

PHIL 211: Why are Bad People Bad? *

PHIL 211.701 (4:00-6:45pm Tuesdays only)

PHIL 211.702 (4:00-6:45pm Wednesdays only)

Course Logistics

Instructor: Dr. Anton

Office Location: Cherry Hall 310

In-person Office Hours: T/R 2:15-3:15pm

Zoom Office Hours: By appointment.

Zoom: <https://wku.zoom.us/j/99569513382>

Please only request appointments outside of office hours when office hours conflict with your class or work schedules. Zoom appointments during in-person office hours are always welcome.

Voice Mail: (270) 745-5757 (goes directly to e-mail, so e-mail is just as good)

Email: audrey.anton@wku.edu

Course Description

In this course, we shall consider the timeless quandary, *why are bad people bad?* People who tend to behave in standard socially acceptable ways are shocked by those who do not.

Contemporary scholars examine past societies and present struggling areas and find it difficult to imagine how slavery or genocide ever seemed like a good idea. It is difficult for those of us who typically follow a basic moral code to imagine the motives that could drive someone to behave in such ways. On the other hand, it is likely that those who bully, torture, rape, and kill others wonder why everyone doesn't want to behave the same way.

This course is designed to explore these and related issues in detail. Students will consider causes of bad habits, moral ignorance, and vicious motives. We shall discuss the prevalence of certain moral failings. Finally, we shall consider what, if anything, can be done to minimize them in ourselves and society writ large.

Texts and Required Technologies

-All texts are provided free of charge via Blackboard or WKU library services. Students will be required to submit work in MS Word (*not* pages, rtf., pdf, etc.). For zoom meetings, students must have access to a smartphone, tablet, or computer with both video and mic capabilities.

Course Trigger Warning:

The content of this course is very difficult for many to stomach. We will be reading, viewing, and considering evidence from both real-life and hypothetical cases of truly deplorable behavior.

Whenever possible, Dr. Anton shall try to provide in-class trigger-warnings prior to displaying difficult images and films. However, given the subject matter of the course, it is not feasible for Dr. Anton to provide trigger warnings prior to every difficult topic's mention. Students should be mentally prepared each and every class to discuss difficult topics without warning, which include (but are not limited to): murder, torture, sexual assault (including rape), extreme violence, bullying, manipulation, hate, prejudice, and genocide.

Course Objectives

PHIL 211 is a Social and Cultural Colonnade Connections Course(3 hours)

Students will investigate ways in which individuals shape, and are shaped by, the societies and cultures within which they live. Courses will consider the ethical questions and shared cultural values that shape societal norms and behaviors, the independent and collective or collaborative artistic expression of those values, and/or the role of social and cultural institutions in developing and sustaining norms, values, and beliefs.

Students will:

1. Analyze the development of self in relation to others and society:

Students will consider various theories of vice that examine how one's background (including one's culture) and situational influences contribute to the development of character. For example, students will discuss possible cultural and societal influences of tragedies such as the Holocaust and the Rwandan Genocide as well as the impact of traumatic experiences in childhood on a person's development. Students will consider both how bad individuals come to power as well as how groups interact in the face of evil.

2. Examine diverse values that form civically engaged and informed members of society.

Students will study and evaluate various theories of human nature based on distinct ideas of values. For example, students will compare the views of philosophers such as Mengzi and Xunzi who disagree about the moral quality of human beings at birth and, as a result, advance slightly different social programs based on their anticipated effectiveness in cultivating the best citizens possible. In addition, students will consider different views of responsibility, which consider whether and when it is fair to hold others accountable and how best accountability can shape a society for the better.

3. Evaluate solutions to real-world social and cultural problems.

Students will study and consider various models of rehabilitation of the evil mind. Students will not only consider philosophical approaches to moral and social improvement from thinkers such as Mengzi, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Arendt, but also, they will survey and evaluate historical and contemporary attempts to improve society. For example, students will consider whether legally sanctioned deterrents such as the death penalty successfully discourage capital offenses, whether the right to free speech positively or negatively affects hate groups such as the KKK, and whether various attempts to minimize recidivism such as rehabilitation programs and "three strikes" policies on violent crime could have a positive impact.

