



## KIIS Austria-Bregenz, Summer 2025

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### PSY 299-3 Topics: The Psychology of Good and Evil

**Professors:** Dr. Alison Heck  
Dr. Matthew Winslow

**Email:** hecka@berea.edu  
matthew.winslow@eku.edu

**Instructors' office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

### **Course Description:**

The Holocaust was one of the great tragedies of the modern era. One question that is still asked today is: "How could people commit such atrocities?" This class seeks to answer that very question and explore how normal people can do terrible things. We will talk about the effect of authority and the forces that drive us to obey, the urge to conform, the power of out-groups, and the dehumanization of the other. We will also examine factors and core themes of human goodness. For example, what factors influence those few who risked their lives to protect their neighbors, or complete strangers, from the Nazi regime. By the end of this class, we will have a better understanding of the psychology that drove this period in history, compare it to atrocities and acts of heroism that have happened since then, and hopefully, be in a better position to understand and prevent similar horrors in the future.

**Course Level Note:** Western Kentucky University lists Special Topics courses in Psychology as 299. Despite this course's 299 listing at WKU, it is actually an upper level (300-400+ level) course at many other universities. As such, it is being taught as an upper level 300-400+ level course.

### **Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:**

#### KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

#### Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

### **Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students will...

1. Demonstrate an understanding of different psychological perspectives related to issues of good and evil and their relationship to areas of human concern. **How assessed:** *class discussion, reaction journals.*
2. Verbally articulate complex information in an interesting presentation on a chosen current world events topic related to good and evil. **How assessed:** *good and evil presentation.*
3. Develop their own views on a variety of questions related to good and evil. **How assessed:** *class discussion, book review presentation.*
4. Understand the effect of situational variables on individual behavior. **How assessed:** *Night book review, class discussion.*
5. Describe the psychological aspects of basic social problems such as prejudice, discrimination, and aggression as well as potential solutions to these problems. **How assessed:** *class discussion, book review presentation, film reaction journal, Night book review*
6. Describe the psychological aspects of basic social virtues, such as forgiveness, empathy, altruism, happiness, gratitude, mindfulness, compassion. **How assessed:** *reaction journal.*
7. Describe the historical and social factors that led to the Holocaust and examine parallels to other incidents of genocide. **How assessed:** *film reaction journal, excursion field assignments.*
8. Describe and apply social psychological principles as they relate to recent world events. **How assessed:** *good and evil presentation,*

### **Required Readings and Materials**

#1: Wiesel, E., & Wiesel, M. (2006) *Night*. New York : Hill and Wang,

#### **#2: Text of Your Choice**

For our book review presentations, your choice of **one** of the following books. Do not begin reading until you contact Dr. Winslow and Dr. Heck, because we want to divide you into presentation groups and split the readings evenly across our class. E-mail us and tell us your

top 3 list of these books you'd like to read and we'll do our best to take your preferences into account. To reduce costs, you can consider checking one out from a library, ordering one inexpensively online, etc.

Aronson, E. (2000). *Nobody left to hate: Teaching compassion after Columbine*. New York: Henry Holt.

Baron-Cohen, S. (2011). *Zero degrees of empathy: A new theory of human cruelty*. London: Allen Lane.

Cox, D. (2008). *Dirty Secrets. Dirty War*. Charleston: Evening Post.

Frankl, V.E. (1984). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Golding, W. & Epstein, E.L. (1954). *Lord of the flies: a novel*. New York: Perigee.

Lama, D. & Cutler, H. (1998). *The art of happiness: His holiness the dalai lama*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Lama, D. Mullin, G., & Gyatso, L. (1994). *The path to enlightenment*. Ithaca. Snow Lion Publications.

Larimore, M. (2013). *The book of Job*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Must be read in combination with:

Acocella, J. (2013, December 16). Misery. *The New Yorker*.

Find it here: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/16/misery-3>

Lipstadt, D. (2016). *Denial: Holocaust History on Trial*. HarperCollins.

Merton, T. (1981) *The nonviolent alternative*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Picoult, J. (2013). *The Storyteller*: New York: Atria Books.

Saslow, E. (2018). *Rising out of hatred: The awakening of a former white nationalist*. Doubleday.

