

**DEREE COLLEGE SYLLABUS FOR: SO 4026 SUFFERING AND EVIL IN SOCIETY**

**UK LEVEL: 6**  
**UK CREDITS: 15**  
**US CREDITS: 3/0/3**

(Updated Spring 2022)

**PREREQUISITES:**

None.

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

Suffering and evil in sociology's classical founders.  
 Contemporary perspectives on suffering. Sites and causes of suffering.  
 Anthropological and social classifications of good and evil.  
 Visual sociology on suffering and evil.

**RATIONALE:**

Modernity's problems (alienation, anomie, instrumental rationality) have led classical and contemporary sociologists to theorize suffering and evil in powerful ways. This course aligns with recent developments in the field and seeks to address social suffering, its impact on the person, the sites that sustain it and the media proliferation of images of suffering. It also examines suffering through the wider problematic of evil. Sociology students, as well as students from neighboring disciplines, will acquire an understanding of the multifaceted concept of suffering and evil, developing simultaneously an understanding of policy tools and metrics that seek to curb suffering and to mitigate evil.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- As a result of taking this course, student should be able to:
1. Build a critical understanding of sociological approaches on suffering and evil in conjunction with findings from other disciplines.
  2. Develop a critical understanding of sociological analysis on suffering and evil to case-study materials.
  3. Appraise past and contemporary incidents of suffering and evil by utilizing a 'visual sociology' approach.

**METHOD OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:**

- In congruence with the teaching and learning strategy of the college, the following tools are used:
- Classes consist of lectures, visual material (paintings, photographs, film extracts, TV clips) and discussions.
  - Office hours: students are encouraged to make full use of the office hours of their lecturer, where they can address issues and ask questions pertinent to the course material.
  - Use of a blackboard site, where instructors post lecture notes, assignment instructions, timely announcements, as well as additional resources.

**ASSESSMENT:**

Summative:

<b>First assessment:</b> Essay (4,000 +/-10% words)- <b>summative</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Final assessment:</b> Oral presentation (15 minutes) - <b>summative</b>	<b>30</b>

Formative:

Interpretive exercises with a visual component - <b>formative</b>	<b>0</b>

The first assessment (term paper) tests Learning Outcomes 1 and 2  
 The final assessment (oral presentation) tests Learning Outcome 3  
 The formative assessment tests Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3

*Students are required to resit failed assessments in this module*

**INDICATIVE READING:****Required material:**

1. Wilkinson, I. (2005). *Suffering: A Sociological Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.

**On Reserve Status in the JSB Library (required):**

1. Alexander, J. (2013). *The Dark Side of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

2. Alexander, J. (2001). 'Toward a Sociology of Evil: Getting Beyond Modernist Common Sense about the Alternative to "the Good".' in Pía Lara (ed.) *Rethinking Evil: Contemporary Perspectives*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

3. Anderson, R. (2014). *Human Suffering and Quality of Life: Conceptualizing Stories and Statistics*. Dordrecht: Springer.

4. Arendt, H. ([1969] 2006). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. NY: Penguin.

5. Baudrillard, J. (1990). *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. London: Verso.

6. Bauman, Z. (1989), *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity.

7. Bourdieu, P. et al. (1999), *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

8. Cladis, M.S. (2008). 'Suffering to Become Human: A Durkheimian Perspective', pp. 81-100 in *Suffering and Evil: The Durkheimian Legacy*. NY and Oxford: The Durkheim Press.

9. Cohen, S. (2013). *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering*. Polity: Cambridge.

10. Coser, L. (1969), 'The Visibility of Evil', *Journal of Social Issues* 25(1): 101-109.

11. Douglas, M. (1973), *Natural Symbols*. London: Penguin (Ch.7. 'The Problem of Evil').

12. Gangas, S (2019). 'The Fury of 'Ressentiment': Binary Codes, Evil and Society', pp. 171-194 in *Perspectives on Evil: From Banality to Genocide*. Leiden: Brill/Rodopi.

13. Israel, J. (1979), *Alienation: From Marx to Modern Sociology*, New Jersey: Humanities Press.

14. Lyman, S.M. (1989). *The Seven Deadly Sins: Society and Evil*. NY: General Hall.

15. Neiman, S. (2002). *Evil in Modern Thought. An Alternative History of Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

16. Parkin, R. (2008). 'Robert Hertz on Suffering and Evil: The Negative Processes of Social Life and Their Resolution', pp. 103-117 in *Suffering and Evil: The Durkheimian Legacy*. NY and Oxford: The Durkheim Press.

