

PHILOSOPHY 402: UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR IN PHILOSOPHY
CAUSATION, RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE FORCE OF LANGUAGE IN *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV*

Thursdays 9:40–11:30, in Angell Hall 1164

CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor Eric Swanson
ericsw@umich.edu
2259 Angell Hall
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4–5 and by appointment

FOCUS OF THE COURSE

In *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky explores a wide range of philosophical issues: judgment and punishment, moral luck, the distinction between doing and allowing, special obligations (especially those to family), the nature of testimony, the relationships between intention, causation, and culpability, and the force of our words and actions on others. We will read the novel alongside work in contemporary analytic philosophy that refines and tries to address the questions it raises.

COURSE WEB SITE

<http://ctools.umich.edu>

BOOKS

Martinich, *Philosophical Writing: An Introduction*
Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by Pevear and Volokhonsky
Rowe (ed.), *God and the Problem of Evil*
Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*

GRADING

- In-class discussion: 20%
- Two four to five page papers, worth 20% each, due on a rolling basis determined on 1/7. The class will read and discuss the drafts of two (sometimes three) students per session from 1/21 to 4/1.
- One eight to ten page paper, worth 40%. The class will read and discuss drafts in the last two meetings of the semester (4/8 and 4/15). The final draft is due by 12 pm on 4/29.
- On *all* papers, students are required to meet with the professor after class discussion to refine plans for revision.

I give credit for late work only if you give a good explanation for its being late. If you think you might need an extension, please ask early. All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, in a legible font, and emailed to me as a pdf file. I encourage you to discuss the material with your classmates, but all work you turn in must be your own.

SCHEDULE

(Subject to change. Readings not in the required books will be made available via CTools.)

1/7	A. P. Martinich, <i>Philosophical Writing: An Introduction</i>
1/14	Mikhail Bakhtin, "Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel and Its Treatment in Critical Literature" "From the Author" and Book One of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
1/21	George Mavrodes, "Religion and the Queerness of Morality" Book Two of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
1/28	Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil" Book Three of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
2/4	John Rawls, "Classical Utilitarianism" Bernard Williams, "Consequentialism and Integrity" Book Four of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
2/11	David Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" (in <i>God and the Problem of Evil</i>) Book Five of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
2/18	Nelson Pike, "Hume on Evil" Hick, "Soul Making Theodicy" (in <i>God and the Problem of Evil</i>) Book Six of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
2/25	Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints" G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" Book Seven of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
3/11	J. L. Austin, <i>How to Do Things with Words</i> , Lectures I–VI Books Eight and Nine of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
3/18	J. L. Austin, <i>How to Do Things with Words</i> , Lectures VII–XII Book Ten of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
3/25	David Lewis, "Causation" Carolina Sartorio, "Causation and Ethics" Book Eleven of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
4/1	Robert Adams, "Must God Create the Best?" (in <i>God and the Problem of Evil</i>) J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" (in <i>God and the Problem of Evil</i>) Book Twelve and the Epilogue of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>
4/8	Draft discussion, topic 1
4/15	Draft discussion, topic 2