

METAPHORS OF EVIL

AFAM 779/REL 830/RLST 845 FALL SEMESTER 2009 MONDAYS 1:30P-3:20P

YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL

EMILIE M. TOWNES

N-122 • 203.432.5308 • emilie.townes@yale.edu

OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT; CONTACT GRACE CHAO AT 203.432.5308 OR grace.chao@yale.edu

TEACHING FELLOWS: MARCUS ELDER JENNIFER LEATH

marcus.elder@yale.edu jennifer.leath@yale.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an examination of the ways in which metaphors function at the intersections of various forms of oppression that coalesce into lifestyles of misery to produce social patterns of domination and subordination. We will consider how conversations between Christian ethics and theology as well as other disciplines help frame possible trajectories of justice and justice making.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

COMPLETION OF READING ASSIGNMENTS

Completion of required reading by the date assigned will enhance the student's developing understanding and participation in the course.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE FOR THE CLASS SESSIONS

Punctual attendance at all class sessions is required. The instructor should be notified in case of absence. Participation includes preparation, selective verbal contributions, attentive listening, and facilitating the participation of others.

EXPLORING EVIL JOURNAL

You are to keep a weekly reflection notebook on the weekly readings. *Your entries should be no more than one page, single-spaced.* You are to choose *one* theme found in the reading each week. Explore whether you agree or disagree with the author and state your reasons why. Do not create a list without giving an explanation for why the items on it are important for you or to the theme you have identified.

Journal entries begin with the readings for September 21 and conclude with the readings for December 4 (8 entries). Your notebooks are due on **September 29** (for September 21, 28), **October 20** (for October 5, 19), **November 3** (for October 26 and November 2) and **December 5** (for November 16 December 4). E-mail them to emilie.townes@yale.edu by **9:00pm on each date they are due**. No late notebooks accepted. Date and number each. Also send a copy to both teaching fellows.

For Ph.D. students: Your notebook must focus on an analysis and critique of the readings as well as your own critical comments about the subject matter in each week's readings.

For all students: save your journal file as a MSWord file using **yourlastname-journal #x.doc** naming convention and send to me via email file attachment. For example: townes-journal1.doc.

MESA GRANDE

The class will be divided into groups to present one manifestation of evil the group would like to discuss more fully as addressed by one of the authors. Groups are divided between the four authors of the course and the presentation is a collective effort. You are encouraged to make use of the Ministry Resource Center to help you do your presentation. You will be able and encouraged to sign up for the groups early in the semester so that you can begin crafting your presentation. Each group will present in roundtable on the last class session on **December 7** and will have 10 minutes to make their presentation.

Creativity and interesting group presentations are encouraged and welcomed (almost required).

However, keep in mind: substance over style!

PH.D. STUDENTS

In lieu of the roundtable, doctoral students must complete a 15-20 page paper that focuses on a selected theme that is representative in one of the authors or a theme that you see present throughout the four authors. This paper is due on **December 11** and should be sent to me via email file attachment by midnight.

GRADING

Grading for this course will be the average of all of the assignments for the course. The grading system is:

Honors (H) = Exemplary (97)

Honors minus (H-) = Excellent (90)

High Pass plus (HP+) = Very Good (87)

High Pass (HP) = Good (83)

High Pass minus (HP-) = Satisfactory (80)

Pass (P) = Acceptable (73)

Fail (F) (0)

Withdrew (W)

You may request to be graded Credit/No Credit by following the proper procedures to do so. If you choose this option, all work must be turned in on time and must earn at least HP- in order to receive the Credit grade.

DISABILITIES AND HANDICAPPING CONDITIONS

It is my commitment to make every reasonable effort to facilitate the learning of students capable of graduate level seminary work. Any student who has a condition that may prevent full demonstration of her or his abilities (e.g. difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities) should contact the instructor personally to discuss learning needs, alternatives that have worked for the student in the past, and mutually acceptable accommodations to ensure the student's full participation and evaluation in the course.