In addition, this course aims to teach students how to:

4. Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of philosophy, including the concepts and techniques of argumentation, philosophical theories, and core techniques and concepts of the interpretation of philosophical texts.
5. Analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments, (including a demonstrated ability to distinguish between valid and fallacious reasoning and to identify common logical fallacies); identify reliable sources; and distinguish between different types of philosophical evidence.
6. Express themselves logically and objectively in both analytic and argumentative writing.
7. Evaluate themselves as moral beings.
8. Consider their own susceptibility to moral influences as well as potential effects their behavior might have on others.

Course Outline

Each unit is organized as responses to a sub-question of the course's enduring question, *why are bad people bad?* We shall spend 2-3 weeks on each of the following sub-questions of the course's main enduring question, *why are bad people bad?* The potential answers to each sub-question are grouped and titled according to weekly themes:

- (1) Are people in general naturally bad?
 - Original Sin
 - Evil as Privation
 - Human Nature
- (2) Are *some* people bad by nature?
 - Neuropsychology of Bad Agents
 - Social Evidence of Human Depravity
- (3) Do people become bad as a result of custom, habit, nurture, and experience?
 - Nurture and External Pressure
 - Custom and Habit
- (4) Do people choose to be bad?
 - Vice and Weakness of Will
 - Temptation and Choosing to Give In
 - Autonomous Choices and Bad Influences
- (5) Do our attitudes make us bad?
 - Envy, Greed, and Pride
 - Self-Deception
- (6) Why do we hate (each) other(s)?
 - Prejudice
 - Genocide

Course Delivery and Operations

This course has a synchronous component that will take place over Zoom. All students must have the ability to attend class during the scheduled time over Zoom with a functioning camera and microphone.

Hybrid Component

Due to the size of each section and the need for every student to participate in class discussion weekly, this course will operate as a hybrid most weeks.

- Students will be provided recorded lectures and documentaries they are to watch prior to taking the quiz and participating in class meetings.
- Students will be required to meet for *a portion* of the regularly scheduled time. Students will be assigned to a discussion period in advance (for example, from 4-5:15pm *or* from 5:30-6:45pm). Students should attend the zoom sessions to which they are assigned.
- Students should keep the entire scheduled class period free, as some weeks we may meet for the entire time.

Evaluation Distribution:

Attendance, Participation, and Proper Functioning	10%
Quizzes	35%
Personal Social Experiment and Paper	15%
Colonnade Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%

Attendance:

Attendance, on its own, is **not** required for this class. However, ***students who miss class will not have an opportunity to earn points or make up the work for activities associated with that class meeting.***

The only **exception** to this rule is that students may use the course discussion board to earn participation points when absent. Students may not make up group work, in-class assignments, or pop quizzes; but they will earn some points for participating thoughtfully if done in a timely manner (within 24 hours of the missed class meeting).

Documentation and prior notification are NOT required (Dr. Anton values your privacy). All absences count equally. If a student isn't present, the student cannot receive credit for classroom activities. However, be advised that:

Being absent does NOT constitute an excuse to submit work late.

Being absent does NOT excuse being uninformed.

Submitting work when absent

If work is due during a class meeting for which a student must be absent, it is the student's responsibility to see to it that the instructor receives the student's work ***prior to the beginning of that class*** (either online on Blackboard or via e-mail. In the event that you submit hard copies of work to Dr. Anton's mailbox (located in Room 300 Cherry Hall), you **MUST** e-mail her to let her know that it is there prior to the beginning of the class meeting.

The instructor reserves the right to refuse late work.

This attendance policy is non-negotiable.

