

**RGT3745HS // RGT6745HS**  
**ISSUES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV***  
**TST Theology Department**  
**January – April 2009**

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**Course Description**

This course explores issues in the philosophy of religion, with special reference to *The Brothers Karamazov*. Major themes include: the existence and nature of God, religious language, religious experience, faith and reason, the problem of evil, religion and morality, and afterlife beliefs. Readings include Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and selections from theologians and philosophers of religion. Lectures, discussions, critical reflection papers.

**Course Objectives**

Students will be able to describe, analyse, and critically evaluate various significant issues in the philosophy of religion. See the course syllabus on p. 4-6 for the listing of issues and readings within which these issues will be contextualized. Students will also be able to appreciate the significance of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* in drawing these issues into question and provocatively exploring them.

**Required Books**

David Stewart, ed., *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, sixth ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2006).

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhinsky, trs., (N.Y.: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2002).

**Reserve Reading**

Some required reading selections, listed on the course syllabus (pp. 4-5), will be available on Reserve in the Regis College Library. See the Reserve Reading list (p. 6) of this course outline for this listing.

## Grading

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. Following the final examination, a letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

A+	= 100-90	B	= 76-73
A	= 89-85	B-	= 72-70
A-	= 84-80	FZ	= 69-0
B+	= 79-77		

## Graded Assignments

### For Basic Degree Students

#### 90% Three Critical-Reflection Papers

Paper #1 about 1400 words (5-6 typed pages or so), 25%; **due February 12.**

Paper #2 about 1400 words (5-6 typed pages or so), 30%; **due March 12.**

Paper #3 about 1600 words (6-7 typed pages or so), 35%; **due April 9.**

10% Class Participation: attendance, evidence that you are keeping up with the readings, class discussion, etc.

### Possible questions for critical-reflection papers

- 1) Choose one of the essay readings (or multiple readings that address a common theme) from David Stewart, ed., *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, which we will develop and discuss in class.
- 2) Carefully and creatively develop the significant elements of the readings and, if possible, situate these ideas within the context *The Brothers Karamazov*.
- 3) Provide some critical-evaluative comment on the readings, with reference to issues developed in class and/or other relevant material drawn from other sources.
- 4) The critical reflection paper #3 can focus on a theme or issue related more directly to *The Brothers Karamazov* than to essays from the Stewart text, if this theme or issue has been approved in discussion with me.

### For Advanced Degree Students

#### 90% Three Critical-Reflection Papers (see possible questions listed above for B.D. students)

Paper #1 about 1600 words (6-7 typed pages or so), 25%; **due February 12.**

Paper #2 about 1600 words (6-7 typed pages or so), 30%; **due March 12.**

Paper #3 about 1800 words (7-8 typed pages or so), 35%; **due April 9.**

10% Class Participation: attendance, evidence that you are keeping up with the readings, class discussion, participation in one AD seminars (see below), etc. There will be some extra readings assigned for AD Students.

### Advanced Degree Seminar

The A.D. Seminar will be scheduled the week of **March 24-28** (1.5 hour).\

- i) Students are to come prepared to discuss ideas related to one or more of the following themes/elements in *The Brothers Karamazov*: the nature, role and significance for the story of one of the Karamazov brothers; or of Fyodor K.; or of Grushenka; or of Katerina Ivanovna.
- ii) Also, students are required to develop two comments/questions appropriate for class discussion, which relate to those themes/elements in *The Brothers Karamazov*. These comments/questions are to be written and copies circulated to all seminar participants.

