

# Rel 207: Religious Sources for Morality

CUNY Hunter College, Summer Session II

July 13 - August 13, 2020

**Instructor:** Lindsay Grass

[lgrass@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:lgrass@hunter.cuny.edu)

Office Hours: M-Th 2:00-3:00pm (online)

Email to schedule an appointment

## Course Description:

Our judgements of 'right' and 'wrong' are undergirded by a claim of how we believe things 'ought to be.' This course will examine the moral reasoning and assumptions involved in our ideas of the 'ought to' and 'should be' that inform our evaluation of the 'good' and the 'bad,' in other words, *why* we judge certain acts (and/or intentions) as good or bad.

Through a survey of ethical theories as well as theological and philosophical sources, this course will explore themes regarding:

- The nature of God, humanity, and their relationship
- The presumptions and understanding of God, self, other, and religion embedded in ethical formulations
- The religious grounds of ethical dilemmas and decisions
- Morality without religion
- Ideas of sin, guilt, and retributive justice

## Course Objectives:

Students who lend their full participation to this course can expect to:

- Gain a familiarity with major traditional theories in ethics (utilitarian, rationalist, pragmatic, etc.)
- Identify and explain the fundamental presumptions underlying religious sources of morality
- Evaluate the theological cogency of religiously grounded moral arguments
- Cultivate skills in strategic reading and the critical analysis of texts
- Better understand and articulate their own ethical claims

## Course Requirements:

**Reading:** There will be weekly reading assignments you will be expected to have read in full by each class session. Be prepared to discuss your understanding (or questions) of the text. Take notes to help you engage with and process the reading, citing page numbers and specific passages you'd like to discuss so we can better anchor our conversation to the reading.

**Journal Entries:** You will have the opportunity to write two journal entries for weeks 1-4 (250-350 words) regarding each reading, of these eight journal prompts you must write six entries. The journal prompt will be available on Blackboard; the entry is due before the start of the class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. No late submissions will be accepted.

**Quizzes:** At the end of weeks 1-4 you will take a short quiz on the week's reading. The quiz will be available on our Blackboard site from Thursday 9:00am -Friday 11:59pm.

**Essays:** There will be five (5) essay assignments (750-1000 words) throughout the course. Each will be submitted through Blackboard (with SafeAssign--plagiarism will not be tolerated). No late submissions will be accepted. Blackboard will email you a confirmation of your assignment submission.

Essay 5, the final paper, will additionally involve a proposal/outline, reviewing another student's proposal/outline, and a brief presentation on our last day of class. All essay prompts, instructions, and grading rubrics are available on our Blackboard site under 'Course Information.'

**Attendance & Participation:** This class will be largely oriented around our discussion of the assigned text, for that reason it is imperative that you read thoughtfully and critically engage with each week's reading. Come prepared to voice your questions, comments, and points you feel need further clarification. Attendance at each class meeting is required; two absences are allotted to you without penalty, but each absence beyond that will result in a 5 point deduction of your final grade.

**Grades:** Your grade will be determined by the weekly blog posts, quizzes, five writing assignments, and the quality of your participation.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
Essays 1-4	40%	100 points each
Journal Entries	30%	50 points each
Final Paper	20%	200 points total
Quizzes	10%	25 points each

A: Excellent work, wholly accurate, thoroughly thought through, clearly and elegantly written. Fully responsive to the question asked.

B: Very good work. Well supported arguments/explanation, clearly presented though perhaps not as perfectly as an A paper.

C: Satisfactory work, some deficiencies in accuracy, thoroughness. Lacking specifics or full development, but arguments are generally sound.

D: Poor work lacking in accuracy and thoroughness, although demonstrating effort.

F: Inadequate work and effort.

**\*Specific rubrics, prompts, and instructions for each type of assignment are available on our Blackboard site**

**Office Hours:** M-Th 2:00-3:00 (Online), email to schedule an appointment

**Required Texts:** Available through the Hunter Online Bookstore and on loan in the Religion Office library.

- Martin Buber, *Good and Evil*
- Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

All other readings are available as PDFs on Blackboard.