Participation:

Everyone must participate. Since Ancient Greece, philosophers have conducted much of their "research" in dialogue, which requires the interaction of many interlocutors. Students may participate in class as well as on the Discussion Board on the course Blackboard site. If students find that they have nothing to say in class, cannot form intelligent questions or comments "on the spot", or cannot "get a word in edgewise" in heated class discussions, the discussion board is a great alternative for earning participation credit. **It is the student's responsibility to earn adequate participation credit.** Students should maintain frequent and regular engagement throughout the semester (i.e., participation worthy of an "A" will include engagement with the readings for every class meeting). Any hiatus will negatively affect the student's overall APPF grade.

Proper Functioning:

Many Ancient Greek philosophers believed that something is good and, therefore, virtuous when it fulfills its natural function well. Likewise, your virtue shall be assessed similarly. Part of good participation involves being familiar with the course syllabus, assignments, policies, requirements, etc. and doing your very best to live up to these standards. Chronic unintentional failure to meet these standards or acute belligerent disregard for such standards will result in a deduction of participation points awarded at the end of the semester. Examples of such non-virtuous behavior

might include:

- Frequent tardiness
- Frequent unpreparedness
- Being disruptive in class
- Having “no clue” of when things are due/asking the instructor when things are due when she’s already announced it.
- Ignorance of or disregard for basic parameters of assignments
- Protesting non-negotiable course policies (e.g., anything in the syllabus), etc.

All such examples (and others like them not mentioned) are manifestations of a student’s failure to do his or her job as a student, and such manifestations shall result in grade penalties in the APPF portion of the final grade.

Deal-breakers:

All written assignments will have *deal-breakers*, or minimum requirements that, if not met, constitute a failure to complete the assignment. Dr. Anton does not award credit for incomplete work. Therefore, assignments failing to meet the deal-breakers ***will not be graded***, they ***will be assigned a grade of ‘0,’*** and students ***will NOT be able to redo the assignment or anything in replace of the assignment (unless otherwise noted)***. No extra credit will be applied to an assignment failing to meet all deal-breakers.

Deal-breakers typically include:

- A strict word minimum
- Uploading the assignment via the *SafeAssign* link and checking the box to include the student’s work in the institutional database
- Incorporating course material
- Chicago Humanities footnote citations

Quizzes

There will be a quiz almost every week delivered via the Blackboard platform.

Quizzes will be due by 3:45pm on Tuesday.

That is, if we are discussing Augustine next Tues./Wed., the quiz on Augustine must be completed by 3:45pm on Tuesday (regardless of which section you are in). Students are advised to begin taking the quiz no later than 2:45 to ensure they will have the full time

Notes and readings ARE permitted during these quizzes. NO help from the Internet or other people is permitted. Follow the schedule and check under the “Quizzes” tab for more information. In general, quizzes will be due by 11:59pm the Monday of the week to which they pertain (unless otherwise noted).

It is the student’s responsibility to remember to take the quizzes each week.

Personal Social Experiment and Paper

Students are required to conduct a personal social experiment and write a paper outlining their findings in light of the course material. Explicit instructions will be available on Blackboard.

*The instructor will **not** read drafts in advance.*

Students are welcome to discuss ideas for writing this paper with the instructor during office

hours, but the student must have specific questions about how to improve specific aspects of the paper. Again, the instructor will not read (or correct) drafts of work prior to submission for credit. This paper will be due in October.

Colonnade Paper

The paper is a take home essay question that requires extensive use of written course material (required course readings), synthesizing of ideas found in course material, critical analysis, and philosophical and creative reasoning and argumentation. While not “technically” a paper, students should consider this assignment to be as important and require as much detail, attention to the course material, and effort as any term paper for any course.

