

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

RELS 331 L01 *Religious Perspectives on Suffering*

WINTER 2013

Place and Time: SS 541, on Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 1:00-1:50pm

Instructor: Dr. David A. Bergen, SS 1308, 403-220-7063, dabergen@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: Monday @ 2:00-3:00pm (appointment preferable)

Textbooks:

Required:

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*
Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*
Bhagavad Gita (Miller)

Optional:

Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*

Content and Objectives:

What is suffering? Why do humans view it negatively? How do we transform prolonged pain into experiences with meaning and purpose? This course will address these questions as it explores and analyzes selected representations of human suffering. In so doing, we will situate human experience and representation within the context of 3.8 billion years of earth-bound biology.

This course follows the academic mandate set out by Bruce Lincoln:

*When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one's interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between 'truths,' 'truth-claims,' and 'regimes of truth,' one has ceased to function as a historian or scholar. In that moment, a variety of roles are available: some perfectly capable (amanuensis, collector, friend and advocate) and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None, however should be confused with scholarship. ("Theses on Method," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8, 225-7; 1996)*

This course has been deliberately structured so that all lectures and graded assessments will be completed by April 1. Pedagogically, this structure will liberate RELS 331 students from the "deadline panic" that often characterizes the final two weeks of term. More importantly, from an academic perspective, this schedule will give students the opportunity to engage (with those of like-minded disposition) in a guided discussion of Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*. Analytical thought for its own sake, without instrumental concern for grade performance--a spa for the mind amidst spasms of mental hyperventilation.

Assessments:

Five Tests - 50%

Non-cumulative and equally-weighted, using a variety of assessment styles from multiple choice to short-answer. These tests will be written on the following dates: Jan 25, Feb 8, Mar 1, Mar 15, and Apr 1.

Representation Project - 50%

In this project, students will have the opportunity to exercise their creative imagination powers by representing an instance of suffering of importance to the student, using any non-essay medium. The instances of suffering may be either personal or non-personal; if the latter, the represented suffering must be (or have been) an event available to the general public. The representation must also be accompanied by a five-page, double spaced analysis that draws on the analytical insights discussed in this course. The grade weight of 50% will be divided evenly between representation (25%) and analysis (25%). The deadline for the submission of this project is March 27.

**There will be no Registrar scheduled Final Exam for this course.*

Student Responsibilities:

To achieve success in this course, students are advised to:

- *read* the assigned readings (see schedule posted in Blackboard, Course Information);
- *seek* clarification related to the assigned readings (in class [if time] or via email);
- *attend* the lectures and *record* accurate, detailed notes;
- *review* and *reflect* on lecture notes weekly; *search out* necessary information where notes and understanding are incomplete;
- *study* hard and smart, allotting sufficient time prior to each test for rereading of text-book and notes.

Details:

Please note these important details:

- no remedial assignments are available in this course.
- lecture notes will not be available from the instructor.
- a passing grade on any of the graded components is not essential for passing the course.
- exams must be written on the dates scheduled. No exceptions will be made, except for death, significant illness, or domestic affliction (corroborated by a valid, original note from a physician or counselor). You must contact the instructor within twenty-four hours of a missed exam or deadline. The University Calendar states:
“It is the responsibility of students who have prolonged absences from class because of physical and/or emotional health problems to present to the faculty of-fice offering the course a statement from a physician/counselor attesting to the physical or emotional health of the student.”
- no external aids are permitted during the written tests.
- please note that the University of Calgary regulations strictly prohibit the following during written examinations (the penalty for which is suspension or expulsion or such other penalty as may be determined):
 - speaking to other candidates or communicating with them under any circumstances whatsoever;

- bringing into the examination room any textbook, notebook, or document not authorized by the examiner;
- leaving answer papers exposed to view
- attempting to read other student's examination work.

Grading Scale:

A+ 100-96	B+ 84.9-80	C+ 69.9-65	D+ 54.9-53
A 95.9-90	B 79.9-75	C 64.9-60	D 52.9-50
A- 89.9-85	B- 74.9-70	C- 59.9-55	F under 50

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.

Academic Accommodation

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than **fourteen (14) days** after the start of the course.

Blackboard Help

Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/onlineservices/blackboard> for Student Help and FAQ's about Blackboard. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are available at <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/students>. Instructions for using the Digital Drop Box are available here: http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/student/bbbs_r6_1_student/digital_drop_box.htm.

Gnosis

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at artsads@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at arts1@ucalgary.ca.

Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints. Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

Safewalk

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.