

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of Psychology
PSYCH 232
Psychology of Evil
Winter 2019
10:00-11:20 MW, SJ2 1004

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Christopher T. Burris, Ph.D.
Office: Sweeney 2031
Office Phone: (519) 884-8111, ext. 28213
Office Hours: by appointment
Email: cburris@uwaterloo.ca

T.A.	Marina Vrebac
Email	m2vrebac@uwaterloo.ca
Office	Sweeney 2035
Office Hours	by appointment

Course Description

Psychological perspectives concerning definitions, causes, and consequences of institutional and personal evil, as well as symbols and interpretations of evil in both religious and secular contexts, will be considered.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

I hope you'll walk away from this course with a psychologically informed understanding of:

- 1) what "evil" means to people, and why;
- 2) when, why, and how various forms of human-on-human nastiness occur;
- 3) why people feel the need to minimize or justify their own nastiness, and how they do it;
- 4) the impact that all of the above has on perpetrators, victims, and observers.

Note: You shouldn't be surprised to encounter disturbing descriptions and images in this course. I think it would be irresponsible not to deal with the subject matter head-on in this way. That being said, I intend to present no more of such things than is educationally useful.

Course Schedule (topics and readings)

UW Library e-reserves (listed by author below) can be accessed via the course's LEARN page.

- 07 Jan (M) – Introductions (us, you, and "It");
- 09 Jan (W) – What is "evil"? 1; **Govrin (2018)**
- 14 Jan (M) – What is "evil"? 2
- 16 Jan (W) – What makes an "evildoer"? 1: **Bastian et al. (2015)**
- 21 Jan (M) – What makes an "evildoer"? 2: **Rowan & Dwyer (2015)**
- 23 Jan (W) – What makes an "evildoer"? 3
- 28 Jan (M) – The "Mark of Cain" 1: **Merritt, Efron, & Monin (2010)**
- 30 Jan (W) – The "Mark of Cain" 2
- 04 Feb (M) – **TEST ONE**

- 06 Feb (W) – Becoming "evil" 1: **Moore & Gino (2013)**
- 11 Feb (M) – Becoming "evil" 2
- 13 Feb (W) – Becoming "evil" 3: **Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus (2013)**
- 18 Feb (M) – **READING WEEK: NO CLASS**

- 20 Feb (W) – **READING WEEK: NO CLASS**
 25 Feb (M) – Becoming “evil” 4
 27 Feb (W) – Hate: **Rempel & Sutherland (2016)**
 04 Mar (M) – Sadism: **Bulut (2017)**
 06 Mar (W) – Serial Killers: **Hodgkinson, Prins, & Stuart-Bennett (2017)**
 11 Mar (M) – **TEST TWO**
- 13 Mar (W) – Group-based “evil” 1: **Campbell & Göritz (2014)**
 18 Mar (M) – Group-based “evil” 2
 20 Mar (W) – Group-based “evil” 3: **Pedrini & Villeneuve (2017)**
 25 Mar (M) – Group-based “evil” 4
 27 Mar (W) – Group-based “evil” 5
 01 Apr (M) – Responses to “evil”
 03 Apr (W) – **TEST THREE**

Course Requirements and Assessment

TEST 1 = 40%; TEST 2 = 35%; TEST 3 = 25%. There is no final exam. All tests are multiple choice and use computer cards, so be sure to bring a couple of pencils and an eraser on test days. Also, be prepared to present identification (your WAT card) during tests. Tests are weighted proportionally to the material that they cover; they are not cumulative. The mark received for a test stands – it will not be dropped, re-weighted, etc., nor will “extra” work be given to students who are dissatisfied with their grades. My goal is to be fair to everyone, so please don’t ask for special treatment. Marks will be posted on LEARN as soon as they are available.

Extra Credit: Up to 4% extra credit is available via research participation in the SONA system. Detailed instructions appear in the SONA document available for download via the course website. On a personal note, as an active researcher myself, I would ask that you ***PLEASE TAKE ANY RESEARCH PARTICIPATION SERIOUSLY*** – careless completion of a study’s materials is a waste of everyone’s time and seriously undercuts the research process.

UW Policy regarding Illness and Missed Tests: UW Examination Regulations

(www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) state that: 1) A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html. 2) If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor. 3) The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations. 4) Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

Thus, you are entitled to test rescheduling for *legitimate* medical, compassionate, or religious grounds. Whenever possible, please inform us **PRIOR** to the scheduled test to arrange an alternate writing time. A make-up test should be written as quickly as possible upon your return to classes, with the obvious provision of access to missed material (see Class Attendance below). When arriving to write a make-up test, please have the appropriate documentation in hand to support a medical, compassionate, or religious claim. Make-up exams may differ in format from the original.

Attendance Policy

Whether or not you choose to attend class is entirely up to you, but you are responsible for all material covered. Should you miss class, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to find a classmate who would be willing to provide you with the notes you missed. If your absence is *legitimate*, then we will be happy to answer questions about the missed material once you have consulted with a fellow student. To make the most of consultation time outside of class, come prepared with specific questions regarding whatever material you may be having trouble with, and be prepared to discuss what you know (or think you know) about a topic – that can speed up and simplify the clarification process tremendously.

Electronic Device Policy

In-class use of any electronic devices for non-class-related purposes is discouraged, as it distracts other students and interferes with your own ability to absorb the material.

Other Important Information

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity](#) webpage [for more information](#).

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

How to Do Your Best:

- 0) Make the decision to do your best and commit to it! There is no substitute.
- 1) Come to class! Be alert, ask questions – either in class or later. Do more than mindlessly write down whatever appears on an overhead: *Think* about the material – try to come up with your own examples and illustrations by applying the material to people you know, media happenings, etc.
- 2) Do the readings! Ideally, read them at least once before the relevant week’s lecture, and at least once after that lecture. Don’t mindlessly run a highlighter over the words: *Think* about the material – write down questions, observations, possible examples, etc. as you read.
- 3) Look for connections! We will deal with a lot of specific phenomena, but there some big themes will

keep recurring throughout the term. Look for them. Look also for connections between lecture and assigned readings. Think about what *this* theorist might say about *that* topic, etc. – even if we’ve never addressed this in class.

4) Test yourself! Don’t assume that certain concepts are “easy” or “common sense” – often, they are not. Can you explain an idea to someone, without reciting your notes, in a way that that person will understand? If given a blank page, could you reproduce the structure of ideas I use to organize my lectures? Can you create a structure of ideas that accurately summarizes a reading’s main points? Can you recognize sets of information in lectures or readings that might make good multiple-choice options, and can you explain how members of a set are similar or different?

These may sound difficult, especially if you have gotten by with plain old memorization in the past. Having said that, I strongly suspect that you **WILL** do better in this class if you put the above suggestions into practice. ***I have also prepared the “MC Survival Guide” (downloadable through LEARN) that offers you specific tips for preparing for my tests.*** Remember: I am happy to see you succeed, but **YOU** have to do the work!

Final Words: Good luck! I hope that this course is a worthwhile experience.