

## Philosophy 450/650 / EP&E 478: The Problem of Evil

### Syllabus, 1/13/20 – preliminary version, subject to change

Spring 2020, Tuesdays 3:30-5:20, Phelps Hall room 312

DeRose office hour: Thursdays (on which Yale classes meet) 9:45-10:50, 410 Connecticut Hall

course page: <http://campuspress.yale.edu/keithderose/450-650-s20/>

Notice about enrollment, 1/13: Based on the information in the Course Demand Statistics, we have significantly more students signed up this course than it can handle. (The main concern is the class's ability to function as a seminar, as opposed to as a lecture course.) So I will have students each fill out a brief card at the first meeting (tomorrow, 1/14), check with my bosses about enrollment priorities, and then decide (I don't see why I won't be able to do this on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>) who is admitted to the class.

**Course Requirements: For Auditors:** Auditors should do the readings for each meeting, and attend in participate in each week's discussion.

**Course Requirements: For Those taking the course:** Those taking the course should:

- do the readings for each meeting, and attend in participate in each week's discussion
- class size permitting [this will be decided after the first meeting of the class]: each student will lead about 50 minutes of a seminar, presenting one of the class readings (or a part thereof), and leading discussion of it
- Written work
  - Phil. 450 / EPE 478: Two distinct papers, each 2,500-3,500 words long (about 7-10 pages), on topics directly related to the topics of the course, and each preceded by a brief (about 100 words) topic proposal. Dates (all Thursdays):
    - Proposal for first paper: due Feb. 20
    - First paper: due March 5
    - Proposal for second paper: due April 2
    - Second paper: due April 23
  - Phil. 650: Two options:
    - Two papers, just like the Phil. 450 papers above, except the second paper proposal is due on April 9, and the second paper itself is due on April 30 [first paper proposal and first paper itself due on same dates as those for Phil. 450] or
    - One paper, 5,000-7,000 words long (about 14-20 pages), due on April 30, preceded by a short (about 100-150 word) proposal, due April 9

The topics and readings listed below will be covered over the course of the semester. The upcoming topics will be explained and discussed at the first meeting of the seminar (Jan. 14).

My paper "Might God Have Reasons for Not Preventing Evils?" (which was supposed to be the introductory chapter for a co-authored book; that book never happened) can provide an explanation of the Problem of Evil, at least as I view it, and can provide a good, fairly brief (15 pages) background for

the first meeting, and for the seminar as a whole. If possible, read this before our first meeting on Jan. 14. A link to this paper is on the course web page [ <https://campuspress.yale.edu/keithderose/> ]

I am now in the process of writing a book on three forms of the problem of evil, but focused on the first form listed in the book's tentative title, which is: *Horrific Suffering, Divine Hiddenness, and Hell: The Place of Freedom in a World Governed by God*. I'm working mainly on later parts of the book, but I have a draft of the earlier parts of it posted, and it can also be accessed on the course web page. I'm not asking students to read this if possible before the first meeting, as I am asking you to read the shorter introduction linked to above, but we will be reading early in the semester, and those who want a more extensive look at how I see the central issue here are welcome to read that partial draft now, as they decide whether this course is for them.

At our first meeting, I will be describing the topics we will be addressing during the semester, but here's a quick list of the main ones (though the actual path we follow will be sensitive to student interests):

## Topics

-The Argument from Horrific Evils, the Need for Theodicy, and Anti-Theodicy

The readings to start with are the ones on anti-theodicy (Betenson, Griffioen, Trakakis), and esp. the Betenson

-Free Will Defense & its limits

-Defeating Evil

-Problem of Hell

-A Free-Will-Based Theodicy

Students' reading should be along two tracks. First, you should do the reading for the topics coming up for seminar discussion. But second, you should be reading around the topics that you want to do your writing on; usually this will involve doing readings that will be covered later in the seminar well in advance of when they come up for seminar discussion. Let me know as you become interested in potential topics. I may know some other things you might want to read.

**Readings:** may be adjusted to follow student interest, but will likely include most of these:

Marilyn McCord Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume, 1989 [J]

Toby Betenson, "Anti-Theodicy," *Philosophy Compass* 11/1 (2016): 56–65, 10.1111/phc3.12289 [J]

\*Keith DeRose, work in progress, tentatively under the title: *Horrific Suffering, Divine Hiddenness, and Hell: The Place of Freedom in a World Governed by God*. [C]

\_\_\_\_\_, "Might God Have Reasons for Not Preventing Evils?", unpublished introductory essay [C]

\*Trent Dougherty, "Skeptical Theism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2015, focusing on sections 1, 2, and 6; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skeptical-theism/>

Amber L. Griffioen, "Therapeutic Theodicy? Suffering, Struggle, and the Shift from the God's-Eye View," *Religions* 2018, 9, 99; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9040099> [J]

\*John Hick, "Soul-Making and Suffering," portion of *Evil and the God of Love* (originally published 1966) in Adams & Adams, ed., *The Problem of Evil*, OUP 1991 [F]

\*C.S. Lewis, "Hell" chapter of *The Problem of Pain*, [F]

David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?", *Philosophical Papers* 1993 [J]

Michael Murray, "Three Versions of Universalism," *Faith and Philosophy* 1999 [J]

Alvin Plantinga, "The Probabilistic Problem of Evil," *Philosophical Studies*, 1979 – focusing on the first 5 pages [J]

\_\_\_\_\_, "Suffering and Evil" chapter 14 of *Warranted Christian Belief*, OUP 2000 [B]

Eleonore Stump, "Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and Love of God," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 1986 [J]

Richard Swinburne, "The Need for Theodicy," chapter in *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, OUP 1998 [B]

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Problem of Evil," chapter in *The Existence of God*, OUP 2004 [B]

Nick Trakakis, N. (2008) 'Theodicy: the solution to the problem of evil, or part of the problem?', *Sophia* 47 (2008): 161-191. [J]

Peter van Inwagen, chapters 1, 4, and 5 of *The Problem of Evil*, OUP 2006 [B]

Stephen Wykstra, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffereing: On Avoiding the Evils of 'Appearance'," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 1984. [J]

C: links to these are on the course web page

J: Journal articles: these should be downloadable for free with a Yale internet connection. To find them, this is a good place to start: <http://wa4py6yj8t.search.serialssolutions.com/ejp/?libHash=WA4PY6YJ8T#/?language=en-US&titleType=JOURNALS>

B: I think all the above books that we're reading portions of are available from Yale library as on-line books. Look them up on Orbis, and download the relevant parts.

F: these are readings I will put up on the "Files" tab on the Canvas site for our course; you should be able to download them there.