### Format and Marking Criteria

- 1) The Critical Reflection Papers should show significant thought and effort. They should be well-developed and polished.
- 2) Late submissions will be reduced by 10% per week, unless prior arrangements have been made with me.
- 3) Format: papers must be **double spaced**, have a **title page**, **page numbers**, and appropriate **margin spacing**. **Footnotes** are necessary if you quote passages or are dependent for your ideas on another writer. Neglect of appropriate notation will result in a significant reduction of your grade, possibly even an 'F'.
- 4) Academic Honesty: Documentation for footnotes is necessary, when quoting writers or referring to secondary sources. All material which you quote directly should be noted, as well as any judgments, arguments, and data that you draw from other sources.
  - i) Plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the course, and the notification of the Dean of your College.
  - ii) In order to deter plagiarism, I might require an oral defense of papers. Failure to attend the defense will result in an "F" on the paper.
  - iii) Failure to document properly the sources of your research will involve a significant reduction in your grade, possibly even an "F". This includes the failure to cite the appropriate books or page numbers of books from which you have quoted.
  - iv) If the paper makes any major use of work done in another course, submit the work along with the paper. If there is not a significant amount of new work, the grade may be reduced. See me if you have any questions on this.
- 5) Marking Criteria
  - i) **Clarity** of the paper, in grammatical detail and expression, and in the overall structure. Be sure your paper is drawn together coherently; a strong introduction

- stating what you will do and how you will do it, and conclusion summarizing what you have done, are essential in this regard.
- ii) **Substance** of the paper, whether it is significant or superficial, rigorous or sloppy. You must take an appropriate objective and scholarly approach, and show some significant understanding of the material and relevant issues.
  - iii) **Accuracy** of the paper, where it involves an exposition or explanation of information from books or lecture notes.
  - iv) **Scope** of the paper: that is, be sure to develop the significant relevant issues and implications that arise from the problems, issues or themes of the material in question.
  - v) **Conciseness** of the paper, in contrast with being wordy or overly elaborate or needlessly repetitive.
  - vi) **Originality** of the paper: the analysis should show some critical reflection on the theme or question, whether it is your own or a synthesis of ideas connected to another course-reading or of ideas developed in class discussion. You must show some critical and creative development on your part.

### **Tentative Syllabus**

Because I will be referring to the *The Brothers Karamazov* throughout the course to illustrate various issues, students are expected to read this novel as soon as possible. Other readings are listed below. “**R.R.**” indicates readings that are on Reserve at the Regis College Library.

Week #1      **course introduction**; *The Brothers Karamazov*, introduction and outline.

Week #2      **existence and nature of God.**

Readings -- Stewart: pp. 117-120; Paley, *The Design Argument*, pp. 140-148 (also Ewing, pp. 74-81, Stewart, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., **R.R.**); Kant, *The Moral Argument*, pp. 149-155 (also, Lewis, *The Moral Argument*, pp. 82-90, Stewart, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., **R.R.**).

--AD Students: David Ray Griffin, Chapter 4, “God in the PostModern World”, *God and Religion in the Postmodern World*, pp. 51-67.

Weeks #3 and #4      **faith and reason.**

Readings -- Stewart: pp. 203-207; Flew, *Belief and Falsification*, pp. 208-220; James, *Will and Belief*, pp. 221-238; Kierkegaard, *The Leap of Faith*; pp. 247-254; (also, Tillich, *Faith as Ultimate Concern*, 261-271, of Stewart, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., **R.R.**; and Lewis, *On Obstinacy in Belief*, 113-125, of Stewart, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.)

--AD students: Michael Stoeber, “Dostoevsky’s Devil: The Will to Power”, *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (1994) pp. 26-44.

**Week #5      religious language.**

Readings -- Stewart: pp. 257-259; Aquinas, *The Nonliteral Use of Language*, pp. 276-283; Ramsey, *Models for Theological Discourse*, pp. 284-295; Ruether, *Religious Language and Gender*: 296-305; (also, Daly, pp. 201-207 of Stewart, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., **R.R.**)

--AD Students: Terence Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality*, Chapters Seven and Eight, "The Concept of God in Traditional Theism: The Negative Way" and "Analogy and Meaning", pp. 65-87.

**Week #6      religious experience.**

Readings -- Stewart: pp. 1-5; James, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 6-15; Otto, *Numinous Experience*, pp. 16-28; Kaufmann, *Critique of Mysticism*, pp. 28-35; (also Buber, *The Eternal Thou*, pp. 29-36 of Stewart, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, or pp. 30-37 of the 4<sup>th</sup> ed., **R.R.**); Hick, *Varieties of Religious Understanding*, pp. 36-47.

