

## **J St | PHIL | RL St 478.01 ETHICS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST**

Instructor: Dr. Michael Paradiso-Michau

Office: 222 Weaver Building

Phone: (814) 865-6689

Hours: MW 2:30-3:30pm, a.b.a.

Email: [mrp18@psu.edu](mailto:mrp18@psu.edu)

Website: <http://cms.psu.edu>

Class meetings: Monday and Wednesday, 3:35-4:50pm, 167 Willard

### **DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

In this interdisciplinary humanities course, we will explore the philosophical effects of the Holocaust for thinking about the primary ethical question: how does, or should, one relate to another and to oneself? We will briefly survey ethical theory and relevant aspects of European history *before* the Holocaust and how those moral philosophies have encountered theoretical and actual roadblocks. We will also address issues regarding ethics and moral behavior *during* and *after* the Holocaust. Course topics will include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. A brief history of Jew hatred and anti-Semitism before and during the Holocaust
2. The nature and problem of evil: banal, moral, radical, paradoxical, diabolical
  - Responses to the problem of evil (theodicy), and some critiques of leading responses
3. Questions of individual and collective choice, guilt, and suffering
4. Possibilities of ethical responsibility and goodness in the wake of Auschwitz
5. The problems and promises of forgiveness, hope, and redemption

We will outline and critically investigate the shift or transformation in thinking about morality from concepts such as *universality*, *duty*, *autonomy*, *consequence*, and *modernity* before the Holocaust to those of *singularity*, *responsibility*, *heteronomy*, *intransitivity*, and *postmodernity* since the Holocaust. This course covers material in the history of Western philosophy, contemporary ethical and religious thought, and texts pertaining to the Holocaust in various forms (historical, documentary/journalistic, theoretical, etc.). It provides links to other major areas in the history of philosophy, existentialism and phenomenology, postmodernism, ethics, philosophy of religion, religious studies, and Jewish studies.

PREREQUISITE: One course in Jewish Studies, Philosophy, or Religious Studies (or by written permission of instructor).

### **REQUIREMENTS**

Participation and Attendance	15%	Two short presentation papers	10% each
Attendance at two events	5% each	Final project	30%
Weekly response papers (*)	25%	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: *All* assignments are to be fully completed if a passing grade is to be rendered. Stated differently, non-compliance with any one of the assigned tasks will yield a failing grade.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*EJ* Hannah Arendt. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin, 2006. ISBN: 0143039881.

*QGG* Karl Jaspers. *The Question of German Guilt*. Trans. A.B. Ashton. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001. ISBN: 0823220699.

*IRB* Jill Robbins, ed. *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001. ISBN: 0804743096.

*RESH* Martin Beck Matustik. *Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0253219688.

**A** Readings and websites available on course website, ANGEL (<http://cms.psu.edu>)

OPTIONAL/RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- EL* Salomon Malka. *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy*. Trans. Michael Kigel and Sonja M. Embree. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0820703583.
- OCF* Jacques Derrida. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes. New York: Routledge, 2001. ISBN: 0415227127.

**POLICIES**

1. **Participation (15%):** Mere physical attendance does not necessarily equal *active* course participation. A student's *active* presence (not to mention consistent attendance) is an essential precondition for success in this course. During every class session, students are expected to come to class with an open mind, a notebook and the required materials, having carefully engaged the assigned text(s), and being prepared to dialogically engage in mature and intellectual conversations concerning the daily tasks and topics. The classroom atmosphere will be one of openness and respect, where all will be able to share their ideas, opinions, questions, experiences, and information. See the handout on "In-Class Participation" for more information.
2. **Attendance:** If a student needs to miss any class, he or she is expected to successfully contact the instructor as soon as possible prior to the anticipated absence. Students are responsible for any material missed, so it is highly suggested that students exchange pertinent information (phone number, email address) with each other, so that they can find out what they missed in the event that they have to be absent from a class, or if they are tardy to a class session. If a student absent from *four* (4) classes without proper justification and/or documentation, that student could automatically earn *zero points* for the Participation & Attendance components of the course. If a student is absent from *six* (6) or more classes, a failing grade will be rendered for the course. Being tardy or leaving early *two* (2) times equals one absence. The instructor will determine what constitutes an excusable (i.e. justified) absence or tardiness. Additionally, *any* unexcused absences and/or tardinesses will negatively impact one's Participation & Attendance grade.  
*Important Note:* Attendance will be taken every class period, and on an undetermined number of classes, a student's attendance will be evidenced by his/her bringing in the required texts, including textbook(s) and printed copies of relevant online readings, to class those days. Failure to provide such documents will render a formal absence from class, and a deduction from the Participation & Attendance grade.
3. **Attendance at Two Events (5% each):** Students are required to attend two events relevant to course topics, and write a 1.5—2 page response/reflection paper for credit within two class periods of each event. These two events are indicated in **black background with white bold font** on the Course Schedule. Attendance will be taken at these two required events. Additional, optional events are also indicated on the Schedule in **dark gray background with white font** attendance at one or two of these events, accompanied by a 1.5—2 page paper will yield an amount of extra credit, to be determined by the instructor later.
4. **Readings:** Students will be assigned new reading material for almost every class session, and will be held accountable for these readings. *Students are required to bring all relevant texts, both textbook and printed versions of online readings, to each class period.* With regard to theoretical texts, it is highly advised that students read the selections more than once. A tentative schedule of readings and discussion topics can be found below.
5. **Weekly Responses (25%):** Students are required to write 10 *weekly* 300-400 word (1.5—2 full pages double spaced) response/reflection papers almost every Monday of the semester (10 out of 11 for full credit, 11 out of 11 for possible extra credit), due on dates indicated by an asterisk and **light grey background (\*)** on the course Schedule. These papers will critically and personally respond/react to that week's primary readings under discussion, and will include 1-2 critical response questions. More information about this requirement will be discussed in class.
6. **Two Short Presentation Papers (10% each):** Students are to compose two short response papers (2.5—3 full pages per essay, double-spaced, 12-pt. Times New Roman font, standard margins, etc.),

