

Wandering in Darkness

Instructor: Daniel Kodaj

Content of the course:

This is an English-language seminar that focuses on *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (2010), a book by Eleonore Stump, one of the leading (analytic) philosophers of religion. She discusses the problem of evil, which is the most important contemporary challenge for (rational) belief in God. The gist of the problem of evil is that the suffering we find in the world is incompatible with the existence of a loving, perfectly good, all-powerful creator. Stump's defense of theism is an extremely interesting and meticulous argument that builds on the works of St Thomas Aquinas. Put simply, Stump claims that suffering is a kind of 'spiritual chemotherapy' which removes those psychological divisions that prevent us from entering into a loving relationship with God. She illustrates her view with detailed analyses of four Biblical stories (Abraham, Samson, Job, Mary of Bethany). Along the way, she discusses the relationship between philosophy and narrative, the varieties of knowledge, the nature of love, and the idea of human flourishing.

We will read the book chapter by chapter. The exact topics will depend partly on the interests of the students and it will be fixed in the first two weeks. The detailed syllabus, along with supplementary materials, will be available on the course website:

elte.dkodaj.net

Assessment

BA students and MA/PhD students outside Philosophy:

This is a seminar where you are expected to attend regularly and read the texts. Assessment is based on two in-class tests (midterm and final) plus an in-class presentation. The presentation should be 15 minutes (+10 minutes Q&A) and it should analyze one of the readings (unless you make some other arrangement with the instructor). The time and topic of the presentation must be approved by the instructor in advance.

The tests will feature 5 short questions about the content of the previous 5 readings, plus an essay question (also about the previous 5 readings). You cannot use any electronic devices or printed material during the tests, with the possible exception of a printed English dictionary.

Grading:

presentation: 0–30 points
midterm test: 0–35 points
final test: 0–35 points

60–69 points: D (2), 70–79 points: C (3), 80–89: points B (4), 90–95 points: A (5), 96–99 points: A+, 100 points A++.

If you miss one or both of the tests, there will be a 90-minute make-up session in the first week of the exam period, on 20 May. The presentations must occur during termtime.

Philosophy MA/PhD students:

The requirements are generally the same but the presentation should be 30 minutes (+10 mins Q&A) and the test questions will be more difficult (there will be a separate test sheet for Philosophy MA/PhD students).

