ENCOUNTERING EVIL: SUFFERING IN THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD
REL 140–2/3

(2) Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 – 10:50 a.m. / Humanities 304
(3) Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 – 1:50 a.m. / Miller 106
Office Hours: MW 10:30–12 / Humanities 307–D
Dr. Matthew Sayers
sayers@lvc.edu
Office: (717) 867–6133
http://personal-pages.lvc.edu/sayers/classes.html

“Problems of the nature of the world are unthinkable, not to be thought of, thinking of which one would become mad, and come to ruin.” The Buddha, *Anguttara Nikāya*

**DESCRIPTION**

This class challenges students to engage The Problem of Evil, the dilemma posed by simultaneously believing in a benevolent deity and the existence of human suffering. Our frame will be three religions with radically different approaches to understanding human suffering: Christianity, Hinduism (particularly the monist perspective exemplified by Advaita Vedanta), and Zoroastrianism. Using these three archetypes we will explore the variety of responses to human suffering; we will become familiar with three of the world’s oldest religions and their responses to human suffering, which will illuminate the responses of other religions to the existence of evil.

The course is divided roughly in two; the first half is dedicated to surveys of the three religious traditions, the second to their responses to human suffering. In the end we will also look at the problem of evil in literature.

In this class students should expect to become familiar with 1. the most prominent ideas of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity; 2. A basic outline of these religions’ historical development; and 3. A working knowledge of the different ways that religious traditions address the

With respect to the IDEA teaching evaluations, this class addresses most directly the following goals:

✔ Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
✔ Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories
✔ Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
✔ Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

This class has a Foreign Studies designation with respect to the General Education curriculum. As such this course intends to increase students’ global awareness by introducing them to an important aspect of Asian culture in order to foster an understanding of cultural, social, political, religious, and/or economic systems outside the European tradition.

**TEXTS**

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

(Knipe): *Hinduism*, David M. Knipe
(Ferguson): *Christian Thought: An Introduction*, Marianne Ferguson
(Clark): *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith*, Peter Clark
*The Plague*, Albert Camus

You will need access to a copy of the Bible (various translations encouraged)

Other Class Readings are available on Blackboard.
EVALUATION

Inevitably, this is a class taken for credit and I must evaluate your absorption of the material presented in class.

Central to the learning experience is preparing for, attending, and participating in class. You will be expected not only to have read all assigned readings by the class period, but also to have reflected upon them and to bring the readings to be discussed that day to class. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. You are adults and I leave the management of your lives to you; I will not ask for, nor do I want to see excuses for missed classes. It is your responsibility to get the information covered in class. You will be allowed three absences throughout the semester. Any absences in excess of three will reduce your ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION grade by five points (one percentage point of your final grade). Participation can be as easy as asking for clarification on a concept, or as challenging as trying to engage the instructor directly on the relevance of the material to your everyday life. Participation is the best way to ensure you understand the material, and that is the best way to ensure you do well in the class.

Specifics on Grading: Fifty points is dedicated to attendance and fifty to participation. Each student gets 50 points for attendance, from which 10 points is taken for every absence beyond 3, if you have 6 absences total, you will get 20 out of 50. I then sit down and figure out how well I think that students have participated in class. This is admittedly a subjective judgment, but that is, unfortunately, unavoidable. At the end of the semester I rate students on a scale of 1 to 3. If the student participates regularly, then they get a 3. If the student occasionally contributes to the discussion, they get a 2. If they are there, but I have trouble recalling a time that they spoke up, or am clear that they never participated without being prompted, they get a 1. I then assign 20 of the 50 points for participation to the ones, 30 to the twos, and 40 to the threes. I then look to the borderline cases and bump those that I feel deserve to be bumped up 10 points, which translates to 1% of the total grade. Thus if you simply show up for class and speak rarely if ever without me forcing you to read when we read round robin, you get 20 out of 50.