one of which critically introduces and analyzes elements of one primary reading, and the other on one secondary reading. These short papers will be presented in front of class to serve as discussion starters. Students may not write both papers on the same major figure to be studied this semester, nor are they to present two papers during the same week. Those presenting a short paper on a certain Monday will not have to write the weekly response for that day. See “Advice for Essay-Writing” for more information with regard to directions for JSt/PHIL/RLSt 478 compositions.

7. **Final Project (30%):** Each student will, in consultation with the instructor, compose a 8.5—10 page final paper (not including scholarly apparatus, MLA, Chicago, or APA format), which integrates two of the major thinkers considered on a particular topic of specific relevance to the student’s personal and/or scholarly interests and studies, preferably addressing one of the major course themes. This project will be done in *three* stages, or installments: (1) Topic proposal: research question, provisional thesis – 1.5-2 pages; (2) Full outline – 3-4 full pages, single-spaced; (3) Final paper – 8.5-10 pages. The due dates for these installments will be staggered throughout the second half of the semester. While only the third installment of this project will be graded, the preceding two portions need to be acceptably submitted on time in order to advance to the next stage. During the last two class sessions, students will be able to share their projects with one another in a mini-seminar, and receive critical and supportive feedback.
8. **Mutual Respect:** It would be best for all involved if we treated one another with a modicum of respect. While reasonable amounts of food and drink are acceptable to consume in class, students are not to bring newspapers, iPods, or laptop computers into class or have cell phones engaged in the “ring” mode. Students who violate this policy will be asked to leave class, and will be marked “Absent” for two class periods. Additionally, this course will likely be addressing material that may be sensitive, disturbing, or painful to some. We will deal with such situations rationally, sensitively, and carefully.
9. **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:** There is no excuse for any form of academic dishonesty. Dishonest behavior on the part of the student will result in automatic failure of this course and referral to the Office of the Dean of Students. Your professor has access to the same websites as students do. If you are unsure about methods of proper citation and documentation, please consult the instructor or the on-campus Writing Lab as soon as possible. See <http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-LAUS/policies/AcademicIntegrity.shtml> and <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html> for more information in this regard.
10. **Note to Students with Disabilities:** Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS), located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at <http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/>. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.
  - **Note #1:** Your continued enrollment in this course declares your active agreement to these policies.
  - **Note #2:** Unless extreme circumstances dictate otherwise, work turned in late work will **not** be accepted.
  - **Note #3:** The instructor reserves the right to amend these course policies, and the course schedule, as needed.

**SCHEDULE (tentative to revision at the discretion of the instructor)**

Date	Topic	Assignment
J-12	Introductions: course, students, instructor <i>Question:</i> What is Ethics?	Read administrative course documents and browse course website, ANGEL
J-14	<i>Question:</i> What is the Holocaust? Guest speaker: <b>Linda Short</b> (Penn State Univ.)	Read introductions to the course textbooks; print off relevant course documents (esp. PPT slide show)

