop use hinders long-term retention, and those in class suffer from others' use of devices.

By [Emma Whitford](#)

July 27, 2018

Yes, cellphones and laptops do affect students' grades, and no, students can't multitask as well as they say they can.

Arnold Glass, a psychology professor at [Rutgers University at New Brunswick](#), and Mengxue Kang, a graduate student, [recently published a study](#) in *Educational Psychology* that they say reveals a causal link between cellphone and laptop use during class and poorer exam scores.

Glass has been teaching for over 40 years and has been proactive about bringing new technology into the classroom. He's noticed changes in his students' behavior as they've become more used to the technology, and some of those changes are for the worse.

"For about five or six years, [student] performance was getting better and better," he said. "But because I was attuned to this, and because I was collecting an enormous amount of data, I was immediately aware when things started changing. Students started ignoring me -- they used to not ignore me."

Previous studies on the impact of personal devices on student performance have measured individual student scores against those of their peers, but, using what Glass calls a "platinum standard" method, Glass and Kang designed their experiment to test students' performance against themselves. One hundred and eighteen students, split between two virtually identical sections of an upper-level psychology course, were told they could use their electronic devices in class during half of the lecture periods and asked to keep them put away during the other half. To enforce the rule, a proctor attended class on device-free days.

Glass and Kang measured student performance with daily quizzes, three unit exams and a cumulative exam over the course of the semester. Exam scores were poorer for all students on the material covered on device-approved days, regardless of their individual decisions to use their device or not. [Previous lab studies](#) have noted the effects of classroom distractions, but Glass and Kang's work confirmed those effects in an actual classroom.

"Students themselves shrug it off and say, 'Oh no, I can divide attention, this isn't bothering me,'" Glass said. "These are large enough effects that students' grades were clearly affected by [laptop and cellphone use]. Students really are hurting themselves by ignoring me -- this isn't just my ego."

Students' insistence on their ability to multitask isn't a matter of stubbornness; divided attention had no impact on day-to-day performance and students could accurately recall what happened in class that day even if they were using a cellphone or laptop. But the use of a device had a significant impact on long-term retention, a consequence Glass sees as more "insidious" because it happens over time.

"This is one of the occasional cases in human cognition where our intuitions mislead us, because even though they can divide their attention well enough to remember in the moment ... what happens is that a week later, they've pretty much forgotten what happened in class," Glass said. "What's the point of going to class in the first place if a week later you don't remember it?"

In light of his findings, Glass bans laptops and cellphones during lectures, and he's made a habit of calling out his students when he sees them using one.

"I also tell [my students] I'll do something which most faculty will not do anymore: I'll call them out when I notice them ignoring me, and I'll call them out not because I'm tremendously offended by this, but because I know it negatively affects them."

He encourages other faculty to do the same but said that class evaluations discourage them from making their students uncomfortable.

"They wouldn't want to see their evaluations go down, and they're right, their evaluations will go down if they call students out," Glass said. "They want to maintain an atmosphere where the class views them as their friend and entertainer, so I don't really expect instructors to follow my advice."