

# Good and Evil: East and West

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**As taught by Jennifer Rodgers**

## **Description:**

For some time now, philosophers have debated whether or not humans are inherently good. They have speculated about the nature of good and evil. They have questioned the existence of an ordering principle in the universe. We'll leave that, for the most part, to them.

This class will focus on how we, as humans, recognize good and evil in our lives. Where do our perceptions of good and evil come from? How clear are they? In what ways do they help us live our lives? How do we reconcile the noble ideals of societies throughout the world with the often horrible realities of the twentieth century? Can reading books about other people's struggles with good and evil teach us something about ourselves?

## **Required Texts:**

Mariama B, *So Long a Letter*; Carolina Maria de Jesus, *Child of the Dark*; Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Neil Gaiman, *Sandman: Season of Mists*; Husain Haddawy, *The Arabian Nights*

## **Course Requirements:**

Class participation will make up a significant portion of your grade. This means that you will have to both attend class and keep up with the reading in order to pass the class. In addition to participating, you will be expected to give one oral presentation and write one 8-12 page final paper. There will also be occasional in-class essays, short (10 minute) quizzes, and/or short (1-2 page) take-home writing assignments, as the need arises.

## **Discussion:**

Come to class each day with something to say, whether it's a question, a comment, or a topic for discussion. If an aspect of a work puzzles or interests you, let the rest of the class know about it; you probably aren't the only one confused or intrigued. Read actively, then be active in class.

In order to allow for open communication in the classroom, it is very important that each of us respect the right of others to have opinions contrary to our own. Remember that your classmates represent a wide variety of backgrounds, literary and otherwise, and make the most of your diverse experiences.

## **Absence Policy:**

After two missed classes, additional absences will impact your class participation grade, with two

exceptions: absences for either religious observance or illness. If you plan to miss class because of a religious holiday, please notify me in advance so that we can schedule any make-up work.

Any time you miss class, I will hold you responsible for assignments due or given during the class you miss, so make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible after your absence. *I will not accept late work if you don't make a prior arrangement with me!!!*

## **Office Hours:**

If you have questions or concerns of any sort about the class, the readings, the papers, and the like, please come and talk to me. Should you be unable to come to my office hours, make an appointment for another time; I'm on campus at least five days each week.

## **Grades will be determined as follows:**

- 30% Class participation
- 30% Final Paper
- 20% Oral presentation
- 20% Quizzes, in-class writing, and homework

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Part I: Archetypes of Good and Evil**

1/28-1/30 Introduction to the course; "Those Who Walk Away from Omelas"

2/4-2/6 "Horse Brother"; "The Man Who Turned Into a Monster"; "Beauty and the Beast"

2/11-2/13 Genesis; "Old Man and Old Woman"

2/20 "Devi"

### **Part II: Black and White**

2/25-2/27 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

3/4-3/6 Start *Invisible Man* (Ralph Ellison)

3/11-3/13 Continue *Invisible Man*

3/17-3/21 **Spring Break**

### **Part III: Angel and Monster**

3/25-3/27 Husain Haddawy, *The Arabian Nights*

4/1-4/3 Mariama B, *So Long a Letter*

4/8-4/10 "The Fall"; "Aguri"; "The Seizure"

### **Part IV: The Horsemen**

4/15-4/17 Carolina Maria de Jesus, *Child of the Dark*

4/22-4/24 Neil Gaiman, *Season of Mists*

4/29-5/1 **Paper Due**, TBA

5/6-5/8 TBA

5/13 Conclusion