

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

Rel 331 L01

Religious Perspectives on Suffering

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2010

Logistics

Time: Wednesday, 6:00 – 8:50 pm

Location: SH 268

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

Office Hours (SS 1308): Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-11:00 am

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

Grahek Nikola, *Feeling Pain and Being in Pain*

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

Course Description

What is suffering? How are experiences of suffering rendered meaningful? Why do humans feel compelled to represent suffering? Using a combination of lectures, discussions and multi-media presentations, this course will examine representations of human suffering produced by the religious (i.e., Jews, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists) as well as the irreligious. These representations (and the human propensity to represent) will be evaluated from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, situating human consciousness within 3.8 billion years of inherited biology. The ultimate concern of this course will not be religion per se, but rather the human species in its broadest (evolutionary) definition.

Learning Assessment

Six brief periods of suffering (i.e., six tests—each equally weighted)	50%
Analytical Essay	25%
Reflective Representation Project	25%
	Total: 100%

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

PLEASE NOTE:

- Given the nature of the subject and the approaches adopted, it is vital that students attend the first week of class to gain an understanding of the nature and methodology involved.
- The test dates and assignment deadlines will be posted in Blackboard, under “Course Information.” 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). The instructor must be contacted within twenty-four hours of a missed exam or deadline.
- The tests are designed to assess the students’ comprehension of the materials

discussed and presented. These tests are not directly cumulative, though an increasing level of understanding of the nature of suffering and the theoretical framework employed is expected as we proceed through the course.

- The “Analytical Essay” will be 5 to 7 pages in length.
- The “Representation Project” will involve a creative representation of an instance of suffering that is of significance to the individual student.
- Students anticipating a class absence should find a classmate willing to loan his/her notes; no lecture notes are available from the instructor.
- Recording of lectures is not permitted, except by special permission.
- Students must maintain “back up” copies of all submissions; no concessions will be made for “lost” materials.
- Students are encouraged to discuss the course materials with the instructor. An appointment can be set up for this purpose, either verbally or through email. When arranging to see the instructor, students are asked to be specific in terms of the issues or topics they wish to discuss.

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.

Important Dates

Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the current University Calendar.

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 or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.