**General Information:**

As this class will be conducted online through our course Blackboard site you will need to have regular access to the internet as well as access to your Blackboard and your cuny.edu email account. We will have live meetings M-TH, 12:00-1:53pm via BB Collaborate. Weeks 1-4 you will be responsible for writing two (2) journal entries, one (1) quiz, and one (1) essay assignment; Week 5 you will be working on your final paper which will consist of a proposal, peer reviewing another student's proposal, presentation, and essay.

Each week of the course is divided into its own folder in 'Weekly Folder,' with links to related reading materials, journal entries, quizzes, and essay assignments (prompts, instructions, and links will be available therein). The syllabus and grading rubrics are available under 'Course Information.'

This course is both a summer *and* writing intensive, it is important to keep up with the weekly reading and assignments. You're expected to be prepared for each class meeting, having read the assigned text, with questions and comments ready for discussion.

If you should have any questions, concerns, need for assistance or to schedule an office hours appointment please contact me through email. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours (during the work week, I will be unavailable on weekends). Ideally, the journal entries and quizzes will be graded by the end of each week; essays will be graded via Blackboard (with an accompanying grading rubric) within 7 days of submission.

For help with Blackboard:

If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Student Help Desk at (212)650-3624 or email [studenthelpdesk@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:studenthelpdesk@hunter.cuny.edu).

For help with writing assignments:

The Rockowitz Writing Center is still available for e-tutoring during the summer session--visit <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/rwc>

#### **Hunter's Policy on Ability Inclusivity**

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/ or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

#### **Hunter's Policy on Academic Dishonesty**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

When plagiarism is confirmed, whether accidental or deliberate, students must be reported to the Dean of Students and will FAIL THE COURSE. A hearing with the Dean, and/or expulsion from the university may follow. Examples of substantial violations include but are not limited to forging a grade form or a transcript; stealing an examination from a professor or a university office; having a substitute take an examination or taking an examination for someone else; having someone else write a paper for the student or writing a paper for another student; sabotaging another student's work through actions that prevent or impede the other student from successfully completing an assignment; and violations committed by a graduate or professional student or a student who will seek professional licensure. Simply rearranging another writer's words and/or substituting synonyms while making no serious change to the content is also considered plagiarism. The college also should consider any mitigating circumstances in making this determination.

Submission of anyone else's work under your name--in terms of content or form, ideas or words, in whole or in part--will result in an F for the course and a report of academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students. The same consequence will result from sharing your class or reading notes or papers with anyone else--in person or online--or in any other way assisting others use work that is not their own.

Your continuation in this course shows your agreement to policies outlined in this syllabus.

## Course Schedule

\*\*Specific prompts, instructions, and grading rubrics are available on our class Blackboard site

### Week One

**Objective:** To gain an understanding of the fundamental premises, key terms, and major questions of moral philosophy/meta-ethics and its relationship to religion.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Mon, 7/13	Syllabus (PDF)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	
Tues, 7/14 7/14	Smith, "Concept of the Moral" (PDF)  Friedman, "Moral Authority" (PDF)	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Tues  by noon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	
Wed, 7/15	<i>Psalms</i> (PDF) Buber, <i>Good and Evil</i> Foreword-pp.31	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	
Thurs, 7/16	Buber, <i>Good and Evil</i> pp 31-63	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Thurs 7/16 by noon <b>Quiz</b> due Fri 7/17 by 11:59pm <b>Essay #1</b> due Sunday 7/19 by 11:59pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	

