



[EL230 Evil, Death, and Alienation]

[Fall 2015]

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

[Kyle Roberts]

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[Fridays]

[8:00-11:30]

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Course Description

This course turns to the heart of the most vexing, existential issues for theology. What is evil? Where does it come from? What is the relation between evil and death? How do we understand death theologically? Evil in its current geopolitical manifestations and the existential and psychological challenges of the inevitability of death will be investigated through the lens of influential anthropologists, theologians and philosophers—past and present. The phenomena of evil and death will be approached primarily through the philosophical and theological concept of alienation.

Outcomes and Assignments:

Master of Arts Concentration outcomes	Course Outcomes	Course activities or assignments directly related to course outcomes <i>See fuller descriptions below</i>
1. Summarize the theological, cultural, and historical expressions of his or her faith.	By the end of the course, the student will: 1. Be intimately familiar with the theories of Ernest Becker and their role in the formation of the psychological school, "Terror Management Theory" 2. Articulate the relation between death/mortality anxiety and evil in modern life 3. Understand Marx's concept of alienation, as	1. <i>Application of Terror Management Theory Paper</i> (30%) #s 1, 2 3. <i>Reading Reflections</i> (30%) #s 1, 2, 3, 4 4. <i>Final Integrative Paper: A Theology of Death and Evil</i> (30%) #s 1, 2, 4, 5 5. <i>Attendance and Participation</i> (10%)

	<p>well as be familiar with other philosophical understandings of alienation as a problem of modern life.</p> <p>4. Reflect on the pastoral implications of a deep, theological and philosophical understanding of death as a source of the problem of evil</p> <p>5. Develop and articulate a personal theology of evil</p>	
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Course Texts - Required:

1. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, Free Press, 1997.
2. Sheldon Solomon, et al, *The Worm at the Core*, Random House, 2015.
3. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, Prometheus Books, 1998 (Note: This work is also available online for free)
4. Paul Kahn, *Out of Eden: Adam and Eve and the Problem of Evil*, Princeton University Press, 2010.
5. Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, Columbia University Press, 2014. .

Course Assignments:

1. Class Attendance and Participation (20%)

This course is reading intensive and class sessions are intended to be in-depth discussions of reading content. This requires that students attend class sessions faithfully and come having read the material. If a student has three or more unexcused absences, they may automatically receive a failing grade for the course (in other words, the grade may be affected by attendance beyond the 10% allocated, should attendance become a regular problem).

2. Application of TMT Paper (20%)

Write a paper in which you define and explain Terror Management Theory (TMT) as well as apply the insights of TMT to a contemporary event covered in the media. The issue could be an event pertaining to religious fundamentalism, or terrorism, and/or ethnic or religiously motivated violence, or racism, etc. Show how TMT enables greater understanding of the event in question. Or, if you prefer, show how the event in question raises questions that may be unanswered by or raise problems with TMT's analysis.

Your paper should be 5-7 pages, double-spaced (1500-2100 words) and conform to UTS format requirements (i.e. Turabian).

This paper will be graded on a 100% scale. The grade will be determined on the basis of:

- (1) Depth and adequacy of content, including sophistication and clarity of argument, knowledge of issues discussed. (60%)
- (2) Sufficiency of research, including number of sources and quality of sources, as well as proper following of required format (Turabian, unless otherwise specified). (30%)
- (3) Presentation, including spelling, grammar, syntax, quality and character of prose (10%)

3. Reading Reflection Questions: (20%)

Each week in which reading is due (excepting the first week of class) you are to write three questions that emerge for you from your reading of the material. You do not need to answer the questions yourself. The questions should be specific/focused, rather than vague and general. You will be graded on depth/profundity and specificity of the questions. The questions should evidence that you have read and intellectually engaged with the material.

Each week's questions will be graded on a five point scale:

- (5) Excellent (4) Good (3) Fair (2) Poor (0-1) Fail

3. Presentation of a current "Death image" (10%)

Occasionally throughout the course we will examine and reflect upon images of death from contemporary media, film, pop culture, art, music, etc. For this assignment, you will be assigned a day during the course when you will present to the class an image that you discover. You do not need to write or present a paper, but you should have some remarks/reflections prepared and be able to guide the class in a discussion of the meaning of the image. Your presentation/reflections should be about 5-7 minutes, with discussion lasting about 15-20 minutes.

This assignment will be graded pass/fail. As long you fulfill the basic requirement of finding the

image, preparing and presenting your reflections, you will pass the assignment.

