

**Evil**  
Philosophy 5, Fall 2022  
Course Syllabus

Professor Eric Schwitzgebel  
Office: 3208 HMNSS  
Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 to 1:30 and by appointment  
Email: [eschwitz@ucr.edu](mailto:eschwitz@ucr.edu)

Lectures: MWF 11:00-11:50 am; SSC 229  
Final Exam: Tuesday, December 6, 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Course Web Site: Navigate to the course website on Canvas.

Evil abounds. The ancient Chinese philosopher Mengzi (Mencius) argued that, nonetheless, evil behavior is contrary to the natural inclinations of our hearts and minds. Mengzi's opponent Xunzi argued, in opposition, that we are naturally attracted to immoral behavior and can only become good by overcoming our original impulses. This course begins with the debate between Mengzi and Xunzi, then updates it with an examination of more recent work in history, psychology, philosophy, and primatology. The course concludes with a brief discussion of whether the prevalence of evil disproves the existence of an omnipotent, benevolent god.

In-Person Requirements: This is an *in-person* class. I will attempt to Zoom and record the MWF lectures, but if there are technical errors it is the students' responsibility to make up for missed material by consulting with attending students and/or their TAs. In-person attendance in sections is required as described below. In-person attendance at exams is also required except in cases of unforeseen emergency or as proctored through the Disability Resource Center.

The Zoom link is: <https://ucr.zoom.us/j/97371959389?pwd=U1kyckdpTHJ4L2tNMGxLS3RGRDVwUT09>  
Meeting ID: 973 7195 9389  
Passcode: Phil5Evil  
Access through a UCR account is required.

Midterm Exams:

Tests will be given in class on October 14 and November 9. The first test will be worth 10% of your course grade. The second will be worth 15% of your course grade. Make-up tests will be given only in extraordinary circumstances.

Final Exam:

The course will have a comprehensive final exam, worth 30% of the grade, from 3-6 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6. If you are not available to take the exam on that date, do not take this course.

You must receive at least a D- on the final exam to receive credit for the course. If you do not carefully do most of the readings and see most of the films, you run a substantial risk of receiving an F on the exam and thus in the course. Students who find they cannot keep abreast of the material as it is presented in lecture are advised to drop or withdraw from the course.

The final exam will focus principally on the readings and films, but it will also include material treated in exclusively in lectures.

Essays:

A 500-word essay, worth 15% of your course grade will be due on October 28.

A 1200-word essay, worth 30% of your grade, will be due on December 2. The essay will ask you to connect themes from the course with some specific act of immorality of which you have detailed knowledge, with

considerable liberty for you to choose a topic of interest to you. Specific instructions for composing and submitting the essay will be made available later.

You must email a 1000-word draft of your 1200-word essay to your TA by Tuesday, November 22. Your TA will assign you to a group including 3-4 other students. Each student must provide a written critique of the papers of the other students in his or her group by the following Tuesday. Those not submitting adequate critiques will have their essay grades reduced.

You must receive at least a D– on the final essay (prior to penalties, if any) to receive credit for the course.

#### Kindness Assignment:

There will be no reading or lecture assigned for November 23. I ask you instead to complete what I will call the Kindness Assignment. Details to come. You will not be graded on the Kindness Assignment, but I will include a section on the final exam where you can describe your experience and what, if anything, you learned from it.

#### Section Attendance and Participation:

Section attendance will be recorded. Students who miss three sections without legitimate excuse will have their course grades lowered by 1/3 of a grade (e.g. B– to C+). Students who miss four sections without legitimate excuse will have their course grades lowered by 2/3; students missing five sections will be penalized one full grade; and so forth.

In determining the final course grade in borderline cases, the TAs have discretion to consider whether the student has made valuable contributions to section discussion.

#### Films:

Three films are required for the class, available through YuJa under the Assignments tab on the Canvas course website for Philosophy 5. All the required films are also be available through reserve services at the UCR library. *Schindler's List* and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* are also widely available for download or rental.

