What is evil? Is it a force, an entity, an illness, an absence of good? Is it necessary? Is it merely a matter of perception, so that one person's evil is another one's good? Does such a thing as “evil” even exist? What is the effect of calling something “evil”? In this course we will read some of the primary Western portrayals and explanations of evil from various time periods and sources including the Bible, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, as well as in modern theories and texts. We will consider manifestations of evil in violence, suffering, scapegoating and apathy; in characters such as Satan and witches; and in historical circumstances such as Nazi Germany.

**Required Texts (all books available at the Durham Book Exchange):**

1. A Bible in modern translation. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New Revised Standard Version) is available for purchase at the Durham Book Exchange. This version provides notes on difficult passages, as well as other secondary information. You are not required to purchase it, but you may find it useful to have. You may also use another modern version (not the King James Version). If you use a Jewish Bible, you will need to find a version of the New Testament. Regardless of which version you use, **you must bring a Bible to class.**

2. A copy of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Ideally this would be the Oxford World Classics edition, but if you already have a different one, you can use that instead.

3. A copy of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Again, ideally this would be the Oxford World Classics edition, but you can use another if you already have it.


5. A copy of Albert Camus’s *The Plague*.

6. All other readings will be posted on Blackboard or can be found online. **You must print these out and bring them to class with you.**

**YOU MUST ALWAYS BRING THE TEXT FOR THE DAY WITH YOU TO CLASS.**
Requirements

1. **Class participation and preparation (4%).** It is imperative that you do the readings ahead of class time and that you attend the lectures. If you do not do the reading before class it will be more difficult to understand the lecture. Tests will be based on the lectures and so if you miss the lecture, you will be unable to answer the test questions appropriately. Moreover, at most class sessions I will call on students to answer basic questions about the reading, to read aloud, or to give their opinions. A student who does not answer when called on will be marked as absent for the class.

**DO NOT USE COMPUTERS, IPADS, PHONES OR OTHER TECHNOLOGY DURING CLASS. YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE FOR THE REST OF THE SESSION.**

**PRINT OUT ALL READING S AND BRING THEM TO CLASS WITH YOU.**

2. **Four tests (24% each).** These will take place on 9/28, 10/26, 11/18 and during the exam period

Plagiarism

The University of New Hampshire defines plagiarism as:

The unattributed use of the ideas, evidence, or words of another person, or the conveying of the false impression that the arguments and writing in a paper are the student's own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following: 1. The acquisition by purchase or otherwise of a part or the whole of a piece of work which is represented as the student's own; 2. The representation of the ideas, data, or writing of another person as the student's own work, even though some wording, methods of citation, or arrangement of evidence, ideas, or arguments have been altered; 3. Concealment of the true sources of information, ideas, or argument in any piece of work.

Plagiarizing in this class will result in failure and will be reported to the Dean of your home college. You may, and are encouraged to, study with fellow classmates, but all written materials must be your own work. For further information, see the link below and consult with the instructor. [http://www.unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/academic-honesty](http://www.unh.edu/vpsas/handbook/academic-honesty)

Documented Disabilities

The University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Disability Services for Students (DSS). Contact DSS at (603) 862-2607
or disability.office@unh.edu. If you have received an Accommodation Letter for this course from DSS, please provide it to me privately so that I can review those accommodations with you.

**Course Schedule (assignments due on the date they appear)**

M. 8/31   INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

W. 9/2    EVIL: WHAT IS IT?

        Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery” (Blackboard)

**Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Understandings of Evil**

F. 9/4    ENUMA ELISH – Babylonian Creation Myth

        Read at: [http://www.class.uh.edu/mcl/classics/3308/EnumaElish.html](http://www.class.uh.edu/mcl/classics/3308/EnumaElish.html)

        Written Assignment: 1. State what the term “evil” means to you. 2. Write two words that remind you of a.) something someone did to you that was “evil,” or that someone else might describe that way and b.) something you did that was “evil”

M. 9/7    NO CLASS – Labor Day

W. 9/9    BIBLICAL CREATION MYTHS

        Genesis 1-9 in Bible

F. 9/11    GOOD, EVIL AND HUMANKIND

        Re-read Genesis 2 -3

M. 9/14    GOOD, EVIL AND HUMANKIND, Continued

        Re-read Genesis 2-3 and 4

        Documents on Lilith (Blackboard)