4. Final Integrative Paper (30%)

This paper will not be a research paper, but will function as an open-book, open-note “take home exam.” The objective is to assimilate and synthesize your reading, learning, and reflection into a single assignment. The assignment will consist of four integrative questions on the course material. I will provide more details regarding grading criteria and expectations later in the course.

General Class Structure:

1. Class will involve a combination of lecture/discussion and small group reflection, but as it will be taught “seminar” style, it will involve more class discussion than lecture.

Course Policies:

1. Class attendance and participation is essential. Students who miss more than three unexcused class sessions will not receive a passing grade.

2. Papers should follow UTS style guidelines for M.A. theses (see pp. 32-33 of the Masters Student Handbook), with this exception: papers must be submitted in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Digital submission is required (use upload links on Moodle course). One-third letter grade will be deducted for each day the paper is late.

3. Extensions follow UTS policy.

4. Be aware that UTS attracts a wide variety of students with various theological perspectives. Further, you may not share the perspectives of the instructor. It is absolutely essential that kindness and respect reign in the classroom and online

Course Schedule (topic/assignments, etc. for each week):

Week One (Sept. 18). Introductions.

Read: Becker, intro-chp. 3

Week Two (Sept. 25)

Read: Becker, chps. 4-7

Week Three (Oct. 2)

Read: Becker, chps. 8-end

Class Presentation #1

Week Four (Oct. 9)

Read: Solomon, part 1

Class Presentation #2

Week Five (Oct. 16)

Read: Solomon, part 2

Class Presentation #3

Week Six (Oct. 23)

Read: Solomon, part 3

Due: TMT Application Paper

Class Presentation #4

Week Seven (Oct. 30)

Read: Kahn, Intro-chp. 2

Due: TMT Application Paper (Nov. 1, 11:59 PM)

Class Presentation #5

Week Eight (Nov. 6) *Reading Week (No Class)*

Read: Kahn, chps. 3-5

Week Nine (Nov. 13)

Read: Kahn, chps. 6-end

Class Presentation #6

Week Ten (Nov. 20)

Read: Jaeggi, Part 1 / Marx, "Wages of Labor"

Class Presentation #7

Week Eleven (Nov. 27): *Thanksgiving Week (No Class!)*

Week Twelve (Dec. 4)

Read: Jaeggi, Part 2 / Marx , “Profit of Capital,” and “Rent of Land”

Class Presentation #8**Week Thirteen (Dec. 11)**

Read: Jaeggi, Part 3 / Marx, “Estranged Labor,” and “Antithesis of Capital and Labor,” and “The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society”

Week Fourteen (Dec. 18)

Due: Final Integrative paper (Dec. 18, 11:59 pm)

Expectations for Auditors:

Students auditing this class are expected to: Attend class regularly. Read assignments, on time, if possible.

Expectations for D.Min. Students (see handbook; not applicable to first-year courses):

1. D.Min. students will add an additional 5 pages to the length requirements of the TMT Application Paper and an additional 7 pages to the length requirements of the Final Integrative Paper. In both cases, the additional text should include reflection on practical implications for their current or planned ministry context.

Petition for Extension Policy

The work for a course must be completed by the end of the final class session. The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor. Extensions of time to complete course work beyond the end of the final class session will be approved only under extraordinary circumstances. [Each instructor will include this policy on each course syllabus as well as the criteria by which she or he will grant such an extraordinary exception.]

If an exception is made, the instructor must agree to the extension by the end of the final class session and the student must complete the Petition for Extension form to be submitted in lieu of a grade. If the student is unable to negotiate the extension by the end of the final class session due to critical health issues, the student is responsible for seeing that the instructor is notified as soon as possible and then negotiating the extension promptly. If no petition for extension is filed, a final grade will be submitted.

Copyright Compliance Policy

All work in this class is expected to follow the Copyright Compliance Policy in the *Masters Student Handbook*. The full Copyright Policy is at the Circulation Desk in the Spencer Library.

Academic Integrity Policy

All work in this class is expected to follow the Academic Integrity Policy in the *Masters Student Handbook*.

Inclusive Language Policy

All work in this class is expected to follow the Inclusive Language Policy in the *Masters Student Handbook*.

Confidentiality and Disclosure within Small Group Settings

All work in this class is expected to follow the Policy Regarding Confidentiality and Disclosure within Small Group Settings in the *Masters Student Handbook*.

Statement on Boundaries

Regarding professional boundaries, see the Statement on Boundaries in the *Masters Student Handbook*.

Email Communications

To be in compliance with FERPA regulations, email communications from faculty and staff of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities is handled via United email only. Assistance setting up forward or redirection of messages is available by contacting computersupport@unitedseminary.edu.

Course-specific addenda:

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