#### Potentially Upsetting Material:

Some of the material presented in this course is graphically violent and some contains nudity or sexuality. Also, some selections from Hitler's writings have been assigned. In the professor's judgment, the chosen material most effectively conveys the themes of this course. If you think you will find the assigned material too offensive or upsetting for calm academic discussion, please do not take this course. Students may be excused from *one* reading or film they find excessively upsetting: They may read the optional selection from Colby and Damon instead. They are, however, still responsible for the lecture on the topic for the skipped reading or film. The final exam will contain a short extra credit section on Colby and Damon to compensate for the missed reading or film.

#### Extra Credit:

Four forms of extra credit are available in this course.

1. A student may earn extra credit by reading the *entirety* (that is, the whole book) of Keneally, Smith, Staub, de Waal, Stump, Colby and Damon, Lifton, Haidt, or Pinker (see the list below) and submitting a 5-page paper to Prof. Schwitzgebel detailing how the material as a whole, *particularly the material outside the regularly assigned reading*, comports with Mengzi's and Xunzi's theses. Students receiving an A will have their course grade raised by 1/3 of a grade (e.g., B to B+). A grade of B on the assignment will be worth 2/3 that amount (e.g., a mid-range or high but not a low B will be raised to a B+). A grade of C will be worth 1/3 that amount (e.g., raising a high B, but not a middle or low B, to a B+). A grade of D or F will receive no credit. Extra credit papers are due at the time of the final exam.
2. The final exam will contain a short extra credit section on Colby and Damon. This is principally intended for students who chose to read Colby and Damon in lieu of another reading or film, but any students may answer the questions in that section.

3. There will be a few brief in-class or in-section assignments for which you may receive small amounts of extra credit in the form of bonus points on an exam.
4. A few supplemental works will be linked through the course website on Canvas and/or via group emails to students' official UCR email addresses. This will probably include interesting material that comes to my attention as the course proceeds – suggestions from students are welcome! Tests might contain a question or two about this material as a reward for students who learn this material, but probably only a minority of this supplemental material will be mentioned on tests.

Required Texts:

(1.) Wiesel, Elie (1958/2006). Night. Trans. M. Wiesel. New York: Hill and Wang. [This edition is preferred, but other editions are also okay.]

(2.) Electronically available PDFs through Canvas under Files → Course Readings. **This will be almost all of the readings.** If you are temporarily unable to access Canvas, please email your TA who should be able to supply you with the week's PDFs.

(3.) Three movies accessible through Canvas under "Assignments" (or on your own): *Obedience* (the Milgram experiment); *Schindler's List*; *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.

Extra Credit Books:

Colby and Damon, *Some Do Care*.

de Waal, *Good Natured*.

Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

Stump, *Wandering in Darkness*.

Keneally, *Schindler's List*.

Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*.

Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*.

Smith, *Making Monsters*.

Staub, *Roots of Evil*.

Intellectual Property:

This syllabus and the recorded lectures are protected intellectual property which should not be shared without permission of the instructor.

A Caution About Canvas:

I am still fairly new to Canvas, which I am using primarily as a location to store the readings and films, to make announcements, and as a portal for essay submissions. This course will not be using the Canvas scheduling or grading features, so please ignore those if they become visible.

