

Prof. van Zuylen
Office Hours: Wed & Fri 10:30-11:30
Hopson 103
Vanzuyle@bard.edu

The Aesthetics of Evil

1. Absolute Good, Absolute Evil: Plato, "Timaeus" (webreserve); Kant, "The Rational Will Overcomes Base Inclinations" [Rorty, 179-189]; Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, "There is no Evil in Allah's Perfect World" (Rorty, 54-56); Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazovi* [Rorty, 241-248]; DelBanco, "Introduction" from *The Death of Satan* (webreserve, 3-19). Optional: Gnostics, "The War Between Darkness and Light" (Rorty, 24-37);
2. **Obedience for its Own Sake:** Suffering as a moral test. *Genesis & Exodus* [Rorty, 8-12]; excerpts from Book of Job (handouts); Martin Luther "Prefaces to Job"(handout); Levinas "Useless Suffering" [webreserve]; Josiah Royce, "The Problem of Job" (webreserve). Optional: Calvin "Human Corruption" [Rorty, 118-123];
3. **The Good in Evil:** Hobbes *Leviathan* (Rorty, 145-151); Rousseau "Social Corruption" [Rorty, 172-178] & Letter to Voltaire (handout); Voltaire "The Lisbon Earthquake" [handout]; Leibniz, "The Justice of God and the Problem of Evil" [Rorty, 161-165]; Mandeville, "Private Vice, Public Benefits" [Rorty, 165-168]; Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population" [handout]. Optional: excerpts from Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.
4. **Does the Punishment Fit the Crime?** St. Augustine [handouts from *The Confessions*]; St. Thomas Aquinas, "On Evil" [Rorty, 84-93]; Dante, *Divine Comedy* [Rorty, 93-100 & handout]; Boccaccio's *Decameron* [handouts]
5. **Does Radical Evil Exist?** St. Augustine, "Guilt and Divine Benevolence" [Rorty, 39-54]; Baudelaire "The Bad Glazier" [handout]; Joan Copjec, "Evil in the Time of the Finite World" [webreserve]; Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* [excerpts, handout].
6. **The Freedom of Crime:** Sade, "Murdering Nature: Philosophy in the Bedroom" [Rorty, 193-194]; *The Infortunes of Virtue*. Optional: Bataille "Sade" in *Literature and Evil* [shelf reserve]
7. **Literature as Crime:** Cesare Lombroso [handout]; Max Nordau, preface to *Degeneration* [shelf reserve]; Loos, "Ornament as Crime" [handout]; van Zuylen "On Criminals, Degenerates, and Literary Offenders" [webreserve];.Hitler, excerpts from speeches on "Degenerate Art"

8. **Eroticism and Crime:** Jean Genêt, *Diary of a Thief & Bataille, Eroticism* (webreserve) & "Jean Genêt" in *Literature and Evil* (webreserve)
9. **Why They Kill:** readings in criminology. Richard Rhodes, *Why They Kill. The Discoveries of a Maverick Criminologist* [shelf reserve, 5-37 & "Lee Harvey Oswald" 175-end] & Foucault, "I, Pierre Rivière".
10. **Evil Models: Life Imitating Literature.** Paul Schrader, *Taxi Driver*. Additional readings from Nordau's *Degeneration* will be distributed.
11. **Evil and Self-Love:** Sartre, *No Exit*
12. **The Banality of Evil:** conflicts around a terminology. Uli Baer, "Arendt, Sartre, and Baudelaire" [handout]; Arendt, "The Banality of Evil" [Rorty]; "The Persistence of Goodness" Sven-Olov Wallenstein [*Cabinet*, 114-117. Webreserve]
13. **The Inevitability of Evil:** Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil* [Rorty 222-235] & Schopenhauer [Rorty 218-221] & Hawthorne "Dreams of Evil" [Rorty 206-215]
14. **Filming Evil:** Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah*; Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* [webreserve]
15. **From Picture to Text:** Lanzmann, *Shoah* (the text)
16. **Evil & Testimony:** Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*

Requirements:

- A presentation
- One-page weekly reaction paper (must comment on one issue or raise a problem to be discussed in class)
- Final Essay to be discussed with instructor (10-15 pages)

Required Reading:

Rorty, Amélie. *The Many Faces of Evil. Historical Perspectives*
 Marquis De Sade *The Misfortunes of Virtue, and Other Early Tales*
 Genet, Jean. *The Thief's Journal*
 Foucault, M. I, Pierre Riviere, *Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother*
 Lanzmann, C. *Shoah: The Complete Text*
 Sartre, *No Exit*
 Schrader, Paul. *Taxi Driver* Schrader, Paul
 Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*

Reserve Readings: some of these works are not on the syllabus, but should be consulted for inspiration for the final paper or presentation. Please also check the WebReserve.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*

Bataille, G. *Eroticism*

Bataille, George. *Literature and Evil*

Beauvoir de, Simone. "Faut-il brûler Sade?"

Black, Joel. *The Aesthetics of Crime*

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*

Copjec, Joan. *Radical Evil*

De Sade *The Misfortunes of Virtue, and Other Early Tales*

Delbanco, Andrew. *The Death of Satan*

Foot, Philippa. *Virtues and Vices & Other Essays*

Ford, Franklin. *Political Murder. From Tyrannicide to Terrorism*

Foucault, M. I, *Pierre Riviere*

Geddes, Jennifer . *Evil after Post-Modernism*

Genet, Jean. *The Thief's Journal*

Hoss, Rudolph. *Death Dealer: The Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz*

Lanzmann, Claude. *Shoah: The Complete Text of the Acclaimed Holocaust Film*

Larrimore, Mark. *The Problem of Evil*

Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*

Leyton, Elliott. *Compulsive Killers*

McGinn, Colin, *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction*

Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*

Pagels, Elaine. *The Origin of Satan*

Rorty, Amélie. *The Many Faces of Evil. Historical Perspectives*

Sartre, J.P. *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr*

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*

Schrader, Paul. *Taxi Driver*

Sereny, Gitta. *Cries Unheard: Why Children Kill. The Story of Mary Bell*

Watson, Lyall, *Dark Nature: A Natural History of Evil*