Seligman, M. (2012). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ten Boom, C. (1971). *The hiding place*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books

Spiegelman, A. (1986). *Maus: A survivor's tale*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Wiesel, E. & Frenaye, F. (2006). *Dawn*. New York: Hill and Wang.

García Márquez, G. (1981). *Chronicle of a death foretold*. New York: Vintage Books.

OR

A professionally written and Good-Evil relevant book that you submit to us for approval for this project. E-mail us your ideas or requests **before** we travel to Bregenz.

We'll provide a rubric for book review presentation details.

#3. Additional required readings will be available to students either online, via handout, or a shared dropbox folder from your instructors. E-mail Dr. Winslow if you'd like to request an e-mail with the dropbox link.

**If you are a person who needs extra time for reading, you should consider reading (or at least get started on) our readings prior to the start of the class. You will have short reactions based on readings due for many class meetings. Getting an early start, if you like, will help you feel less pressured to do the reading during our trip.**

### **Instructional Activities**

In addition to lectures and readings, the course will involve the following activities:

- Attendance at Field Excursions and Observation assignments organized for our entire travel group
- Two Field Excursions with specific assignments for our class (Dachau Concentration Camp, Jewish Museum in Hohenems)
- Class Exercises and activities
- Class Discussions
- 2 Class afternoon/evening Films
- Individual Mini-presentations
- Pre and post quizzes

### **Field Excursions/Travel Days**

When we take a travel day, you will be exploring Good and Evil and Holocaust-related topics in the context of Bregenz's surrounding areas. To help structure this learning, when we travel, take a picture taking device and be ready to take photos as directed for the following field excursion assignments for this class

Munich Weekend: *Dachau* (free admission. Social media photo post and caption. Comment on at least one other student's post

Class Excursion: Jewish Museum in Hohenems. Five objects assignment.

### **Grading**

Course grades will be based on the total number of points earned on each of the following activities:

Reading Reaction Paragraphs for 8 Pre-class Readings (5 points each)

8 Reactions/activities for In Class Videos, readings, audios, activities, etc. (3 points each for 8 total non-excursion classes)

Brief Reaction Journals for Films (5 points each for 2 films)

Pre-post Quiz (5 points each for a total of 2 quizzes)

2 Excursion Field Assignments (2 at 10 points each) (Photography Dachau; 5 Object Project Jewish Museum)

Book Review Video Presentation and Good/Evil Presentation (20 points each for a total of 2 presentations)

Night Book Review (10 points)

Class attendance (10 in classroom days, all excursions)=24 points

*Total points possible: 178*

Letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

90-100% of the total points available = A

80-89% of the total points available = B

70-79% of the total points available = C

60-69% of the total points available = D

0-59% of the total points available = F

### **Late Work/Make-up Work**

Late work or make up work will be given at the discretion of the instructor. The validity of an excuse given as a reason for missing an exam or assignment will be determined by the instructors with consultation from the program director if needed. The instructors reserve the right to not allow late work or make-up work, or to give late or make-up work which is more difficult or in a different form than the original.

### **Attendance**

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

### **Field Journal/Reaction Paragraph Guidelines**

Please do not summarize or outline the readings. We will have read them and will not need a review! But we will enjoy reading about your thoughts.

You can organize your reaction paragraphs around answering the following questions:

What is the most **important** finding or concept in the reading in your opinion?

What is the one thing you found most **interesting** about the reading?

How can you relate this research study to an experience or observation you have had during our time in **Austria**?

What is a question you have after completing the reading?

The written reactions for our out of class readings should be 1 strong paragraph in length. In class reaction journal entries can be this length or even briefer depending on the activity.

### **Book Review Presentation Guidelines**

These individual or pair presentations will be 3-5 minutes in length and will be pre-videoed by students and screened in class. Consider choosing a cool travel setting for your background.

### **Current Good or Evil Event Presentation Guidelines**

These presentations will be 3 minutes in length and will be presented live in class by student pairs.

### **When You Come to Class, Bring:**

1. Your book or article reading for the day.
2. Any notetaking device you may want to use. (e.g., notebook, piece of paper, laptop, phone, tablet etc.)
3. Your good and/or evil reading reaction paragraph or other assignment for the day.
4. Field excursion journal or assignment if applicable.

### **Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

**Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.