

# Humanities 401, Fall 2000 ▾

Notes from Underground: Violence, Aggression, Evil

Prof. Ronald LeBlanc Prof. Melinda McMahon Prof. Catherine Peebles

Course meets:

MW 3:40-5:00pm, Ham. Smith 215 (Lecture)

W 5:10-6:00pm (Discussion)

Murkland 305 (section 1) | Murkland 201 (section 2) | Ham. Smith 41 (section 3)

This semester, Humanities 401 will be exploring the theme of human aggression and violence, from murder to cannibalism, from vague discontent to the nature of evil itself. The main prerequisite for this course is, as always, a willingness to ask yourself difficult questions and to respond frankly. The readings and viewings we have chosen can be very challenging, and will often require you to go back to them a second and third time before you have a good understanding: expect to do this, and budget plenty of out-of-class study time. Although you will need to spend a significant amount of time on this course, keep in mind that the reading list is full of seminal and ground-breaking works. After reading and viewing them, and thinking about them critically, you will be a better-educated person.

## Requirements

Coming to class prepared, having done the assigned reading and made extensive notes (including especially your questions), and having carefully reviewed lecture notes. This course involves a heavy reading load, and students should budget their out-of-class work time accordingly. Students are expected and required to devote a minimum of six to eight hours per week to class preparation. Preparing for this class involves reading and rereading the assigned work carefully, underlining important passages, making notes in the margins, and making notes in your notebook. Your own notes should range from copying significant sections of text and definitions of new vocabulary words, to writing down specific questions you have, to formulating critical responses and interpretations. You are required to look up in a good desk dictionary (such as The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language or Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary or New World Dictionary of the American Language) every vocabulary word with which you are unfamiliar. And you are required to bring formulated questions to each discussion meeting. Your class preparation grade will be based upon your contribution of salient questions and interpretations.

Attendance does not count toward class preparation, and is, of course, required. (What does count toward class preparation is your alert, thoughtful, active presence.) A student who misses three classes during the semester (lecture or discussion) will lose a full letter grade for each subsequent absence, and is required to make an appointment and discuss

the problem with her/his section leader. The penalty scheme for attendance takes into account the occasional emergency or illness. Accordingly, students are allowed three absences with no penalty. There is no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences.

Attendance penalty scheme:

Up to three absences: no penalty  
Five absences: two letter grades lower  
Four absences: one letter grade lower  
Six absences: three letter grades lower  
Seven or more: four letter grades lower

Participation in discussion

As emphasized under "class preparation," participation in discussion is a crucial part of this course, and consists in doing the reading assignments thoroughly and bringing well thought out questions to the discussion section. Missing a lecture session would make it impossible for students to participate well in discussion, as would failing to do the reading assignment attentively. A student's class preparation grade is based on her/his contributing well thought out questions consistently in section.

Papers and Exams

There will be two exams during the semester. The first will be a short-answer, in-class exam. The second will be the final exam, which will be take-home, essay format, and is due on Tuesday, May 16 at 3pm in the Humanities Program office, Murkland Hall, room 2. The first paper assignment will be a short, closely directed assignment. The second will be a five to seven page essay, to be assigned by your section leader. Check with your section leader for details. Your final grade will be an average of your class preparation and participation, first and second exams, and first and second papers, minus any penalty for missed classes (see "attendance" above).

Required Texts:

All books are available at the Durham Book Exchange, on Main Street, except where otherwise noted.

The Course Reader (available at the Copy Center, in the MUB. Packet #32; Price: \$17.75)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*

William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*

Arrigo Boit, *Mefistofoele*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Don Giovanni* (available only at Durham Book Exchange)

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky, *Boris Godunov* (available only at Durham Book Exchange) Films viewed during semester (see timetable)

Jonathan Demme, *"Silence of the Lambs"* (U.S., 1991)

Peter Greenaway, *"The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover"* (Britain, 1989)

Jean-Pierre Jeunet & Marc Caro, *"Delicatessen"* (France, 1991)

## COURSE TIMETABLE

LeB = Prof. Ronald LeBlanc

MM = Prof. Melinda McMahon

CP = Prof. Catherine Peebles

Wed. Sept. 6 Introduction

Mon. Sept. 11 Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* LeB

Wed. Sept. 13 Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* LeB

Mon. Sept. 18 Henry James, Benjamin Britten, *The Turn of the Screw* MM

Wed. Sept. 20 James/Britten, *The Turn of the Screw* MM

Mon. Sept. 25 Shakespeare, *King Richard III* CP

Wed. Sept. 27 Shakespeare, *King Richard III* CP

Mon. Oct. 2 Mussorgsky, *Boris Godunov*

First paper due MM

Wed. Oct. 4 Mussorgsky, *Boris Godunov* MM

Mon. Oct. 9 Dostoevsky, from *Crime and Punishment* [Course Packet] LeB

Film viewing: Demme, *"Silence of the Lambs"* 7p.m.

Tues. Oct. 10 Film viewing: Jonathan Demme, *"Silence of the Lambs"* 7p.m.

Wed. Oct. 11 *"Silence of the Lambs"*; Maggie Kilgour, *"The Function of Cannibalism at the Present Time"* [Course Packet] LeB

Mon. Oct. 16 Recapitulation and Review

Wed. Oct. 18 Mid-term examination

Mon. Oct. 23 Nietzsche, The Antichrist CP  
Wed. Oct. 25 Nietzsche, The Antichrist CP

Mon. Oct. 30 Dostoevsky, from The Brothers Karamazov [Course Packet] LeB  
Jackson, "Dostoevsky and the Marquis de Sade"  
LeBlanc, "An Appetite for Power: Predators, Carnivores, and Cannibals"

Film viewing: Peter Greenaway, "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover" 7pm

Tues. Oct. 31 Film: Peter Greenaway, "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover"  
7pm

Wed. Nov. 1 C. Bartolovich, "Consumerism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"  
LeB  
[Course Packet]; Greenaway, "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover"

Mon. Nov. 6 Mozart, Don Giovanni MM  
Wed. Nov. 8 Mozart, Don Giovanni MM

Mon. Nov. 13 Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents CP  
Wed. Nov. 15 Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents CP

Mon. Nov. 20 Boito, Mefistofoele LeB  
Wed. Nov. 17 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Mon. Nov. 27 "Boito, Mefistofoele MM  
Tues. Nov. 28 Film: "Delicatessen" 7pm  
Wed. Nov. 29 Adams, from The Sexual Politics of Meat (pp. 25-94) LeB  
Film: "Delicatessen" 7pm

Mon. Dec. 4 "Meat" and "Delicatessen" LeB  
Wed. Dec.6 Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil CP

Mon. Dec. 11 Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil CP  
Wed. Dec. 13 Recapitulation and Review. Final Paper Due. Final exam handed out.

Mon. Dec. 18: FINAL EXAM DUE, 3pm, Murkland Hall, room 2.