PLAGIARISM (Lat. *plagiarius* [kidnapper])

This is a form of cheating that is "the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own" (Alexander Lindey, *Plagiarism and Originality* [New York: Harper, 152] 2). When you use another person's ideas or direct quotes without acknowledging the source you are plagiarizing. In short, this is stealing. Although it may be unintentional, you are still held accountable and subject to referral to the academic dean. *Normally, if you plagiarize in this course, you will receive a No Credit for the paper and a No Credit for the course.* Forms of plagiarism include: failing to acknowledge another's wording or a specific term, paraphrasing another's argument, or presenting another's line of thought. Two good sources to refer to are Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition, (5.2) and *MLA Style Manual* (pp. 4-5 and 164). Each student is responsible for reading and conforming to the policies concerning plagiarism in the Student Handbook.

HOW TO READ A THEO-ETHICAL ARGUMENT

Approaching a Text

1. pay attention to the title; what does this suggest about the book's content?
2. read the blurbs about the book on the cover and dust jacket; do you associate the endorsees with a particular theological viewpoint/ideology?
3. always read the acknowledgments and the introduction
4. pay attention to the table of contents
 - how detailed is it?
 - are the chapter titles helpful in explaining the flow of the book?
5. scan the endnotes/footnotes
6. look at the index

Approaching a Chapter or Section of Reading

1. check for the subdivisions, if any

2. make a mental or physical note the outline of the argument
3. pay close attention to the thesis of the reading
4. pay close attention to how the section of reading ends
 - does the author summarize the reading?
 - does he/she prepare you for the next chapter and those to come?
5. what are the main points/sub points?
claims: position or point in which the author is making a point about something
 - the divinity of Christ ≠ claim (doesn't make an assertion)
 - Christ is divine = claim (makes an assertion)grounds: what the author puts forth to support her/his claim
6. does the reading flow--does it make sense to you?
 - does the argument go somewhere?
 - is it an invitation to move from one position (grounds) to another (claim)?
7. make an evaluative judgment

REQUIRED TEXTS

Elizabeth Alexander, *The Black Interior*
James Baldwin, *Evidence of Things Not Seen*
Thomas Glave, *Words to Our Now: Imagination and Dissent*
Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

DUE DATES CHECK LIST

Journals	September 29, October 20, November 3, December 1 2009; 9:00pm
Mesa Grande	December 7, 2009
Ph.D. student final paper	December 11, 2009

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

SEPTEMBER 7	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
SEPTEMBER 14	NOT WHY? BUT HOW?
SEPTEMBER 21	TONI MORRISON Chapter 1
SEPTEMBER 28	TONI MORRISON Chapters 2 and 3
OCTOBER 5	JAMES BALDWIN If unfamiliar with the Atlanta Child Murder case, see at least the Wikipedia article: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlanta_murders_of_1979-1981 Read at least the first 62 pages
OCTOBER 12-16	READING WEEK/FALL CONVOCATION—NO CLASS
OCTOBER 19	JAMES BALDWIN Finish the book
OCTOBER 26	ELIZABETH ALEXANDER "Toward the Black Interior," "The Black Poet as Canon-Maker," "Meditations on 'Mecca'," "I am; I'm a black man;/I am:," "The World According to <i>Jel</i> "

NOVEMBER 2 ELIAZABETH ALEXANDER (GUEST VISITOR)
“Anna Julia Cooper,” “A Black Man Says ‘Sorbet,’” “Denzel,” “Can You be BLACK and Look at This?”

NOVEMBER 9 NO CLASS—WORK ON MESA GRANDE PRESENTATIONS

NOVEMBER 16 THOMAS GLAVE
“Baychester,” “Toward a Nobility of the Imagination,” “(Re-)Recalling Essex Hemphill,” “Fire and Ink,” “Whose Caribbean?,” “These Blocks, Not Square,” “The Death and Light of Brian Williamson,” “Regarding Carolivia Herron’s *Thereafter Johnnie*,” “Between Jamaica(n) and (North) America(n)”

NOVEMBER 23 READING PERIOD/THANKSGIVING BREAK — NO CLASS

DECEMBER 4 THOMAS GLAVE (GUEST VISITOR)
Friday session “On the Difficulty of Confiding...,” “Panic, Despair,” “Regarding a Black Male Monica Lewinsky...,” “On the Importance of Returning from Abroad...,” “Autumn’s Relentlessness,” “Re-membering Steen Fenrich,” “Abu Ghraib”
“Again the Sea”

DECEMBER 7 MESA GRANDE