## Schedule of Meetings and Assignments:

- Sep 23 Introduction to the course.
- Sep 26 What is evil? Lynchings. Reading: Allen et al., p. 8-16; photo plates 20, 25-26, 31, 37-38, 54, 57, 62-65, 74, and 97; notes to photo plates 20, 24-26, 31, 37-38, 54, 57, 62-65, 74-76, end of note to plate 85, and 97; Wells, 42-46. Note that the photos are in a separate folder after the main reading. Please zoom in on the plates for close examination of the perpetrators' emotional expressions.
- Sep 28 Mengzi (Mencius) on human nature. Reading: Selections from *Mengzi*: 1A7, 1B5, 1B11, 2A2 (p. 35-41 only), 2A6, 2B9, 3A5, 4B12, 6A1 through 6A15, 6B1, 7A7, 7A15, 7A21, 7B24, 7B31. Secondary reading: Rousseau, p. 45-48. Note: The italicized material in the Mengzi is commentary. It is optional, but you might find it an aid to understanding.
- Sep 30 Film: Milgram's *Obedience*. No class meeting. View film remotely through Canvas "under Assignments" or through your own resources.
- Oct 3 Xunzi on human nature. Reading: Xunzi, sections 1 and 23. Secondary reading: Hobbes, p. 86-90. Guest lecture: Abel Ang.
- Oct 5 Authority and situation. Discussion of Doris and Milgram. Reading: Doris, ch. 3.
- Oct 7 The holocaust. Reading: Wiesel, *Night*; Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 160-173, 357-360, 367-368.
- Oct 10 The banality of evil. Reading: Selections from Arendt, chs. 2 & 3 and p. 76-77, 83-95, 105-106, 112-115, 145-147, 150, 252, 276-279, 287-298.
- Oct 12 Study / catch-up day. No class meeting.
- Oct 14 **First Midterm Exam.** Bring scantron sheet and #2 pencil. Paper on which to answer essay questions will be made available in class.
- Oct 17 Evil and reflection. Reading: Goldhagen, ch. 7 & 8. Note: Two of the Goldhagen photo plates are in a separate folder after the main reading.
- Oct 19 The psychology of mass killing. Reading: Staub, ch. 5 & 6.
- Oct 21 Film: *Schindler's List*. No class meeting. View film remotely through Canvas "under Assignments" or through your own resources.
- Oct 24 Evil into good. Discussion of *Schindler's List*. Also read: Staub, ch. 11.
- Oct 26 Primate morality. Reading: De Waal, pp. 40-88; 209-212; "Cognition & Empathy" photos in a separate folder after the main reading.
- Oct 28 **500-word essay due by beginning of class at 11:59 p.m. today.** No class meeting.
- Oct 31 Are we evil? Reading: Singer and Rachels.
- Nov 2 The elephant and the rider. Reading: Haidt, ch. 1, 2 & 6.
- Nov 4 The moral behavior of ethics professors. No assigned reading.

- Nov 7 Sadistic violence. Reading: Fromm, p. 268-296.
- Nov 9 **Second Midterm Exam.** Bring scantron sheet and #2 pencil. Paper on which to answer essay questions will be made available in class.
- Nov 11 **Veteran's Day: no class meeting**
- Nov 14 Film: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Catch-up/study day. No class meeting. View film remotely through Canvas "under Assignments" or through your own resources.
- Nov 16 Evil and remorse. Discussion of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.
- Nov 18 Some motivations for sin. Reading: Augustine, ch. 2. Secondary reading: Milton, ch. 4, p. 441-444.
- Nov 21 Morality as an imposition. Reading: Nietzsche, Book I & Book II, sec 16.
- Nov 22 (Tuesday) **1000-word essay draft due** electronically to your TA by 11:59 pm today.
- Nov 23 **Instead of attending class today, complete the Kindness Assignment.** (The assignment must be completed by class time on Nov 28.)
- Nov 25 **Thanksgiving holiday: no class meeting**
- Nov 28 God and evil. Reading: Hick, p. 298-311; Bayle, "Paulicians"; Hume, p. 67-69.
- Nov 29 (Tuesday) **Critiques of essay drafts due** electronically to your TA and critique group by 11:59 pm today.
- Nov 30 God and evil, continued.
- Dec 2 The course, upside down. **Final 1200-word essay due by the beginning of class at 11:00 a.m. today.**
- Dec 6 (Tues) **FINAL EXAM, 3-6 p.m.** in this room. Bring scantron sheet and #2 pencil. Paper on which to answer essay questions will be made available in class.