17. Paoletti, G. (2008). 'Some Concepts of 'Evil' in Durkheim's Thought', pp.63-80 in *Suffering and Evil: The Durkheimian Legacy*. NY and Oxford: The Durkheim Press.

18. Riley, A. (2010). "'A New Kind of Fear": Jean Baudrillard's neo-Durkheimian Theory of Mass-Mediated Suicide", pp. 159-168 in *Durkheim and Violence* (eds. S.R. Mukherjee). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

19. Smelser, N. (1971), 'Some Determinants of Destructive Behavior', pp. 15-24 in *Sanctions for Evil* (eds. N. Sanford and C. Comstock). San Francisco: Jossey-Bas.

20. Sontag, S. (2003). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin.

21. Von Wiese, L. (1934). 'Sociology and Suffering', *International Journal of Ethics* 44(2): 222-235.

22. Weber, M. (1966). 'Theodicy, salvation and rebirth'. In *The Sociology of Religion*. London: Methuen.

23. Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. (2009), *The Spirit Level: How Equality is Better for Everyone*, London: Penguin.

24. Wolff, K. (1969). 'For a Sociology of Evil', *Journal of Social Issues* 25(1): 111-125.

25. Zimbardo, P. (2008). *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding how Good People turn Evil*. NY: Random House.

**Recommended Material:**

1. Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1944). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso.

2. Amato, J.A. (1990) *Victims and Values: A History and a Theory of Suffering*. NY: Greenwood Press.

3. Anderson W, Johnson, D and R. Keller (eds) (2011) *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties*. Duke University Press.

4. Bataille, G. ([1957] 1973). *Literature and Evil*. London: Calder and Boyars.

5. Bataille, G. (1970). *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

6. Baudrillard, J. (1990). *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. London: Verso.

7. Bauman, Z. and L. Donskis (2013). *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.

8. Bell, D. (1980). 'The Alphabet of Justice: On "Eichmann in Jerusalem"' in *The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys 1960-1980*. Cambridge, Mass.: ABT Books.

9. Berger, P. (1974). *Pyramids of Sacrifice. Political Ethics and Social Change*. NY: Basic Books.

10. Bruckner, P. (2010). *The Tyranny of Guilt. An Essay on Western Masochism*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

11. Cheliotis, L.K. (ed.) (2010). *Roots, Rites and Sites of Resistance: The Banality of Good*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

12. Chouliaraki, L (2008). *The Spectatorship of Suffering*. London: Sage.

13. Eagleton, T. (2011). *On Evil*. Yale: Yale University Press.

14. Gabel, J. (1975), *False Consciousness: An Essay on Reification*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