There will be one SHORT QUIZ, which will assess your knowledge of the Hinduism section of the course. The quiz will be composed of multiple choice and short answer questions. This will be the best indicator for how well you are absorbing the material, and how well you will do on the exams and essays. The Short Quiz will be on February 3th.

The MID-TERM EXAMINATION will assess your knowledge of the material covered in the first half of the class. The Exam will be mainly short answer with one or two short essays. The Mid-Term Exam will be on March 3th.

ESSAY ONE will give you the opportunity to develop the ability to express the ideas you have learned in class writing. This assignment is to be between 800 and 900 words in length. For this essay you must select one theodicy, then describe it and argue briefly about whether it successfully answers the problem of Evil. Essay One will be due at the beginning of class on March 29th. Submit your paper electronically to Turn-it-in, via Blackboard, before class and bring a hard copy to class.

In ESSAY TWO you will need to demonstrate your ability to present an argument. For this essay you must formulate and clearly articulate your own theodicy. This assignment should be between 1600 and 1700 words in length. Essay Two will be due at the beginning of class on April 28th. Submit your paper electronically to Turn-it-in, via Blackboard, before class and bring a hard copy to class.

The FINAL EXAMINATION will assess your knowledge of all the material covered in class. The Exam will be short answer and short essays. The Final Exam for section 2 will be held on Wednesday May 11th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and for section 3 on Friday May 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Various aspects of performance will be weighted as listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance &amp; Participation:</th>
<th>50 points</th>
<th>Mid-term Exam:</th>
<th>100 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Quiz:</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>Essay Two:</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay One:</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades will be assigned on a 500 point scale (Grades will not be rounded, so a 399.99 is a C+):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D-</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500-</td>
<td>464-</td>
<td>449-</td>
<td>434-</td>
<td>414-</td>
<td>399-</td>
<td>384-</td>
<td>364-</td>
<td>349-</td>
<td>334-</td>
<td>324-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>465</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policies

Academic Dishonesty:
Any student who submits plagiarized work will be subject to the penalties described in the Student Handbook and outlined in LVC’s “Academic Honesty Policy” (http://www.lvc.edu/catalog/acad-reg-procedures.aspx). This code asks each student to do his/her own work in his/her own words. A student shall neither hinder nor unfairly assist the efforts of other students to complete their work. All individual work that a student produces and submits as a course assignment must be the student's own. Cheating and plagiarism are acts of academic dishonesty. Cheating is an act that deceives or defrauds. It includes, but is not limited to, looking at another's exam or quiz, using unauthorized materials during an exam or quiz, colluding on assignments without the permission or knowledge of the instructor, and furnishing false information for the purpose of receiving special consideration, such as postponement of an exam, essay, quiz or deadline of an oral presentation. Plagiarism is the act of submitting as one's own the work (the words, ideas, images, or compositions) of another person or persons without accurate attribution. Plagiarism can manifest itself in various ways: it can arise from sloppy note-taking; it can emerge as the incomplete or incompetent citation of resources; it can take the form of the wholesale submission of other people's work as one's own, whether from an online, oral or printed source. Students who take part in violations such as cheating or plagiarism are subject to a meeting with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, who has the authority to take further action, up to and including expulsion from the College.

Details on plagiarism and how to avoid it can also be found at this site: http://libguides.lvc.edu/citingreferences You will be held responsible for understanding what is and what is not plagiarism. I will not give anyone a second chance on this issue.

Turnitin Statement: In this course you may be asked to submit some or all of your assignments for review by an on-line plagiarism service. This service will compare the content of your work to content found on the internet and several proprietary databases. Any work submitted to this service may become part of the service’s permanent collection of submitted papers. After your work is submitted, the service will generate an originality report which will be sent to your instructor. Any student who submits plagiarized work will be subject to the penalties outlined in LVC’s Academic Honesty Policy found in the Student Handbook.

Students with Disabilities:
If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to impact your attendance or require accommodation, please let me know. In order to ensure that your learning needs are appropriately met, you will need to provide documentation of your disability or medical condition to the Director of Disability Services. The Office of Disability Services will then provide a letter of verification of disability that describes the accommodations needed for this class. This office is located in the Humanities Building, room 04, and the Director may be reached by phone at 717-867-6071.

