

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION

**RELS 331 L01: *Religious Perspectives on Suffering***

WINTER 2016

**Time:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 10:00-10:50

**Instructor:** Dr. David A. Bergen, 403-220-7063, [dabergen@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dabergen@ucalgary.ca)

**Office hours:** Monday 1:00-2:00 pm in SS 540

**Textbooks:**

*Regarding the Pain of Others* (Sontag)

*Siddhartha* (Hesse)

*Bhagavad Gita* (Miller)

*Maus I & II* (Spiegelman)

*The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky)

Additional readings and representations to be posted online (D2L)

**Content and Objectives:**

What is suffering? Why do humans view it negatively? How do humans transform prolonged pain into experiences with meaning and purpose? This course will address these questions as we explore and analyze selected representations of human suffering. In so doing, we will situate human experience and representation within the context of 3.8 billion years of earth-bound biology. We will also turn to the future to explore the transhumanist promise of extended pain-free existence.

**Assessments:**

*Tests* - 50%

Three non-cumulative, equally weighted tests comprised of short-answer questions, the first two tests to be written in class on January 28, March 4, and the third test to be written as a take-home test on March 25 (due Monday, March 28.)

*Quiz* - 10%

One quiz to be written on April 13.

*Representational Analysis* - 30%

For this analytical component, students will have the choice of either writing a 8-10 page essay that compares three representations of suffering, or of exercising their creative imaginations by representing an instance of suffering of importance to the student, using any non-essay medium. Further information and details on these two analysis options will be given early in the term. The deadline for the submission of this component of the course is March 30.

*Participation (10%)*

Student participation is the privilege of a class-based university experience. To promote this privilege, students in this course will be graded for their engagement with the materials presented and the readings assigned. Use of electronic devices (including laptops), failure to "attend" to the lectures and/or the course, or speaking simply for the appearance of participation will have a negative effect on a student's participation grade. Why? Because a humanities course studies the most profound subject ever to be studied: the human being. Failure to attend to other humans and their work is not simply inconsiderate, it is inhuman and dehumanizing. It is also anathema to a humanities education.

**Student Responsibilities:**

Attend, Understand, Analyze—three fundamental academic tasks.

**Details:**

Please note these important details:

- no remedial assignments are available in this course;
- lecture notes will not be available from the instructor;
- exams must be 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 must contact the instructor within twenty-four hours of a missed exam or deadline. The University Calendar states:  
     "It is the responsibility of students who have prolonged absences from class because of physical and/or emotional health problems to present to the faculty office offering the course a statement from a physician/counselor attesting to the physical or emotional health of the student."
- tests are non-cumulative and will entail typical academic testing formats. The assessments employed will be geared to rewarding students who are conscientious in their attendance, participation, and preparation of classes;
- a passing grade on any of the graded components is not essential for passing the course;
- the use of electronic devices is banned from this course during class time, except in instances where the instructor grants permission for pedagogical purpose;
- take-home tests submitted after deadline on the due date will be penalized 5% for every day (or part thereof) overdue.
- there is no registrar-scheduled final exam for this course;

**Grading Scale**

A+ 100-96	B+ 84.9-80	C+ 69.9-65	D+ 54.9-53
A 95.9-90	B 79.9-75	C 64.9-60	D 52.9-50
A- 89.9-85	B- 74.9-70	C- 59.9-55	F under 50

**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 (section K, which can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>.) If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor, librarian staff or the Chicago manual of style.

### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf).

### **Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help**

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

### **Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources**

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at [ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

### **Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative**

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See [www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds) for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca).

### **Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point**

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints). Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

### **Safewalk**

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.