

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

Rels 331 L20 - *Religious Perspectives on Suffering*

COURSE OUTLINE – SPRING 2010

Logistics

Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 – 4:45pm

Location: SH 268

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

Office Hours (SS 1308): Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00-2:00pm

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

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

Note: While the lengthy Herman Hesse reading (*Siddhartha*) is available online, students might wish to buy a hardcopy of this assigned reading.

Course Description

What is suffering and why do humans view it pejoratively? Why do humans seek to transform experiences of suffering into (deontological) meaning and purpose? Using a combination of 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 situate human experience and representation within the framework 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)*

Learning Assessments

Two Equally-Weighted Midterms (June 1 and 15)	40%
Final In-class Midterm (June 24)	10%
Final Take-Home Exam (June 28)	10%
Representation Project (due June 17)	40%
Total	100%

Bonus Marks – up to 10% bonus added to course grade, based on knowledge of assigned daily readings, to be demonstrated voluntarily or when called upon +10%

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

Student Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• engaged class attendance• intellectual knowledge and understanding of materials assigned and presented• critical academic analysis and reflection on course topic(s)												
Grading Scale	<p>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:</p> <table><tr><td>A+ 100-96</td><td>B+ 84-80</td><td>C+ 69-65</td><td>D+ 54-53</td></tr><tr><td>A 95-90</td><td>B 79-75</td><td>C 64-60</td><td>D 52-50</td></tr><tr><td>A- 89-85</td><td>B- 74-70</td><td>C- 59-55</td><td>F under 50</td></tr></table> <p>N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.</p>	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
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A- 89-85	B- 74-70	C- 59-55	F under 50										
Academic Honesty	<p><i>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.</i></p>												
Important Dates	<p>Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the current University Calendar.</p>												
Academic Accommodation	<p>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.</p>												
Course Withdrawal	<p>Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the current University Calendar.</p>												
Lecture Recording	<p>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.</p>												
Safewalk Program	<p>"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!</p>												
Gnosis	<p>Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis.</p>												