Absence for Religious Holidays:
If you must miss class for the observance of a religious holy day, inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. Notice given at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent will constitute an excused absence. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

Cell Phones:
Cell-phones are prohibited during class. If you use your phone during class, you will be asked to leave.

Syllabus:
The syllabus is a tentative schedule and is subject to change as the need arises students will be made aware of any changes with enough time to adequately prepare for class.

Late and Make-Up Work:
Make-up dates for quizzes and the exam will only be given in the most extraordinary of circumstances and then must be completed within 48 hours. Grades for late essays will be reduced by 10% after class begins and 10% for each full 24 hours thereafter.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One:
  (Jan. 18): Introduction
  (Jan. 20): Hinduism
  Knipe, 1–24

Week Two:
  (Jan. 25): Hinduism
  Knipe, 25–46
  (Jan. 27): Hinduism
  Knipe, 47–74

Week Three: (Short Quiz on Feb. 3)
  (Feb. 1): Hinduism
  Knipe, 75–118
  (Feb. 3): Zoroastrianism
  Clark, 1–26

Week Four:
  (Feb. 8): Zoroastrianism
  Clark, 27–58
  (Feb. 10): Zoroastrianism
  Clark, 59–88

Week Five:
  (Feb. 15): Zoroastrianism
  Clark, 99–124
  (Feb. 17): Christianity
  Ferguson, 9–30

Week Six:
  (Feb. 22): Christianity
  Ferguson, 31–70
  (Feb. 24): Christianity
  Ferguson, 71–90

Week Seven: (Mid Term on Mar. 3)
  (Mar. 1): Review for Mid-term
  (Mar. 3): Mid-term Exam

Week Eight:
  (Mar. 8): No Class: Spring Break
  (Mar. 10): No Class: Spring Break

Week Nine:
  (Mar. 15): The Problem of Evil and its Terms
  (Mar. 17): The Problem Evil and Theodicies

Week Ten:
  (Mar. 22): Theodicies Debated
  (Mar. 24): Religions of Dissolution: Hinduism
Bowker 193–236: “Hinduism,” from Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World

Week Eleven: (Essay One due on Mar. 29)
(Mar. 29): Religions of Dissolution: Hinduism
dobadthingshappen.pdf
(http://www.rsdasa.com/index.html)
(Mar. 31): Religions of Solution: Zoroastrianism

Week Twelve:
(Apr. 5): Religions of Paradox: Old Testament
Genesis 1-3; Genesis 15; Numbers 16:28f; Proverbs 10, 24; Psalm 37; II Kings 21; Jeremiah 4, 12, 20, 31; Ezekial 14, 18, and 20; Ecclesiastes 8, 9; Daniel 12
(Apr. 7): Religions of Paradox: Job
Job (whole book)

Week Thirteen:
John 2, 3, 5, 9, 10; Mark 2, 3, 9; Acts 5; Luke 6, 13, 17; Matthew 9, 24; 2 Corinthians 4
(Apr. 14): Theodicy and Literature: Anger and Rejection
Dostoevsky, 7–18, “Rebellion” from The Brothers Karamozov
LeGuin, “The Ones who Walk Away from Omelas”
http://harelbarzilai.org/words/omelas.txt

Week Fourteen:
(Apr. 19): Theodicy and Literature: Anger and Acceptance
Ivan and Adolf: The Last Man in Hell To be read in class aloud
(Arp. 21): “Frontline: Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero” Discussion

Week Fifteen: (Essay Two Due Apr. 28)
(Apr. 26): Theodicy and Literature: The Plague
The Plague
(Apr. 28): Theodicy and Literature: The Plague
The Plague

Week Sixteen:
(May 3): Review for Final

Final Exam:
Section 2: Wednesday May 11th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Section 3: Friday May 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.