PHIL666: The Problem of Evil
New North 204; M 12:45-3:30 PM

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Course description
The problem of evil will be formulated, considered, and solved.

Course format
It’s a seminar. The first meeting will be lecture-y, with discussion welcome; the last few
meetings will be discussion of seminar paper drafts. The bulk of the meetings will be
discussion-dominated.

Course requirements
(1) Everyone is assigned to do very short seminar weeklies for nine of the seminar
meetings (.pdf, please) on questions given out the week before. These are due by e-mail
by 11 AM on Monday. You can skip three of these; just e-mail me and let me know
before the time the weekly is due.

(2) Everyone will present a draft of his or her seminar paper in class.

(3) Everyone will offer comments in class on the seminar paper draft of one seminar
member’s paper.

(4) Everyone will submit a 6000-9000 word final course paper by December 14.

Texts
You’ll need the book The Problem of Evil (Oxford, 2006) by Peter van Inwagen. The
rest of the readings will be made available electronically.

Consulting
I’m around on Monday a bit, but not much more than the listed office hours. Wednesdays
I am much more free, and will usually be around from about 11 AM to about 3 PM. I’m
usually around on Fridays at least until early afternoon. I’m around almost never on
Tuesdays and Thursdays.
SCHEDULE

Though they will not form the focus of a day’s discussion in seminar, you are expected to have read by September 10 Hume’s *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, at least Parts X and XI, and selections from Leibniz’s *Theodicy*.

8/29  Introduction to ‘God’ and ‘evil,’ the multiple problems of evil, standards for evaluation

9/3   NO CLASS

9/10  The problem of suboptimality

9/17  The logical problem of evil

9/24  The evidential problem of evil: two versions
READING: (1) Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism”; (2) Draper, “Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists”

10/1  Skeptical theism

10/8  NO CLASS

10/15 van Inwagen on the global argument from evil

10/22 van Inwagen on the local argument from evil
READING: van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*, Ch 6

10/29 Adams on the problem of horrendous evils

11/5  Stump on second-personal knowledge, narrative, and evil
READING: Stump, “Faith and the Problem of Evil” (Stob lectures 1998)
The sober truth
READING: (1) Tucker and Murphy, “Welfare and the Problem of Evil”; (2) Murphy, “God’s Own Ethics”; (3) Murphy, “God Beyond Justice”

CANCELLED: work on your drafts — discussions of drafts begin after Thanksgiving (I’ll be in my office during scheduled seminar time if you want to discuss your paper)

Discussion of drafts

Discussion of drafts

+one additional meeting for discussion of drafts if necessary