

Module code: MOD000749	Version: 3 Date Amended: 12/Dec/2025
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1. Module Title
Philosophy of Evil and Criminality

2a. Module Leader
Michael Wilby

2b. School
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

2c. Faculty
Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences

3a. Level
6

3b. Module Type
Standard (fine graded)

4a. Credits
15

4b. Study Hours
150

5. Restrictions			
Type	Module Code	Module Name	Condition
Pre-requisites:	None		
Co-requisites:	None		
Exclusions:	None		
Courses to which this module is restricted:	None		

LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

6a. Module Description

In this module, you will explore the concept of 'evil' from a cross-disciplinary perspective examining immorality and criminality from theological, philosophical, sociological, political, ethical and psychological perspectives. You will begin with the theological origins of evil and consider how this influences modern debates about crime and immorality and the connection to free will, whether individuals who commit evil acts lack psychological 'barriers' to harming others, and how wider social and political structures can enable or normalize evil, including extremism and violence. You will also examine society-sanctioned forms of harm such as war and investigate what goes wrong when entire societies fall under the influence of destructive ideologies, as in Nazi Germany, and to question whether some acts challenge traditional ideas of justice, forgiveness, and punishment.

Throughout, you will engage with influential thinkers—both classical and contemporary—such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Hannah Arendt, Mary Midgley, Jean Hampton, Susan Neiman, Quassim Cassam, and Raimond Gaita. By the end, you will have gained insights that help you understand how concepts of evil shape real-world issues and contemporary moral debates.

6b. Outline Content

- The concept of 'evil' in traditional and modern contexts
- The role of free will in immorality and criminality
- Relativism and the value of morality
- The psychological profiles of criminal psychopaths
- The concept of 'summum malum' in political thought
- Ideology in contemporary 'extremist' groups and terrorist organisations
- War and the embodiment of evil
- Evil societies: Nazi Germany and dehumanisation
- After evil: punishment and forgiveness

6c. Key Texts/Literature

The reading list to support this module is available at: <https://readinglists.aru.ac.uk/>

6d. Specialist Learning Resources

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/evil/> <http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=1213>

7. Learning Outcomes (threshold standards)		
No.	Type	On successful completion of this module the student will be expected to be able to:
1	Knowledge and Understanding	Critically assess the usefulness of the concept of evil in moral discourse.
2	Knowledge and Understanding	Show proficiency in analysing contemporary perceptions of 'good', 'evil', 'wickedness' and 'vice'.
3	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Analyse contemporary accounts of evil and evaluate the concept of evil in the history of philosophy from Leibniz to the present.
4	Intellectual, practical, affective and transferrable skills	Work as part of a small team to produce a report to a deadline.

8a. Module Occurrence to which this MDF Refers				
Year	Occurrence	Period	Location	Mode of Delivery
2026/7	ZZF	Template For Face To Face Learning Delivery		Face to Face

8b. Learning Activities for the above Module Occurrence			
Learning Activities	Hours	Learning Outcomes	Details of Duration, frequency and other comments
Lectures	12	1, 2	1hr lecture and 1hr seminar per week.
Other teacher managed learning	12	1, 2	1hr lecture and 1hr seminar per week.
Student managed learning	126	1-4	Assessment preparation.
TOTAL:	150		

9. Assessment for the above Module Occurrence					
Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
010	Coursework	1,2,3	60 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)
Essay: 2500 words. Choice of essay questions.					
Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
011	Practical	2,3,4	40 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)
Report: Results of brief collaborative presentation and discussion, to be written up.					

In order to pass this module, students are required to achieve an overall mark of 40% (for modules at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6) or 50% (for modules at level 7*).

In addition, students are required to:

- (a) achieve the qualifying mark for each element of fine graded assessment as specified above
- (b) pass any pass/fail elements

[* the pass mark of 50% applies for all module occurrences from the academic year 2024/25 – see Section 3a of this MDF to check the level of the module and Section 8a of this MDF to check the academic year]