

Why Evil Exists: Must We Be Wicked? – Part II

OLLI, Spring 2024

Instructor: James J. Moser

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Prerequisites: None

Materials required: None

What is “evil”? Why do humans do evil?

We will pursue a richly rewarding encounter with dynamic inquiries into Western Civilization’s greatest thinking on this ancient and timely subject. While we will cover six thousand years of human history, the present face of evil in our world will always be lurking in our examination. We will probe how humans have conceived of evil, how we’ve grappled with it, and how we’ve opposed it. And, not least, we will continually hold out the question, “Where can hope be found?”

The “*spine*” of the course is a Learning Company Great Courses lecture series by Professor Charles Mathewes of the University of Virginia, *Why Evil Exists*. The “*skeletal*” structure of the course will be brief lecture presentations by the instructor. The “*flesh*” of the course will be the rich discussion, the ebb and flow of discourse, by class members that will follow each segment. Part I of the course (Fall 2023) ranged from the ancients to the Enlightenment. This course, Part II, Spring 2024, will resume with the Enlightenment and proceed to the present day.

Week 1 – The Enlightenment and Its Discontents

Week 2 – Kant: Evil at the Root of Human Agency

Week 3 – Hegel: The Slaughter Block of History

Week 4 – Marx: Materialism and Evil

Week 5 – The American North and South: Holy War

Week 6 – Nietzsche: Considering the Language of Evil

Week 7 – Freud: The Death Drive and the Inexplicable

Week 8 – Post WWII Protestant Theology on Evil

Week 9 – Post WWII Roman Catholic Theology on Evil

Week 10 – Post WWII Jewish Thought on Evil

Week 11 – Arendt: The Banality of Evil

Week 12 – The “Unnaming” of Evil

Week 13 – Where Can Hope Be Found?