

Syllabus

BLHS-110: RADICAL EVIL Summer, 2010

Instructor: Mario del Carril

Course Description

This course is centered on the concept of Radical Evil as conceived by Immanuel Kant and used by others and it is divided in three parts: 1) Analysis of the Concept of Evil; 2) the Moral Dilemmas of Asymmetrical Warfare and 3) the Human Rights Trials of the 20th century including the Nuremburg Trials, the Trial of Eichmann in Jerusalem as well as the trials of terrorists in our day.

In the first part of the course we examine the concept of evil as it has been developed in modern times in the aftermaths of the Lisbon earthquake, the Holocaust and the destruction of the twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001. These events in different ways shook the trust of man in the goodness of the world and/or the goodness of mankind. In the second part of the course we study the moral dilemmas involved in the techniques of asymmetrical warfare including, torture, targeted extrajudicial killings, and suicide bombings ---none of them new---that many, in the context of extreme danger or *dire emergency*, evaluate in a new light. In the third part of the course we analyze how the understanding of evil bears on the trials and punishment of its perpetrators in the Nuremburg trials, the Eichmann trial, the Human Rights trials of recent years and the contemporary trials or non trials of terrorists, focusing in particular on the controversial notion that the perpetrators of extreme evil have placed themselves beyond forgiveness and punishment, simply put, they would be monsters to be guarded against and disposed of.

Course Objectives and Requirements

The aim of this course is to clarify insofar as it is possible issues in moral, political and humanistic thought that have been reopened and entangled in our times and will be with us in public discourse about criminal, foreign and human rights policies for some time to come. Students are asked to write relatively short critical summaries of the three parts of the course and one overall research paper critically developing their thoughts on the issues they have discussed and analyzed. A topic outline or first draft of the paper should be handed in for approval in the week after receiving feedback from the first summary paper. There will be short assignments including quizzes to be corrected and discussed in class, they will not be graded. Class discussions of these assignments are part of the participation grade.

Georgetown Honor Code:

Honor Pledge:

In the pursuit of high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible members of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. If you have questions speak with the instructor and refer to the honor code material available at www.georgetown.edu/honor. Research Papers in this course may be submitted to turntin.com for verification.

Books (Required and available in Book Store)

1. Neiman, Susan, *Evil in Modern Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton: 2002
 2. Gross, Michael L., *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2009
 3. Nino, Carlos, *Radical Evil on Trial*, Yale University Press: New Haven: 1996
- *Other readings will be assigned and made available to students in Blackboard and placed on reserve at the Library

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I: The Concept of Evil

Class One:

The Problem of Evil

- Hick, John "The Problem of Evil" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Course Documents)
- Kant, Immanuel, Excerpts from Book One, "Radical Evil in Human Nature" in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. (Course Documents)
- Neiman, Susan, Introduction, *Evil in Modern Thought*

Class Two:

Stating the problem in non theistic terms

- Neiman, Susan, "Fire from Heaven", Chapter 2, *Evil in Modern Thought*

Class Three:

Failure of Reason

- Neiman, Susan. "Ends of an Illusion" and "Condemning the Architect", selections from Chapters 3 and 4, *Evil in Modern Thought*

Class Four:

Can a concept of Radical Evil be defined?

- Neiman, Susan. Selections from *Evil in Modern Thought*
- Kant, Immanuel, Excerpts from Book One “Radical Evil in Human Nature” in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. (Course Documents)

PART II: Moral Dilemmas of Asymmetric Conflict

Class Five:

Introduction

- Gross, Michael L. “Torture, Assassination and Blackmail in an Age of Asymmetric Conflict, Chapter 1 of *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*.
- Gross, Michael L. “Friends, Foes or Brothers in Arms? The Puzzle of Combat Equality, Chapter 2 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*.
- First Critical Summary Paper Due.

Class Six

Combatants in Asymmetric War

- Gross, Michael L. “Shooting to Kill: The Paradox of Prohibited Weapons, Chapter 3 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*.
- Gross, Michael L. “Shooting to Stun: The Paradox of non-lethal Weapons, Chapter 4 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*.
- Gross, Michael L. “Murder, Self-Defense or Execution? The Dilemma of Assassination, Chapter 5 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*.
- Gross, Michael L. “Human Dignity or Human Life: The Dilemmas of Torture and Rendition.” Chapter 6 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*.
- First Critical Summary paper returned.

Class Seven

Noncombatants in Asymmetric War

- Gross, Michael L. “Blackmailing the Innocent. The Dilemma of Noncombatant Immunity. Chapter 7 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*
- Gross, Michael L. “Killing the Innocent. The Dilemma of Terrorism” Chapter 8 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*
- Gross, Michael L. “Risking our lives to save others: Puzzles of Humanitarian Intervention” Chapter 9 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*

Class Eight

New Norms for Modern Conflict?

- Gross, Michael L. “Torture, Assassination and Blackmail: New Norms for Asymmetric Conflict?” Chapter 10 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*

- Gross, Michael L. “The war in Gaza, December 2008 to January 2009, Chapter 11 in *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War*

Part III: Trial and Punishment

Class Nine

Radical Evil

- Lord Russell of Liverpool, *The Scourge of the Swastika* (Course Documents).
- *Burnt by the Sun* Film.
- Terrorism: the Destruction of the Twin Towers (Film clips).
- Second Critical Summary paper due.

Class Ten

Responsibility

- Nino, Carlos “Punishment as a Response to Human Rights Violations (A Global Perspective) in *Radical Evil on Trial*
- Scanlon, T.M. “Responsibility” from *What we Owe Each Other* (Course Documents excerpts)
- Gross, Michael I. Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War* (Selected Texts)

Class Eleven

Punishment

- Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Course Documents).
- Nino, Carlos “The Morality of Punishment” in *Radical Evil on Trial*.

Class Twelve

The Political and Moral Problems of Punishing Evil

- Nino, Carlos “Political Problems of Trials for Human Rights Violations” in *Radical Evil on Trial*
- Nino, Carlos “The Morality of Punishing and Investigating Human Rights Violations” in *Radical Evil on Trial*

Class Thirteen:

Justifications and Excuses

- Nino, Carlos, “Punishment for Human Rights Violation” in *Radical Evil*
- Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Course Documents, excerpts)
- Gross, Michael I. Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War* (Selected Texts)
- Gross, Michael I. Gross, *Moral Dilemmas of Modern War* (Selected Texts)
- Third Critical Summary Paper Due.

Research Paper due Final Exam Week.

GRADING

Grades will be assigned in a 100 point scale in the following manner:

- A 100-95
- A- 94-90
- B+ 89-87
- B 86-83
- B- 82-80
- C+ 79-77
- C 76-73
- C- 72-70
- D 69-60
- F 59-0

Assessments are assigned points in the following manner:

- **Participation (15)** includes class discussion and completing all class assignments including all class quizzes that will be corrected and discussed in class but not graded as explained above.
- **Three Critical Summary Papers (45)** A Three page paper that critically summarizes each section of the course and is due when we finish the corresponding section of the course. Each paper is scored fifteen points.
- **Course paper (40)** Ten page paper due Final Week. (A proposal for the paper should be submitted for approval one week after receiving feedback of the student's critical summary of Part I.)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

- Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course.
- Some accommodations might include note takers, books on tape, extended time on tests, and interpreting services among others.
- Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow their office time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations.
- If accommodations are recommended, Students will be given an official letter from the Academic Resource Center listing the exact accommodations that the student should give to the instructor who has the responsibility of implementing the accommodation specified in the official letter.
- Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance. So if you are in need of accommodation you should contact the Academic Resource Center as soon as possible.