ENCOUNTERING EVIL: SUFFERING IN THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD
REL 140-4/5

(4) Tuesday/Thursday 8:00 – 9:20 a.m. / Humanities 309
(5) Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 – 1:50 a.m. / Humanities 304
Office Hours: MW 11–12 & TTH 9:30–11 / Humanities 307–D
http://personal-pages.lvc.edu/sayers/classes.html

Dr. Matthew Sayers
sayers@lvc.edu
Office: (717) 867–6133

―Problems of the nature of the world are unthinkable, not to be thought of, thinking of which one would become made, and come to ruin.” The Buddha, Aṅguttara 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.

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:
(Vicchio) Ivan and Adolf: The Last Man in Hell, Stephen Vicchio
(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 a copy of the Bible (various translations encouraged)

Other Class Readings are available on Blackboard.
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 one point. 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.

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 September 10th.

Essay One will give you the opportunity to develop the ability to express the ideas you have learned in class in writing. This assignment is to be two pages in length. (Two normal size sheets with default Word margins with 12 pt font.) 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 October 29th.

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 October 8th.

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 is five pages in length. (Five normal size sheets with default Word margins with 12 pt font.) Essay Two will be due at the beginning of class on December 3rd.

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 4 will be held on Tuesday December 8th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and for section 5 on Friday December 7th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Various aspects of performance will be weighted as listed below:

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<td>Essay Two:</td>
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<td>Essay One</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Grades will be assigned on a 200 point scale:

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Grades will not be rounded, so a 159.99 is a C+. 
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:
“Lebanon Valley College expects its students to uphold the principles of academic honesty. Violations of these principles will not be tolerated. 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. The seriousness of an instance of plagiarism—its moral character as an act of academic dishonesty—normally depends on the extent to which a student intends to deceive and mislead the reader as to the authorship of the work in question. Initially, the instructor will make this determination.” (From LVC’s Undergraduate Academic Regulations and Procedures: http://www.lvc.edu/catalog/acad-reg-procedures.aspx?bhivw=1024)

Details on plagiarism and how to avoid it can also be found at this site:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php
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.

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 in Humanities 206-D, 867-6071. The Office of Disability Services will then provide a letter of verification of disability that describes the accommodations needed for this class.

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.

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.
Week One:
(Aug. 25): Introduction
Macauley. Selections from *Motel of Mysteries* [to be read in class]
(Aug. 27): Hinduism
Knipe, 1–24

Week Two:
(Sep. 1): Hinduism
Knipe, 25–46
(Sep. 3): Hinduism
Knipe, 47–74

Week Three: **(Short Quiz on Sep. 10)**
(Sep. 8): Hinduism
Knipe, 75–118
(Sep. 10): Zoroastrianism
Clark, 1–26

Week Four:
(Sep. 15): Zoroastrianism
Clark, 27–58
(Sep. 17): Zoroastrianism
Clark, 59–88

Week Five:
(Sep. 22): Zoroastrianism
Clark, 99–124
(Sep. 24): Christianity
Ferguson, 9–30

Week Six:
(Sep. 29): Christianity
Ferguson, 31–70
(Oct. 1): Christianity
Ferguson, 71–90

Week Seven: **(Mid Term on Oct. 8)**
(Oct. 6): Christianity
Ferguson, 91–118
(Oct. 8): Mid-term Exam

Week Eight:
(Oct. 13): No Class, Fall Break
(Oct. 15): The Problem of Evil and its Terms

Week Nine:
(Oct. 20): The Problem Evil and Theodicies
Week Ten: (Essay One due on Oct. 29)

Oct. 27: Religions of Dissolution: Hinduism
Bowker 193–236: “Hinduism,” from Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World

Oct. 29: Religions of Dissolution: Hinduism
dobadthingshappen.pdf
(http://www.rsdasa.com/index.html)
http://www.rsdasa.com/lectures/19841028-Encounter-Do_Bad_things_happen_to_good_people.mp3

Week Eleven:

Nov. 3: Religions of Solution: Zoroastrianism

Nov. 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

Week Twelve:

Nov. 10: No Class, AAR
Nov. 12: Religions of Paradox: Job
Job (whole book)

Week Thirteen:

Nov. 17: Religions of Paradox: New Testament
John 2, 3, 5, 9, 10; Mark 2, 3, 9; Acts 5; Luke 6, 13, 17; Matthew 9, 24; 2 Corinthians 4

Nov. 19: 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:

Nov. 24: Theodicy and Literature: Anger and Acceptance
Ivan and Adolf: The Last Man in Hell To be read in class aloud

Nov. 26: No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Week Fifteen: (Essay Two Due Dec. 3)

Dec. 1: Theodicy and Literature: The Plague
The Plague

Dec. 3: Theodicy and Literature: The Plague
The Plague

Final Exam:
Section 4: Tuesday December 8th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Section 5: Friday December 7th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.