	<p>15.Gane, M. (2010), 'Durkheim's Theory of Violence', pp. 41-50 in <i>Durkheim and Violence</i> (eds. S.R. Mukherjee). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.</p> <p>16.Goffman, E. ([1970] 1986) <i>Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity</i>. Touchstone.</p> <p>17.Jünger, E. ([1934] 2008) <i>On Pain</i>. NY: Telos Press.</p> <p>18.Meštrovič, S.G. (1993). <i>The Barbarian Temperament</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>19.Meštrovič, S.G and R.Y. Caldwell (2010), 'Durkheim's concept of <i>dérèglement</i> retranslated, Parsons's reading of Durkheim re-parsed: an examination of post-emotional displacement, scapegoating and responsibility at Abu Ghraib, pp. 139-157 in <i>Durkheim and Violence</i> (eds. S.R. Mukherjee). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.</p> <p>20.Moore, B. (1972) <i>Reflections on Human Misery and Upon Certain Proposals to Eliminate Them</i>. Boston: Beacon Press.</p> <p>21.Nussbaum, M.C. (2003), 'Compassion and Terror', <i>Daedalus</i> 13 (1): 10-26.</p> <p>22.Sorokin, P. (1942). <i>Man and Society in Calamity</i>. NY: Dutton.</p> <p>23.Walsh, V. (1961). <i>Scarcity and Evil</i>. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.</p> <p>24.Wieviorka, Michel (2012). <i>Evil</i>. Cambridge: Polity.</p>
<p><b>INDICATIVE MATERIAL:</b> (e.g. audiovisual, digital material, etc.)</p>	<p><b>REQUIRED MATERIAL:</b> <b>Four Hours in My Lai, 1989. Available at:</b> <b><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeJBIqAG3hw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aeJBIqAG3hw</a></b></p> <p><b>RECOMMENDED MATERIAL:</b> <b>Shoah, dir. Claude Lanzmann, 1985</b> <b>The Corporation, dirs. Mark Ahbar, Jennifer Abbot, 2003</b></p>
<p><b>COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:</b></p>	<p>Verbal skills using academic / professional English.</p>
<p><b>SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS:</b></p>	<p>Word, ppts</p>
<p><b>WWW RESOURCES:</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.sociologypapers.com/categories/Karl_Marx.html">www.sociologypapers.com/categories/Karl_Marx.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html">www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html</a></p>
<p><b>INDICATIVE CONTENT:</b></p>	<p><b>1.THE PROBLEM OF 'SUFFERING' AND EVIL BEFORE SOCIOLOGY</b></p> <p>1.The Christian setting</p> <p>2. The Philosophical setting (Voltaire, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer). The impact for sociology</p> <p><b>2. SOCIOLOGY'S CLASSICAL FOUNDERS ON 'SUFFERING'</b></p> <p>1. Hegelian roots</p> <p>2. Marx on alienation and work</p> <p>3. Weber on theodicy, meaning and 'suffering'</p> <p>4. Durkheim on anomie</p> <p>5. Simmel on pessimism and evil. Tragic life.</p> <p>6. Freud and civilization's discontents</p>

**3. DEEPER INTO THE DARK SIDE OF DURKHEIM**

- 1. 'Suffering' and the human condition (the dualism of human nature)
- 2. On suicide and the theory of emotions
- 3. Anomie: the evil of 'infinity sickness': Hegel, Marx and Durkheim.
- 4. Contemporary applications of Durkheim's vision of evil and social suffering: post-2007 recession and suicide, Abu Ghraib
- 5. Excursus on Durkheimian anthropology:
  - 5.1. Robert Hertz (the right hand, the left hand and evil)
  - 5.2. Mary Douglas on the problem of evil
  - 5.3. Georges Bataille: Excess and evil (economy, eroticism and religion).

**4. SOCIOLOGY ENTERS EVIL AND 'SUFFERING'**

- 1. Some early attempts at a 'Sociology of Evil' (von Wiese, Coser)
- 2. Evil and emotions: *ressentiment* and shame
- 3. Michel Foucault: the impact of 'evil' on the body
- 4. The Seven Deadly Sins applied to sociology (Lyman)
- 5. Pierre Bourdieu on social suffering
- 6. The recent call for a new Sociology of Evil (Jeffrey Alexander)

**5. SITES OF 'SUFFERING' AND EVIL**

- 1. The Holocaust, modernity and genocide (Arendt, Bauman, M. Mann)  
:Auschwitz, Gulags and Abu Ghraib
- 2. The factory: assembly-line and sweatshop labor sites
- 3. Scarcity, poverty and evil.
- 4. The prison experiments (from Milgram to Zimbardo)
- 5. Evil and suffering through the postcolonial lens

**6. VISUAL SOCIOLOGY: REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS**

- 1. Painting: Goya, Bosch, Grosz, Dix
- 2. Photography: Lewis Hine (kids at work), Ernst Friedrich, Ernst Jünger, Susan Sontag / Iconographies of the evil enemy (war and propaganda posters)
- 3. Film: Depictions of war horrors (excerpts from films by Lanzmann, Franju, Resnais, Klimov, Shepitko, Kobayashi, Kurosawa among others)
- 4. TV: Consuming suffering? (9/11, The Gulf War and the war on 'Terror')
- 5. Cyber-suffering and the proliferation of evil

**7. DEALING SOCIOLOGICALLY WITH SUFFERING AND EVIL**

- 1. Suffering metrics: UN, Amnesty International
- 2. Combating the denial of suffering (S. Cohen)
- 3. The role of ethical institutions
- 4. Toward a Sociology of the Good?
  - 4.1. Values
  - 4.2. Enlightened resistance
  - 4.3. Social justice and human capabilities
  - 4.4. Forgiveness, compassion and sympathy