**Weeks #7 and #8      religion and morality.**

Readings: Stewart: pp. 49-52; Nietzsche, *Life's Goal is to Achieve Greatness*, pp. 58-63; Tolstoy, *Life is Not Meaningful Without God*, pp. 64-70; (also, Stewart, Kolenda, *A World Without God*, pp. 74-81 of the 5<sup>th</sup> ed. or pp. 324-332 of the 4<sup>th</sup> ed., **R.R.**); Neilsen, *Life is Meaningful Without God*, pp. 71-82.

--AD students: William J. Wainwright, *Religion and Morality*, Chapter 11, "Mysticism and Morality", pp. 209-239, **R.R.**

**Weeks #9 and #10      the problem of evil.**

Readings -- Stewart: pp. 159-165; (also Stewart, Thomas Aquinas, *Divine Attributes*, pp. 198-201, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. **R.R.**) ; Griffin, *Theodicy in Process Theodicy*, pp. 171-181; Hick, *The Vale of Soul-Making Theodicy*, pp. 189-198; Doniger, *Karma and Evil* , pp. 182-188.

--AD students: Michael Stoeber, *Reclaiming Theodicy*, Chapter Four, "Destructive Suffering", pp. 60-78.

**Weeks #11 and #12      afterlife issues.**

Readings -- Stewart: pp. 85-87; *Religion and Human Destiny*, pp. 97-101; (also Stewart, Russell, *The Finality of Death*, pp. 263-268 and Hick, *Immortality and Resurrection*, pp. 279-291, 4<sup>th</sup> ed, **R.R.**); Rahula, *Death in Buddhism*, pp. 109-114; Plato, *The Immortality of the Soul*, pp. 88-97; St. Paul, *The Hope for Resurrection*, pp. 103-108.

**RGP 3745-6745HS – Issues in the Philosophy of Religion and *The Brothers Karamazov* Books/Articles on Reserve Reading in Regis College Library**

- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: The Garnett Translation revised by Ralph E. Matlaw*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.
- David Ray Griffin, *God and Religion in the Postmodern World*, (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1989).
- Terence Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality*, (New York: Random House, 1971).
- Terence Penelhum, *Reason and Religious Faith*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995).
- David Stewart, ed., *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, fourth ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998).
- David Stewart, ed., *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, fifth ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1999).
- David Stewart, ed., *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, sixth ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2006).
- Michael Stoeber, “Dostoevsky’s Devil: The Will to Power”, *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (1994) pp. 26-44.
- Michael Stoeber, *Reclaiming Theodicy: Reflections on Suffering, Compassion and Spiritual Transformation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- Victor Terras, *A Karamazov Companion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).
- William J. Wainwright, *Religion and Morality*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2005).

**Other Books/Articles of interest, related to *The Brothers Karamzov* in the University of Toronto Library system.**

- Robert Belknap, *The Structure of the Brothers Karamazov*, (Paris: Mouton, 1967).
- Vaclav Cerny, *Dostoevsky and His Devils* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1975).
- Sergai Hackel, “The Religious Dimension: Vision or Evasion? Zosima’s Discourse in *The Brothers Karamazov*,” in Harold Bloom, ed., *Fyodor Dostoevsky* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), pp. 211-235.
- Robert Louis Jackson, ed., *A New Word on the Brothers Karamazov* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004).
- D.H. Lawrence, “Preface to Dostoevsky’s *The Grand Inquisitor*”, René Wellek, ed., *Dostoevsky* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962).
- Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, Edith M. Riley, tr. (New York: Meridan, 1966).
- C.A Miller, “Nietzsche’s ‘Discovery’ of Dostoevsky”, *Nietzsche Studien*, Band 2, (1973), pp. 248-254.
- Konstanin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, Michael A. Minihan, tr., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).
- George A. Panichas, *The Burden of Vision: Dostoevsky’s Spiritual Art* (Chicago: Gateway Edition, 1985).
- Robert V. Wharton, “Evil in an Earthly Paradise: Dostoevsky’s Theodicy”, *Thomist*, 41 (1977): 567-69.