Options

Students will complete a written response to 1 of 3 prompt options. Written exams must be *at least 1,000 words in length* (though no maximum is strictly assigned, the instructor suggests students not exceed 1,500 words) answering ONE of the following questions that come directly from the Colonnade Connections Course Objectives (see course objectives 1-3 above):

- 1. Given what you’ve taken from this class and its content, how do you think the development of self relates to others and society? That is, how do interpersonal relationships affect both the ways in which individuals develop into the kinds of person that they do and how various individuals affect the ways in which society evolves in response to their group membership?*
- 2. Given what you’ve taken from this class and its content, what are some values (i.e., principles, priorities, virtues, ethical norms, etc.) that form civically engaged and informed members of society? That is to say, are there values that are more likely to inspire individuals to be civically engaged and “tuned in” to their surroundings and communities? How might these values be diverse? Should we want diverse values? Why or why not?*
- 3. What are some concrete solutions to real-world social and cultural problems related to this course and its content? First, outline the real-world problem, and be sure to use course material (especially written course material) to illustrate the problem. Second, thoroughly describe several concrete solutions. You may endorse solutions mentioned in class or come up with alternatives. Be sure to distinguish between solutions already implemented (e.g., in a foreign country, through current socio-political movements, as something that is happening on a smaller scale that could be amplified, or even things we used to do that we no longer do) and solutions you suggest that are (likely) brand new. Also, be sure to evaluate the (likely) effectiveness of those solutions. Make sure that your solutions are concrete*

(i.e., can easily translate into (and that you do describe as) policies, laws, paradigm shifts in education (for example), etc.) and are not merely prescriptions to “stop” doing whatever bad thing we are doing.

Each question option will have its own due date following this schedule:

Option 1 will be due during Week 11, no later than 11:59 pm, Thur. Nov. 4th.

Option 2 will be due during Week 12, no later than 11:59 pm Thur. Nov. 11th.

Option 3 will be due during Week 14, no later than 11:59 pm Mon. Nov. 22nd.

Selecting Your Option

There are benefits to selecting each option, but they are different depending on which you select. Here are some to consider:

Option	Benefits	Downside	In addition
1	<p>__Get the assignment done early. After this paper is done, all you have to do for the rest of the semester is read, pass/perform well on quizzes, participate in class, and pass/perform well on the final.</p> <p>__This is the easiest option. Things get more abstract in later options, which typically means that later options are harder for most people.</p> <p>__While no one should blatantly disregard a dealbreaker, if you mess up and violate one, you can have one more chance to earn this credit.</p>	<p>__You won't be done learning in the course, so your options of what course material to incorporate will be less.</p> <p>__The due date will sneak up on you. It does not allow as much time to get help at the writing center, peer tutoring, or discuss ideas with Dr. Anton. You will need to be proactive about getting any writing or philosophical arguing assistance early.</p>	<p>__Consider whether you can/will put in the extra effort it takes at the beginning of any semester to do anything new competently. There is a bit of a learning curve in philosophy for anyone.</p> <p>__If you choose this option, the grade WILL BE the grade for your colonnade paper. There will be no do-overs. You will not be able to do another option if you don't like your grade. Dr. Anton will not give anyone an opportunity she won't give to everyone, and she cannot give everyone the chance to do over (or replace) such grading-intensive assignments.</p> <p>__Double check what else you have due in week 11 from other classes.</p>
2	<p>__Have some time to adjust to the class.</p> <p>__Get the assignment over with well before finals week.</p> <p>__Have more choice about which course materials to incorporate.</p> <p>__While no one should blatantly disregard a dealbreaker, if you mess up and violate one, you can have one more chance to earn this credit.</p>	<p>__This option is a little tougher than option 1. It requires thinking abstractly about values as they are revealed to you both through instances of good people and through instances of bad people.</p>	<p>__If you choose this option, the grade WILL BE the grade for your colonnade paper. There will be no do-overs. You will not be able to do another option if you don't like your grade. Dr. Anton will not give anyone an opportunity she won't give to everyone, and she cannot give everyone the chance to do over (or replace) such grading-intensive assignments.</p> <p>__Compare other assignments due in your other classes around week 12.</p>
	<p>__Have plenty of time to adjust</p>	<p>__This option is the toughest. You will</p>	<p>__Consider your comfort level with creating solutions. Options 1 and 2</p>