W. 9/16    GOOD, EVIL AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

        Exodus 19, 20, 24 (skim 21-23); Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28
SATAN, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CHAOS: JOB

The book of Job (focus especially on 1-10 and 38-42)

JOB, Continued

EVIL AND THE FINAL CATACLYSM: REVELATION

The book of Revelation

REVELATION and REVIEW

Bring questions on the material to class

TEST #1

Pre-Modern and Early Modern Portrayals of Evil and Its Characters

QUR’ANIC IBLIS AND POST-BIBLICAL LUCIFER

Read selections from the Qur’an Suras 7 and 17 (Blackboard)

Read in the Bible Isaiah 14:3-20

AUGUSTINE AND THE FALL

Read from the New Testament: Romans 5:12-21; 1 Timothy 2:11-15

Read excerpts from City of God and Confessions on Blackboard

PARADISE LOST

PARADISE LOST
F. 10/9  
**PARADISE LOST**

M. 10/12  
**EVIL WITHOUT AND WITHIN: MACBETH**

“Macbeth,” Acts I and II

*Optional:* Watch the filmed production of Macbeth on Blackboard

W. 10/14  
**MACBETH**

Act III

F. 10/16  
**MACBETH**

Acts IV and V

M. 10/19  
**MACBETH**

Concluding remarks

W. 10/21  
**WITCHES: WOMAN AS EVIL**

Christina Lerner, “Was Witch-hunting Woman-hunting?”
Selections from *Malleus Malleficarum* (all on Blackboard)

F. 10/23  
**WITCHES and REVIEW**

Finish Readings and bring questions to class

M. 10/26  
**TEST #2**

**Modern Understandings of Evil**

W. 10/28  
**EVIL, THE SELF, AND SOCIETY: KANT**

Selection from “Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason”
(Blackboard)
F. 10/30 MEANINGLESS EVIL: VOLTAIRE
   “The Lisbon Earthquake: An Inquiry into the Maxim ‘Whatever is, is right’” (Blackboard)
   Selection from Candide, or Optimism (Blackboard)

M. 11/2 “EVIL” AS A CONCEPT: NIETZCHE
   Selection from The Genealogy of Morals (Blackboard)

W. 11/4 SCAPEGOATING
   Selection from René Girard, Violence and the Sacred
   Leviticus 16 (in the Bible)

F.11/6 SUFFERING AND REDEMPTIVE EVIL
   Selection from Talal Asad, On Suicide Bombing

M. 11/9 EVIL AND THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE
   Albert Camus, The Plague

**TUESDAY. 11/10** THE PLAGUE, Continued

W. 11/11 NO CLASS – Veteran’s Day

F. 11/13 THE PLAGUE, Continued

M. 11/16 THE PLAGUE and REVIEW
   Finish readings and bring questions

W. 11/18 TEST #3
Evil and Nazi Genocide

F. 11/20  HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SHOAH

Watch on Blackboard: “The Trial of Adolph Eichmann”  
(Available under “Tools” then “Course Gallery”)
pp.21-35; and “Chapter III: An Expert on the Jewish Question” pp. 36-55

M. 11/23  THE BANALITY OF EVIL

pp. 83-90; 105-111; 112-119; 131-134; “Chapter VIII: Duties of a Law-  
Abiding Citizen” pp.135-150; 171-175; 230-233

W. 11/26  NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

F. 11/28  NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

M. 11/30  THE BANALITY OF EVIL

*Eichmann in Jerusalem*: “Chapter XV: Judgment, Appeal and Execution;”  
pp. 234-252; 272-279; “Postscript” pp. 280-298

W. 12/2   THE BANALITY OF EVIL: CRITICISMS

Finish readings from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*

Psycloogical Explanations of Evil

F. 12/4   THE EVIL IN US ALL – THE MILGRAM EXPERIMENTS

Stanley Milgram, “Behavior Study of Obedience” (Blackboard)

M. 12/7   THE EVIL IN US ALL – STAMFORD PRISON EXPERIMENTS

Skim the website [http://www.prisonexp.org/](http://www.prisonexp.org/)

Selection from Phillip G. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect* (Blackboard)
W. 12/9 EVIL AND MENTAL ILLNESS

Selection from M. Scott Peck, People of the Lie (Blackboard)

F. 12/11 CLOSING REMARKS, REVIEW and EVALUATION

Finish readings and bring any questions to class

**Final Test During Exam Period**