

Syllabus:

Morehead State University
Humanities 305
Good and Evil

Professor Scott Davison (see <http://people.moreheadstate.edu/fs/s.davison/>)
Office: Rader Hall 307
Office Phone: (606) 783-2273 (please email first)
E-mail: s.davison@morehead-st.edu (checked many times each day)

Catalog description: "An interdisciplinary study of the nature of good and evil." Course
Prerequisites: ENG 100.

Required Textbooks:

Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, translated by Thomas Williams (Hackett Publishing Company, 1993)
Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (Beacon Press, 2006)
George Orwell, 1984 (Plume, 2003)
Roy Baumeister and Aaron Beck, Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty (Holt, 1999)

Films and Online Readings:

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
David Hume, "A Treatise of Human Nature"
Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil"
"A Clockwork Orange," a film by Stanley Kubrick
The Art of Happiness, the Dalai Llama

Grades and Assignments:

Final grades will be based upon four things:

- (1) quizzes and other assignments on the Blackboard system, typically over readings assigned in advance, total 25%;
- (2) 2 short papers (5-8 pages each), worth 20% each (40% total);
- (3) 2 objective exams over course readings, worth 15% each (30% total); and
- (4) participation in class discussion (5%).

Grading scale: 90%-100% = A; 80%-89% = B; 70%-79% = C; 60%-69% = D; below 60% = E. In order to provide students with a margin of error, and to reduce the effect of bad luck on final grades, the instructor will do three things: (1) drop some of the lowest quiz scores, counting only the rest; (2) give students a 1% margin of error in final grades; (3) provide at least two extra credit opportunities. *Please do not ask the instructor to do anything else to change final grades.*

Written assignments will be graded according to the following criteria:

An "A" answer (90-100%) makes virtually no factual mistakes, answers completely the question asked, displays evidence of analytical thought which goes beyond readings and class discussion, avoids weak objections and arguments, and is stated clearly and concisely in the student's own words.

A "B" answer (80-89%) may make a few factual mistakes, but must display evidence of analytical thought and must answer completely the question asked in a clear manner.

A "C" answer (70-79%) may contain several factual mistakes, typically contains only a summary of the results of readings and class discussion, and often does not completely answer the question asked in a clear manner.

A "D" answer (60-69%) contains major factual mistakes, does not reflect an understanding of the readings and class discussion, and is unclear.

An "E" answer (below 60%) presents little or no evidence that the student has even read the assignments or listened to class discussion.

Grades do not depend at all on which positions students choose to defend in their answers. Although the instructor might have opinions about some of these questions, student grades on assignments are not based upon whether or not the positions defended agree with the instructor's opinions. Instead, they are based upon how well students defend whatever positions they choose to defend.

Papers will be graded for overall clarity and organization (25%), for articulating alternative views (25%), for explaining clearly the reasons for preferring one of them (25%), and for providing a sympathetic reconstruction of the reasons why others might prefer different positions (25%).

Expectations:

Students are expected to attend the entire hour of every scheduled class. If students miss classes, then they are responsible for consulting other classmates in order to discover what material was covered. Except for documented medical and family emergencies, students may miss *up to four days* of class with no grade penalty, but every day missed thereafter will be penalized by a 3% course grade deduction. There will be no make-up assignments, except for documented medical and family emergencies. (Please contact the instructor by e-mail if such an emergency occurs.) Students must complete their assignments on time (especially reading assignments and questions over these), participate in class discussion, and treat classmates with respect. Treating classmates with respect includes not talking when others are supposed to be talking or otherwise disrupting class. *The use of laptop or tablet computers is not permitted in this class. If you check your cell phone during class, you will be counted as absent for that class period.*

MSU Student Learner Outcomes for this course:

To communicate accurately and effectively. Students must be proficient in both written and spoken English. In Humanities 305, students are required to read texts from a number of professional disciplines and genres with understanding, and to demonstrate that understanding on regular pre-class quizzes on the Blackboard system. They must also write a number of papers explaining their views on different aspects of the nature of good and evil and demonstrate the ability to reflect critically on their own points of view.

To locate, select, organize, and present information efficiently. In their written work, students must be able to retrieve and organize information from various disciplines and to use appropriate computer technologies.

To think and reason analytically. In defending particular points of view concerning the nature of good and evil in their written work, students must analyze the strengths and weaknesses of classical points of view, appreciate world views different from their own, and explain rationally why they believe what they do.

To make informed and ethical value decisions. Making informed and ethical value decisions requires that one be informed about the basic concepts of ethics. This course is a sustained exploration of the most fundamental ethical concepts, good and evil.

To function responsibly in the natural, social, and technological environment. Students will learn to recognize different points of view concerning good and evil in art, literature, film, and political discourse. They will learn to appreciate different points of view and they will be required to engage in civil dialogue that includes disagreement without disrespect.

Course Schedule:

The Instructor will announce in class the deadlines for completing each assignment on the Blackboard system. In general, there will be a Blackboard assignment before most scheduled class meetings. Students who are unable to meet these deadlines should contact the instructor by e-mail as soon as possible.

1) Are good and evil objectively real?

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics; Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will; David Hume, "A Treatise of Human Nature;" Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil"; first exam, paper 1 due

2) What causes evil?

Roy Baumeister, Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty

3) How can we respond to evil?

Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

“A Clockwork Orange”

“The Art of Happiness” by the Dalai Llama; second exam, paper 2 due

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): In compliance with the ADA, all students with a documented disability are entitled to reasonable accommodations and services to support their academic success and safety. Though a request for services may be made at any time, services are best applied when they are requested at or before the start of the semester. To receive accommodations and services the student should immediately contact the Disability Services Coordinator in the Office of Academic and Career Services, 223 Allie Young Hall, 606-783-5188, www.moreheadstate.edu/acs/

Campus Safety Statement: Emergency response information will be discussed in class. Students should familiarize themselves with the nearest exit routes in the event evacuation becomes necessary. You should notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester if you have special needs or will require assistance during an emergency evacuation. Students should familiarize themselves with emergency response protocols at <http://www.moreheadstate.edu/emergency>

Academic Honesty Statement: Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism or helping others to commit these acts will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty will result in severe disciplinary action including, but not limited to, failure of the student assessment item or course, and/or dismissal from MSU. For example, copying information from the Internet is plagiarism if appropriate credit is not given. If you are not sure what constitutes academic dishonesty, read The Eagle: Student Handbook or ask your instructor. The policy is located at <http://www.moreheadstate.edu/files/units/dsl/eaglehandbook/studenthandbook2008-09.pdf>.