## Week Two

**Objective:** To explore and engage with various (and competing) scriptural responses to the 'problem of evil' and the way in which they create a Theodicy.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
<b>Mon, 7/20</b>	<i>Genesis</i> 1-3 Buber, <i>Good and Evil</i> pp. 67-90	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	
<b>Tues, 7/21</b> 7/21	Zaehner, "Zoroastrianism" (PDF)  Zoroastrian Creation Myths (PDF) Buber, <i>Good and Evil</i> pp. 99-121	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Tues  by noon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	
<b>Wed, 7/22</b>	Anderson, "Intro to Job" (PDF) <i>Job</i> Prologue (1:1-2:13) (PDF) Epilogue (42:7-17) (PDF)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	
<b>Thurs, 7/23</b>	<i>Job</i> (3:1-42:6) (PDF)	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Thur 7/23 by noon <b>Quiz</b> due Fri 7/24 by 11:59pm <b>Essay #2</b> due Sunday, 7/26 by 11:59pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>	

## Week Three

**Objective:** To identify the value or principle underlying an ethical system and the way in which that ideal relates to an understanding of identity or 'self.'

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
<b>Mon, 7/27</b>	"Sermon on the Mount" (PDF) Commentary on Matt. 5-7 (PDF)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
<b>Tues, 7/28</b> 7/28	"Sermon on the Mount" (PDF)	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Tues by noon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
<b>Wed, 7/29</b>	Niebuhr, "The Ethic of Jesus" (PDF)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
<b>Thurs, 7/30</b>	Niebuhr, "The Ethic of Jesus" (PDF)	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Thurs 7/30 by noon <b>Quiz</b> due Fri 7/31 by 11:59pm <b>Essay #3</b> due Sunday 8/2 by 11:59pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		

## Week Four

**Objective:** To explore the distinctions between an ethical system based on reason and one based on faith.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
<b>Mon, 8/3</b>	Kant, <i>Fund. Principles</i> Part I	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
<b>Tues, 8/4</b>	Kant, <i>Fund. Principles</i> Part II-III	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Tues 8/4 by noon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
<b>Wed, 8/5</b>	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> Introductory sections	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
<b>Thurs, 8/6</b>	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> Problemata I-III	<b>Journal Entry</b> due Thurs 8/6 by noon <b>Quiz</b> due Fri 8/7 by 11:59 pm <b>Essay #4</b> due Sunday 8/9 by 11:59pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		

## Week Five

**Objective:** To synthesize previous learning in the course and apply it in critical conversation with a contemporary moral issue.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Mon, 8/10	Buber, "Dialogue" (PDF)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
Tues, 8/11	Buber, "Dialogue" (PDF)	<b>Final Paper Proposal</b> due Tues, 8/11 by 11:59pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
Wed, 8/12	Peer Review Groups	<b>Peer Review</b> a classmate's proposal due Wed, 8/12 by 2:00pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm</li> </ul>		
Thurs, 8/13	Last Class	<b>Prepare a short presentation</b> on your final paper topic <b>Final Essay</b> due Friday 8/14 by 11:59pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live Meeting</b> 12:00-1:53pm               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Final paper presentations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		



## Summary of Assignments by Week

### 1. Week One:

- a. Two Journal Entries
- b. Quiz due Friday 7/17 by 11:59pm
- c. Essay: The Psalmist's Transformation  
due Sunday 7/19 by 11:59pm

### 2. Week Two:

- a. Two Journal Entries
- b. Quiz due Friday 7/24 by 11:59pm
- c. Essay: Book of *Job*, due Sunday 7/26 by 11:59pm

### 3. Week Three:

- a. Two Journal Entries
- b. Quiz due Friday 7/31 by 11:59pm
- c. Essay: Critical Correspondence Between Jesus and Niebuhr  
due Sunday 8/2 by 11:59pm

### 4. Week Four:

- a. Two Journal Entries
- b. Quiz due Friday 8/7 by 11:59pm
- c. Essay: Kant and Kierkegaard  
due Sunday 8/9 by 11:59pm

### 5. Week Five:

- a. Paper Proposal with Outline, due Tues 8/11 by 11:59pm
- b. Peer Review another student's proposal, due Wed 8/12 by 2:00pm
- c. Final Paper Presentation, due Thurs 8/13
- d. Essay: Buber and Another Thinker on a Moral Issue  
due Friday 8/14 by 11:59pm