J-19	Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday – <b>NO CLASS</b>	
J-21	Film: <i>The Devil Is a Gentleman</i> (VHS) <u>Hannah Arendt: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i></u> Public lecture: “TBA” by <b>Arun Gandhi</b> : 6:00pm	<b>A:</b> Background materials on Arendt <i>EJ</i> : xxiv; 1-67 Attend lecture (optional)
J-26*	Arendt: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	<i>EJ</i> : 68-134
J-28	Arendt: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	<i>EJ</i> : 135-205
F-2*	Arendt: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	<i>EJ</i> : 206-252
F-4	Arendt: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	<i>EJ</i> : 253-279
F-9*	<u>Discussion #1</u> : Essays by/on Arendt and Eichmann	<i>EJ</i> : 280-298; vii-xxiii <b>A:</b> Essays by/on Arendt
F-11	Karl Jaspers: <i>The Question of German Guilt</i> Guest speaker: <b>Lewis R. Gordon</b> (Temple University) Public lecture: “ <b>The Afro-Jewish Question</b> ” 7:00pm	<b>A:</b> Background material on Jaspers <i>QGG</i> : vii-xxi; 1-40 Attend lecture ( <b>required</b> )
F-13	Public lecture: “ <b>On Violence and the Law</b> ” <b>Peg Birmingham</b> (DePaul Univ.): 3:35pm	Attend lecture (optional)
F-16*	Jaspers: <i>The Question of German Guilt</i>	<i>QGG</i> : 41-95
F-18	Jaspers: <i>The Question of German Guilt</i>	<i>QGG</i> : 96-117
F-23*	<u>Discussion #2</u> : Essays by/on Jaspers, Eichmann, and Guilt	<b>A:</b> “Who Should Have Tried Eichmann?” <b>A:</b> Lang: “ <i>Die Schuldfrage</i> 60 Years After”
F-25	<u>Discussion #3</u> : Essays on Arendt and Jaspers	<b>A:</b> Essays on Arendt and Jaspers
M-2*	Emmanuel Levinas, Nazism, and the Holocaust	<b>A:</b> Background material on Levinas <b>A:</b> “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” & “As If Consenting to Horror” <i>IRB</i> : 1-19; 23-83; 234-236 ( <i>EL</i> : vii-xxvi; xxix-xxxvii; 234-244; 254-270)
M-4	Levinas	<i>IRB</i> : 105-113; 121-129 ( <i>EL</i> : 64-82; 161-171)
M-16*	Levinas on suffering, evil, and theodicy	<b>A:</b> “Useless Suffering” & “Transcendence and Evil” <i>IRB</i> 130-139
M-18	Levinas on suffering, evil, and theodicy	<b>A:</b> “Useless Suffering” & “Transcendence and Evil” <b>A:</b> Bernstein: “Evil and the Temptation of Theodicy” <i>IRB</i> : 140-157; 259-260 <b>Final Paper (Part 1) is due</b>
M-23*	Levinas on suffering, evil, and theodicy	<i>IRB</i> : 158-164; 211-218; 228-233 <b>A:</b> Smith: “The Possible Offense of...” ( <i>EL</i> 271-301)
M-25	<u>Discussion #4</u> : Essays on Levinas	<b>A:</b> Essays on Levinas
M-30*	Jacques Derrida: “On Forgiveness”	<b>A:</b> Background material on Derrida <b>A:</b> Derrida: “On Forgiveness” 81-102 ( <i>OCF</i> : vii-xii; 27-60 // <i>EL</i> : 172-185)
A-1	Derrida: “On Forgiveness” <u>Discussion #5</u> : Essays on Derrida	<b>A:</b> Derrida: “On Forgiveness” 81-102 ( <i>OCF</i> : 27-60) <b>A:</b> Bernstein: “Derrida: The <i>Aporia</i> of Forgiveness?”
A-6*	Martin Beck Matustik: <i>Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations</i>	<i>RESH</i> : 1-51
A-8	Matustik: <i>Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations</i>	<i>RESH</i> : 52-105
A-13*	Matustik: <i>Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations</i>	<i>RESH</i> : 106-162

A-15	Matustik: <i>Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations</i>	RESH: 163-205
A-17	Public lecture: “ <b>Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope</b> ” Martin Beck Matustik (Arizona State University): 3:35pm	Attend lecture ( <b>required</b> ) A: Matustik: “Hope: Scarce and Uncanny”
A-20	Matustik: <i>Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations</i> Film: <i>Weapons of the Spirit</i> / Essay on ‘Le Chambon’	<b>Final Paper (Part 2) is due</b> RESH 206-266 A: Kirby: “Community of Care”
A-22	Discussion #6: Catch our collective breath and reflect	Catch up on readings, work on project
A-27	Final Paper presentations and conversations, Part 1	—
A-29	Final Paper presentations and conversations, Part 2	—
Finals Week		<b>Final Paper (Part 3) is due on May 6 by 2:00pm.</b>

### **WEB-BASED (.PDF) READINGS: TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Key: (P) = Primary text | (S) = Secondary text | (#) = Recommended for student presentations

