

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RELS 331 L01**

*Religious Perspectives on Suffering*

**OFFICIAL COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2010**

**Logistics**

**Time:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday – 11:00 to 11:50am

**Location:** MS 319

**Instructor:** Dr. David A. Bergen  
SS 1308  
dabergen@ucalgary.ca  
403-220-7063

**Office Hours** MWF, 2:00 to 3:00pm  
(*appointment* TR, 12:30 to 1:30pm  
*recommended*)

**Textbooks:** Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*

*Bhagavad Gita* (Miller)

PDF and HTML materials posted in Blackboard, “Course Documents.”

**Course  
Description**

What is suffering? Why do humans view it pejoratively? Why do we transform experiences of suffering into deontological structures of meaning and purpose? Through lectures, discussions, and multi-media presentations, this course will address these questions as it explores selected representations of human suffering within four discursive frameworks: religious, anti-religious, biological, and neurological. In so doing, we will situation human experience and representation within the context of 3.8 billion years of earth-bound biology.

This course follows the academic mandate set out by Bruce Lincoln:

*When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one's interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between 'truths,' 'truth-claims,' and 'regimes of truth,' one has ceased to function as a historian or scholar. In that moment, a variety of roles are available: some perfectly capable (amanuensis, collector, friend and advocate) and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None, however, should be confused with scholarship. (“Theses on Method,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, 225-7; 1996)*

**Student Responsibilities**

Attend, Understand, Analyze—three fundamental academic tasks.

NOTE:

- while it is permissible to register in this class as late as the end of the second week, it is not advisable. If you have joined the class late, you should realize that significant course material has already been presented and that your late arrival places you at some disadvantage.
- tests and assignments must be written/submitted on the dates scheduled. No exceptions will be made, except for death, significant illness, or domestic affliction (corroborated by a valid, original note from a physician or counselor). You should contact the instructor within twenty-four hours of a missed exam or deadline.
- please note that the University of Calgary regulations strictly prohibit the following during examinations (the penalty for which is suspension or expulsion or such other penalty as may be determined):
  - speaking to other candidates or communicating with them under any circumstances whatsoever;
  - bringing into the examination room any textbook, notebook, or document not authorized by the examiner;
  - leaving answer papers exposed to view
  - attempting to read other student’s examination work.
- the assessments offered in this course will be geared to rewarding students who are conscientious in their attendance, participation, and preparation of classes.
- computers should be used for note-taking purposes only. Extra-curricular computer activities will result in the suspension of computer privilege, perhaps even for the entire class.
- if you are anticipating a class absence you should find a classmate willing to loan his/her notes; no lecture notes will be available from the instructor.
- recording of lectures is not permitted, except by special permission.
- a 5%/day late penalty will be levied for all late submissions. Late submissions must be placed in the Department’s assignment drop-box (SS 1301), where they will be date-stamped.
- class schedule, readings, and additional relevant materials will be posted online.
- you must “back up” all submissions. No concessions will be made for papers lost.

**Learning Assessments**

Two Equally-Weighted Midterm Tests (Oct. 15 and Nov. 10)	40%
Final Test – In-class portion (Dec 10)	10%
Final Test – Take-home portion (due Dec. 15)	10%
Representation Project (due Nov. 17)	40%
Total	100%

*\*There will be no Registrar scheduled final exam for this course.*

**Grading Scale**

A numerical grade is assigned for each course requirement. Following the final graded component, a letter grade is assigned, using the department-approved table of equivalencies:

A+ 100-96	B+ 84-80	C+ 69-65	D+ 54-53
A 95-90	B 79-75	C 64-60	D 52-50
A- 89-85	B- 74-70	C- 59-55	F under 50

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

**Academic Honesty**

***Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and***

*inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.*

- Academic Accommodation** If you are a student with a disability who requires academic accommodation and you have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. Once registered, please discuss any upcoming tests/examinations with the instructor **two weeks** before the scheduled date.
- Course Withdrawal** Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the current University Calendar
- Lecture Recording** Recording any part of any lectures in any form must be first approved by the instructor in writing and is for individual private study only. See current Calendar, Tape recording of Lectures.
- Safewalk Program** "You don't have to walk alone...." Call 403-220-5333 and a member of the Safewalk Team will walk you to your car, the LRT, or any destination on campus. Safewalk is available to all students, staff and faculty any time of the day or night. Look for the Campus Security Help Phones located throughout the University. Please don't hesitate to call!
- Gnosis** Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: [gnosis@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gnosis@ucalgary.ca) or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.