3	to the course and philosophy. __Have the most choice of readings to incorporate. __This is the most creative option that allows students to really shine, demonstrating their problem-solving skills and creative acumen.	have to identify both the problems that might make bad people bad <i>and</i> invent some possible solutions. You will likely have to write a bit more to achieve the objectives, and you will likely have to synthesize information from the largest swath of course information.	mostly require that you diagnose problems and argue your position. This option cannot be satisfied by diagnosing similar problems and simply declaring, “we should not do that” or “we should be more empathic.” As concrete solutions, your ideas must be the type that <i>could</i> be put into practice as policies or adopted as norms through specific, deliberate, steps.
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Students are expected to make use of the majority of written material assigned up to the week their selected option is due. For instance, Option 1 is due in week 11, therefore students ought to incorporate materials up through week 11. Students must engage course material thoroughly and critically while advancing the student’s own response to the questions (even if the student’s own response is to endorse a particular scholar’s answer). Students are *not* required to do outside research; however, any material the student elects to incorporate in the paper (including course materials) must be fully explained and cited.

In light of the **first question**, you might consider how our work throughout the course informs your view of why or how individual human beings develop (including interactions with other individuals and society writ large) based on our attention to instances when the development of the self goes awry.

The course question presumes that there are bad people. Therefore, in light of the **second question**, consider how the course has shaped your views on what kind of values stand for the foundation of a view of human beings where some are considered “bad.” What is the relationship to such values and larger groups of people/society? Furthermore, what values might encourage members of society to be informed and engage in their community? Is there any reason to think we ought to make sure our values are diverse? Is there a limit to how diverse our values can be? Why or why not?

The last question allows for a great deal of creativity. Dr. Anton looks forward to what you come up with!

Students will be graded primarily on:

- ☐ How completely and accurately they portray the positions in readings and other materials;
- ☐ How critically they evaluate said positions;
- ☐ How clearly and consistently they present their own view; and
- ☐ How well they argue in defense of their position.

More detailed instructions will be provided throughout the semester and well in advance to the paper's due date. Students are reminded that grammar, style, organization, and referencing should be done well in order to receive credit for accomplishing the above-mentioned objectives. Students are also informed that Dr. Anton does not believe there is such a thing as a naturally born good writer who can meet her standards of writing in a first draft. This is because Dr. Anton does not believe in naturally good writers; there are only good editors. *Good writers* edit their own work constantly, work on any significant piece of writing over time and in multiple sittings, get help from other writers and readers, and refine, develop, re-organize, repackage, and use multiple strategies to communicate and defend their ideas repeatedly until it is RIGHT. Students are encouraged to review the helpful material on writing philosophy (and philosophy in general) in the "Helpful Content" tab of the Blackboard Course completely and often prior to attempting this paper.

NB: As complete, frequent, and specific citing are essential to passing any paper in Dr. Anton's class, students are strongly encouraged to keep readings throughout the semester, make helpful notes in margins, highlight, etc., and keep track of precisely where something interesting is said in a reading. This requires keeping regular records of what is in readings throughout the course. Nobody wants to be searching for that pithy explanation of a concept located in "some" reading we did in the "first half" of the semester that is most likely on a left-hand side of a page. Please spare yourself this agonizing experience! Also, Dr. Anton *will not* entertain requests of this nature. That is, it is dysfunctional (in the sense that costs you proper functioning points) to ask her, "Remember someone who said something about natural impulses being bad? Where was that?" It is your responsibility as a student to know who each author is, which beliefs belong to them and are central to their system, and where in the course readings you can find evidence connecting the author to the claim.

*The instructor will **not** read drafts in advance.*

Some of the shorter writing assignments students work on throughout the semester can be used in this assignment, and therefore students are expected to keep the instructor's feedback from earlier assignments in order to revise and improve upon the earlier versions when incorporating them in the final paper. **Students are welcome to discuss ideas for writing this paper with the instructor during virtual office hours, but the student must have specific questions about how to improve specific aspects of the paper.** Again, the instructor will not read (or correct) drafts of work prior to submission for credit.

Students should refer to the *writing resources* provided by the instructor.