- *Hannah Arendt*

1. Hannah Arendt: “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture” (P, #)
2. Hannah Arendt: “The Concentration Camps” (P, #)
3. Hannah Arendt: Responses to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (P)
4. *New York Times* responses to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (S, #)
5. Dagme Barnouw: “The Secularity of Evil: Hannah Arendt and the Eichmann Controversy” (S, #)
6. Paul Formosa: “Moral Responsibility for Banal Evil” (S, #)
7. Paul Formosa: “Is Radical Evil Banal? Is Banal Evil Radical?” (S, #)
8. Annabel Herzog: “Reporting and Storytelling: Eichmann in Jerusalem as Political Testimony” (S, #)
9. Annabel Herzog: “Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Responsibility” (S)
10. Peg Birmingham: “Holes of Oblivion: The Banality of Radical Evil” (S, #)
11. Dan Diner: “Hannah Arendt Reconsidered: On the Banal and the Evil in Her Holocaust Narrative” (S, #)
12. Barry Clarke: “Beyond ‘The Banality of Evil’” (S, #)
13. Shoshana Felman: “Theaters of Justice: Arendt in Jerusalem, the Eichmann Trial, and the Redefinition of Legal Meaning in the Wake of the Holocaust” (S)
14. Shiraz Dossa: “Hannah Arendt on Eichmann: The Public, the Private, and Evil” (S)
15. Todd Calder: “The Apparent Banality of Evil: The Relationship between Evil Acts and Evil Character” (S)

- *Karl Jaspers*

1. Karl Jaspers: “Who Should Have Tried Eichmann?” (Interview: P)
2. Berel Lang: “*Die Schuldfrage* Sixty Years Later” (S, #)
3. Anson Rabinbach: “The German as Pariah: Karl Jaspers and the Question of German Guilt” (S, #)
4. Mark W. Clark: “A Prophet without Honour: Karl Jaspers in Germany, 1945-48” (S, #)
5. Gesine Schwan: “Political Consequences of Silenced Guilt” (S)
6. Farid Abdel-Nour: “National Responsibility” (S)

- *On Arendt and Jaspers*

1. Andrew Schaap: “Guilty Subjects and Political Responsibility: Arendt, Jaspers, and the Resonance of the ‘German Question’ in Politics of Reconciliation” (S, #)
2. Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman: “Existentialism Politicized: Arendt’s Debt to Jaspers” (S)

- *Emmanuel Levinas*

1. Emmanuel Levinas' chronology
2. Emmanuel Levinas: "Signature" (P)
3. Emmanuel Levinas: Interviews 1-3 (P, #)
4. Emmanuel Levinas: "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" (P, #)
5. Emmanuel Levinas: "As If Consenting to Horror" (P)
6. Emmanuel Levinas: "Useless Suffering" (P, #)
7. Emmanuel Levinas: "Transcendence and Evil" (P, #)
8. Emmanuel Levinas: "Existentialism and Anti-Semitism" (S)
9. Richard J. Bernstein: "Evil and the Temptation of Theodicy" (S, #)
10. Michael B. Smith: "The Possible Offense of 'Contradicting the Despair of Those Who Were Going to Their Death'" (S, #)
11. Roger Burggraef: "The Good and Its Shadow: The View of Levinas on Human Rights as the Surpassing of Political Rationality" (S, #)
12. Richard A. Cohen: "What Good is the Holocaust: On Suffering and Evil" (S, #)
13. James D. Hatley: "Nameless Memory: Levinas, Witness, and Politics" (S, #)
14. Katherine Kirby: "A Community of Care: Compassion and Vulnerability in *Le Chambon*" (S)
15. Michael Paradiso-Michau: "Review of Salomon Malka, *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy*" (S)

- *Jacques Derrida*

1. Jacques Derrida: Interviews 1-3 (P, #)
2. Vladimir Jankelevitch: "Should We Pardon Them?" (P, #)
3. Jacques Derrida: "On Forgiveness" (P, #)
4. Richard J. Bernstein: "Derrida: The Aporia of Forgiveness?" (S, #)
5. Christian Lotz: "The Events of Morality and Forgiveness: From Kant to Derrida" (S, #)
6. Calvin O. Schrag: "Otherness and the Problem of Evil" (S, #)

- *Martin Beck Matustik*

1. "Towards an Existential Politics: A Conversation with Martin Matustik" (Interview)
2. Martin Beck Matustik: "'More than All the Others': Meditation on Responsibility" (P)
3. Martin Beck Matustik: "Singular Existence and Critical Theory" (S)
4. Michael Paradiso-Michau: "'Evil has no face': Reflections on *Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope*" (S)