Contents of the “Course Materials” PDFs:

Note: Please disregard marginal marks and comments. Most marks are defacements of library copies, not made by the professor.

1. Allen, James, Hilton Als, John Lewis, and Leon F. Litwack (2000). Without sanctuary: Lynching photography in America. Santa Fe: Twin Palms. Pp. 8-16, 173-176, 178-180, 184-185, 187-190, 194-196, 198, 201 (text only).
2. Allen et al. (2000). Plates #20, 25, 31, 37-38, 54, 57, 62-65, 74, and 97.
3. Wells-Barnett, Ida B. (1892/2002). On lynchings. Ed. P.H. Collins. Amherst, NY: Humanity. Pp. 42-46.
4. Mengzi (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE/1970). Trans. B.W. Van Norden. Indianapolis: Hackett. Pp. 7-15, 21-24, 28-29, 35-41, 45-47, 57-58, 73-75, 106, 143-156, 158-159, 173, 174-175, 176, 189-190, 192.
5. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1755/1995). Discourse on the origin of inequality. Trans. F Philip. Ed. P. Coleman. Oxford: Oxford. Pp. 45-48.
6. Xunzi (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE/2015). Xunzi: The complete text. Trans. E. Hutton. Princeton: Princeton. Pp. 1-8, 248-257.
7. Hobbes, Thomas (1651/1996). Leviathan. Ed. R. Tuck. Cambridge: Cambridge. Pp. 86-90.
8. Doris, John M. (2002). Lack of character. Cambridge: Cambridge. Pp. 28-61.
9. Hitler, Adolf (1924/1939). Mein Kampf, trans. J. Murphy. Front material and pp. 160-173.
10. Arendt, Hannah (1964/1983). Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil, rev. ed. New York: Penguin. Pp. 21-55, 76-77, 83-95, 105-106, 112-115, 145-147, 150, 252, 276-279, 287-298.
11. Goldhagen, Daniel J. (1996). Hitler’s willing executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust. New York: Random House. Pp. 203-262.
12. Goldhagen (1996). Two photos from above selection.
13. Staub, Ervin (1989). The roots of evil: The origins of genocide and other ground violence. Cambridge: Cambridge. Pp. 67-88, 151-169.
14. de Waal, Frans (1996). Good natured: The origins of right and wrong in humans and other animals. Cambridge, MA: Harvard. Pp. 40-88, 209-212.
15. de Waal (1996). Photo essay: Cognition & empathy.
16. Singer, Peter (2007). The Singer solution to world poverty. In The right thing to do, ed. J. Rachels and S. Rachels. Boston: McGraw Hill. Pp. 138-144.
17. Rachels, James (2004). The basic argument for vegetarianism. In Food for thought, ed. Steve F. Sapontzis. Amherst, New York: Prometheus. Pp. 70-80.
18. Haidt, Jonathan (2012). The righteous mind. New York: Pantheon. Pp. 1-51, 112-127.
19. Fromm, Erich (1973). The anatomy of human destructiveness. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. Pp. 268-296.
20. Augustine, Saint (4<sup>th</sup> c./1997). The confessions. Trans. M. Boulding. Hyde Park, NY: New City. Pp. 62-74.
21. Milton, John (1667/1998). Paradise lost. In The Riverside Milton, ed. R. Flannagan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 441-444.
22. Nietzsche, Friedrich (1887/1998). On the genealogy of morality. Trans. M. Clark and A.J. Swensen. Indianapolis: Hackett. Pp. 9-33, 56-57.
23. Hick, John (1966). Evil and the God of love. New York: Harper & Row. P. 298-311.
24. Bayle, Pierre (1697/1965). Historical and critical dictionary. Trans. R.H. Popkin. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. Pp. 166-193.
25. Hume, David (1776/1998). Dialogues concerning natural religion, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. R.H. Popkin. Pp. 67-69.
26. Colby, Anne, and William Damon (1992). Some do care. New York: Macmillan. Pp. 91-133.