In particular, students are encouraged to carefully review the PowerPoint presentation on how to write a philosophy paper and to make use of the paper checklist prior to submitting work for evaluation. Students are encouraged to seek assistance improving their writing via tutors, the writing center, or their peers; however, ***plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated***. It is expected that all submitted work is that of the student and that all resources are

♦ Thorough, specific, and accurate citations are expected throughout. Citations should be formatted in accordance with *Chicago Humanities Style* (16th edition or newer, the version with footnotes) unless otherwise specified (e.g., Plato and Aristotle have their own citation methods, which are explained in a folder dedicated to these text found through this pathway: "Helpful Content" → "Writing Philosophy" → "Citing/Referencing").

properly cited. See “Anton’s Course Policies” for a discussion of academic dishonesty.

The following is the case for ALL writing assignments for Dr. Anton, unless otherwise noted.

Grammar, organization, and style count.

Students interested in passing are advised to use spell-check, ensure their sentences are neither run-ons nor fragments, and be certain to organize related sentences in a logical manner concerning a single topic for each paragraph. Unless the assignment is a single paragraph (Dr. Anton will tell you when this is the case), your assignment should have more than one paragraph. This is the *minimum* required to pass these assignments. Students interested in passing well should also refer to Dr. Anton’s “Writing” folder under “Helpful Content” in the Blackboard site for this course.

Course material must be used.

Unless Dr. Anton tells you otherwise (and, at the time of this writing, she cannot imagine why she ever would), **use the relevant course material**. For example, if a writing assignment concerns the sub-question for unit 2 in this course, address as much material from unit 2 as possible. No assignment submission that neglects relevant course material will receive full credit (*unless* the assignment specifies it is to be done *prior* to the readings).

Citing is essential.

Whenever writing about course material (or outside material that is not common knowledge, which is most material you are inclined to include), citing is required. Dr. Anton **requires students use *Chicago Manual of Style*** (16th edition or later—the footnote (NOT endnote) version), unless otherwise specified. Citations must be specific. They should include exact page numbers or ranges of pages in almost every case. See the folder labeled “Chicago Humanities Style” on Blackboard. Go through this path to get there:

“Helpful Content”→”Writing Philosophy”→”Citing and Referencing”.

These are standard criteria that must be met to pass any writing assignments in this course. Of course, other requirements not mentioned still apply (e.g., completeness, accuracy, evidence-gathering, sense-making, argumentation, compliance with directions, etc.).

Final Exam

The final exam for this course will cover all content studied. Questions from earlier quizzes may be repeated on this exam, so students are advised to keep track of anything they get wrong on quizzes, any questions that they found particularly difficult, and any “lucky guesses” they had that might require further inquiry into the course material to make sure they understand why they got the question right.

The final exam will be administered over zoom during the regularly scheduled exam period for your class. It is password protected and students will receive the password immediately prior to the start of the exam. Students are required to take the exam with their zoom cameras on at all times. The exam periods are as follows:

Tues. section, PHIL 211.701: Tuesday, December 7th, 2021 from 3:45-5:45pm.
Wed. section, PHIL 211.702: Wednesday, December 8th, 2021 from 3:45-5:45pm.

Additional Essential Policies and Information (including appendices)

Academic Dishonesty

Abide by rules of academic honesty at all times. Academic Dishonesty (including plagiarism) is an offense punishable by an 'F' for the entire course. Dr. Anton will report instances of academic dishonesty to the student conduct office. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. It is the student's responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Other Course-Specific Policies:

Please see the document, **"Anton's Course Policies"** for further information (available on Blackboard and by request). This document is an appendix to the syllabus; therefore, it is equally binding. This syllabus (as well as its appendices, reading lists, and assignments and deadlines) is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor at any time.

University Policies:

Persons with Disabilities

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

Policies Concerning Inclusion

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the 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 at 270-745-3159.

For more information about student rights and responsibilities, go to:

<https://www.wku.edu/syllabusinfo/>

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