

RECENT WORK ON EVIL

The concept of evil is highly charged, but also fairly obscure. What is it to see someone as evil? Is being evil a psychological state, like being angry or malicious, or a kind of fundamental badness? Is there a sense of ‘evil’ in which real evil is impossible? Does the concept of evil play a valuable role, or would we be better off without it? Our intuitive answers to these questions are often pulled in different directions. On the one hand, seeing someone as evil can be a poorly motivated way of misunderstanding and dehumanizing her. On the other hand, we struggle to understand atrocities and other harms which seem beyond our grasp as anything other than evil. This course will work through a range of recent writings on the possibility and limits of evil; the extent to which a person or action can legitimately be considered evil; and the ethics of our responses to atrocity and oppression.

Instructor: Eugene Chislenko, chislenko@temple.edu

Office hours: Anderson Hall 750, Thursdays 1-3pm or by appointment

Course requirements: (1) Eight 1-page response papers (25%)

(2) Two 3-page papers (25%)

(3) 2-page proposal for final paper (required but not graded)

(4) 10-15 page final paper (50%)

There is one required book: Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm*; all other readings on Canvas.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND READINGS

1. Tu 1/16: **Introduction**

I. The Possibility of Evil

2. Tu 1/23: **Pursuing the Good**

Reading Matthew Boyle and Douglas Lavin, “Goodness and Desire”

3. Tu 1/30: **Pursuing the Bad, I**

Reading: J. David Velleman, “The Guise of the Good”; Michael Stocker, “Desiring the Bad”

4. Tu 2/6: **Pursuing the Bad, II**

Reading: Kieran Setiya, *Reasons without Rationalism*, Part One (pp. 21-67)

5. Tu 2/13: **Explaining Bad Pursuits**

Reading: Joseph Raz, “The Guise of the Bad”; Jennifer Hawkins, “Desiring the Bad under the Guise of the Good”

II. Alternative Conceptions of Evil

[No class Tu 2/20—Central APA.]

7. Tu 2/27: **Choosing Oneself Over Morality**

Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6:26-44;
Allen Wood, “Kant and the Intelligibility of Evil” (both on course website)

[No class Tu 3/6. Happy spring break!]

8. Tu 3/13: **Intolerable Harms**

Reading: Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm*, Chapter 1

III. Responses to Evil

9. Tu 3/20: **Conceptual Revision**

Reading: Philip Cole, *The Myth of Evil*, Chapter 1 and Conclusion (on course website)

10. Tu 3/27: **Demystification**

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp.274-9; reactions by Allison, Cole,
and Fine

11. Tu 4/3: **Prioritization**

Reading: Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm*, Chapters 5 (“Prioritizing Evils Over
Unjust Inequalities”) and 6 (“Rape in War”)

12. Tu 4/10: **Resistance**

Reading: Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm*, Chapter 10 (“Gray Zones: Diabolical
Evil Revisited”); Carol Hay, “The Obligation to Resist Oppression”

Paper proposals due Friday, April 13 by noon.

IV. Conclusion

13. Tu 4/17: **Discussion of Paper Proposals, I**

Reading: Paper proposals.

14. Tu 4/24: **Discussion of Paper Proposals, II**

Reading: Reread paper proposals.

Final paper due Friday, May 4 by noon.

COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours: I encourage you to come to office hours often; talking one-on-one or in small groups is one of the best ways to get a handle on the material and methods of the course. You'll probably get more out of it if you come with specific questions, but coming to talk about the issues in a more general way is fine too. It's also fine to come as a small group. If you want to meet but have a schedule conflict, let me know and we can find a different time.

Short papers: In weeks 2-12, you will write eight 1-page response papers, defending a thought about the readings for the *upcoming* seminar meeting and mentioning one issue you would like us to discuss in class; and two more substantial 3-page papers, defending a thought about a reading from the *preceding* three meetings, taking class discussion into account. These are due by Monday at noon, as a Word or PDF file (I slightly prefer Word, but either is fine) emailed to chislenko@temple.edu. Within weeks 2-12, you have complete freedom with regard to which two weeks you write a 3-page paper and which week(s) you write no paper at all, depending on your interests and your schedule. You may not write two 1-page papers in the same week, but you can choose to submit both a 1-page paper and a 3-page paper in the same week, if you want. You can expect some of the short papers to be integrated into class discussion, and I might read selections from them out loud in class, or ask you to read part of your paper to the seminar.

Plagiarism: *All* written work for this course must be your own. Be sure to cite any works you use, including web sites, books, and articles. Presenting *anyone* else's work as your own is considered plagiarism. Please read Temple University's Policy on Academic Honesty: http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm

Disabilities: Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact me privately to discuss your situation by the end of the second week of classes, or as soon as you can. If you haven't already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex or 215-204-1280 to learn more about the resources available to you. I will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. Temple University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02

FINAL PAPER AND PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENT

Write a term paper on a topic of your own choosing, from within the topics covered in this seminar. Defend your view through discussion of relevant parts of the readings for the course, as well as your own thoughts and examples. Explain all key terms so that someone who has not taken the course can understand your paper. Consider explicitly the best reasons why someone might disagree with you, and how you might convince that person. Your paper should show an understanding of course readings and class discussion, and of which parts of the readings are relevant for your topic. But the assignment is to work out and defend your own view. Summary of what we have covered so far should take up less than half your paper. When choosing a topic, think about what you're most interested in, and also what you have something to say about that goes beyond what we have covered in class.

Length: You can write: (1) a paper of at most 15 pages, using only the readings for the course; OR (2) a paper of at most 3000 words, not including notes and bibliography (about 10-12 pages), in which you do additional research on your topic. Both are double spaced, with 12-point font and at least 1-inch margins. The first is a more typical seminar paper, while the second is a more typical conference paper, which you can revise and submit directly to conferences. Feel free to consult with me throughout the semester about your topic and choice of paper length.

Logistics: Your paper is due **Friday, May 4, by noon**. Please email your paper as a Word file or PDF (I slightly prefer Word, but either is fine) to chislenko@temple.edu, with your name and a title at the top of the first page. *Late papers* will be marked down one third of a grade (from A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for each day or fraction of a day they are late, including Saturday and Sunday. *Grades are non-negotiable*, and will not be changed for any reason. I'm open to *extensions* in extenuating circumstances, but only if you ask at least at least two weeks before the deadline.

Proposals: This assignment includes a *required proposal* of at most two pages, due Friday, April 13, by noon as a Word file or PDF to chislenko@temple.edu. Your proposal must include: (1) a direct statement of the view you will defend in the paper; (2) a brief explanation of what the view is saying, including what you mean by any key terms; (3) a brief list of the texts you will focus on, including specific titles and page numbers; and (4) a summary of the planned line of thought of the paper, including your central reasons for holding your view to begin with, the main objections or problems you anticipate, and how you plan to address them. Of these, (4) should take up more than half of your proposal. These proposals will not be graded, but they are required, and will be discussed in our last two seminar meetings. Your final *paper* will be marked down one third of a grade for each day the proposal is late, and will not be accepted without a proposal. Incomplete proposals will not be accepted; I strongly recommend submitting your proposal before the due date, so that you can revise it in time if it is incomplete. You can submit a proposal as early as you like, and you can submit a draft proposal for written feedback. And again, feel free to consult with me at any time about your paper as the semester goes on.