

English 315-1001 [85302] – Medieval Literature in Translation:

Sins and Sinners in Western Culture

Prof. Richard Newhauser

Fall Semester, 2014; 10:30-11:45 a.m. TTh; LL 103

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Office Hours: TTh 12:00-2:00 p.m., and by appointment

Description

A recent TV series on The History Channel, a book series at Oxford University Press, eight articles by contemporary novelists in *The New York Times Book Review*, an hour-long special on MTV, as well as the feature-length film *Se7en* – all of these productions were devoted to the seven deadly sins. They demonstrate the lasting impact of this systematization of morality on western thought within both elite and popular culture for the last millennium and a half. This interdisciplinary class will investigate the origins of the idea of a systematized list of chief vices which emerged in the ethical writings of monks in the Egyptian desert in the fourth century; the medieval developments of this idea in literature and the arts in monastic, courtly, and university environments; its transmission in late-medieval popular and vernacular forms, especially in England, and in the literature of the English renaissance; and its adaptations in modern literature, art, and music.

Reading List

Kleinberg, Aviad. *7 Deadly Sins. A Very Partial List*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008; reprint 2010. ISBN: 9780674057326.

On Reserve or Available through the Library Portal or my Web Site:

Bossy, John. "Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments." In *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Edmund Leites. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, Paris: Editions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 1988. Pp. 214-34. [Hayden: BJ301.C63 1988]

Bracciolini, Poggio. *On Avarice*. Trans. Benjamin G. Kohl and Elizabeth B. Welles. In *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*. Ed. Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt, with Elizabeth B. Welles. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1978. Pp. 241-89. [Hayden: DG532.E37]

Brecht, Bertolt, and Kurt Weill. *The Seven Deadly Sins of the Petty Bourgeoisie*. In *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny and The Seven Deadly Sins of the Petty Bourgeoisie*. Ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim. Trans. W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman. New York: Arcade, 1996. Pp. 67-83. [Hayden: PT2603.R397A9613 1996]

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The Parson's Tale." In *The Canterbury Tales*. Trans. Ronald L. Ecker and Eugene J. Crook. Palatka, FL: Hodge & Braddock, 1993. [Hayden: PR1870.A1E27 1993]

- Evagrius Ponticus. *The Praktikos. Chapters on Prayer*. Trans. John Eudes Bamberger. Cistercian Studies Series, 4. Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1972, reprint 1981. [Hayden: BV5039.G7E973]
- Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*. Trans. A. V. C. Schmidt. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992. [pdf]
- Little, Lester K. "Pride Goes before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom." *The American Historical Review* 76,1 (1971): 16-49. [JSTOR]
- Martin of Braga. *De ira*. Trans. Claude W. Barlow. In *Iberian Fathers*, vol. 1. Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America Press, [1969]. Pp. 59-69. [Hayden: BR60.F3I2 v.1]
- Newhauser, Richard. "Introduction: Cultural Construction and the Vices." In *The Seven Deadly Sins: From Communities to Individuals*. Ed. Richard Newhauser. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions: History, Culture, Religion, Ideas, vol. 123. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007. Pp. 1-9. [Hayden: BV4626.S48 2007]
- Newhauser, Richard. "On Ambiguity in Moral Theology: When the Vices Masquerade as Virtues." Trans. Andrea Nemeth-Newhauser. In R. Newhauser. *Sin: Essays on the Moral Tradition in the Western Middle Ages*. Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS869. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. Essay I. [Hayden: BJ231.N49 2007]
- Prudentius. *Psychomachia*. Trans. H. J. Thomson. In *Prudentius*, vol. 1. Loeb Classical Library, 387. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1949, reprint 1969. [Hayden: PA6648.P6 1949 v.1]
- Pynchon, Thomas [et al.], *Deadly Sins*; illustrations by Etienne Delessert. New York: W. Morrow, 1993. [originally published in *The New York Times Book Review*: Thomas Pynchon, "Nearer, My Couch, to Thee" (June 6, 1993, pp. 3, 57); Mary Gordon, "The Fascination Begins in the Mouth" (June 13, 1993, pp. 3, 31); John Updike, "Even the Bible is Soft on Sex" (June 20, 1993, pp. 3, 29); William Trevor, "Remembering Mr. Pinkerton" (June 27, 1993, pp. 3, 25); Gore Vidal, "The Most Unnerving Sin" (July 4, 1993, p. 3); Richard Howard, "Avarice, 1849: A Distraction" (July 11, 1993, p. 3); A. S. Byatt, "The Sin of Families and Nations" (July 18, 1993, pp. 3, 25-26); Joyce Carol Oates, "The One Unforgivable Sin" (July 25, 1993, pp. 3, 25)] [Hayden: BV4626.D43 1993]
- Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr., with C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. London: Penguin, 1978, reprint 1987. [PR2358.A3R6 1978]

Requirements:

Students will be responsible for the content not only of the reading assignments, but also of our discussions in class. Regular attendance and participation in the discussions of *all* texts (not just the text[s] that you are researching for the semester) are prerequisites for passing the course. The door to the classroom will remain open for five minutes after the scheduled time for the class to begin; after that point the door will be closed. If you are late and see that the door has been closed, you have already been marked absent for that day – do not come into the classroom. Two unexcused absences are permissible without any effect on your grade, but three unexcused absences or more will adversely affect the final grade for the course. Absences due to a medical condition must be excused by a statement signed by the physician in charge of the treatment (not a nurse). You may also expect brief quizzes on all reading assignments. Do not use electronic equipment in the classroom to take notes or record the discussion. The final grades for the course will be composed of individual performance in six areas:

- 1) A Topic Description. All Topic Descriptions (1 page; typewritten; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, and your name at the top of the page; and carefully proofread), which will either be assigned to you or which you will choose yourself *after consultation with me*, are due on Thursday, September 11. You *must* meet with me during my office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss your topic. The grade on the Topic Description will account for about 10 percent of your final grade. Two or three students may wish to work together on a series of oral presentations of related topics or literary texts and/or intellectual documents to be held at successive class meetings. To see an example of a well done Topic Description, click on the following link: [Sample 1](#)
- 2) An oral presentation (ca. 10-15 minutes) representing the fruits of your initial research on a topic. The presentation should be open-ended and should encourage questions from the rest of the class. The grade on the presentation will account for about 15 percent of the final grade.
- 3) A brief critical book report (1-2 pages; typed or printed in no larger than size 12 font; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and your name on every page; and carefully proofread) of one or two major studies of the topic or text on which your report is based, due on the date of the oral report. Include the bibliography of the book(s) or article(s) you are reviewing at the end of your review. The grade on the critical book report will account for about 10 percent of the final grade. To see an example of a well done review, click on the following link: [Sample 1](#).
- 4) Quizzes on each work to be read for the semester. The average of all the quizzes will account for about 20 percent of the final grade.
- 5) A short paper (5 pages, excluding bibliography; typed or printed in no larger than size 12 font; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and your name on every page; and carefully proofread) to be handed in one week *before* the oral presentation. The paper will include an annotated bibliography of 3-5 items which you will have read in preparation for giving the report and writing the paper (for all questions of documentation and references, follow the guidelines available at: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dedalus/guidetostyle/index.html>). The short paper for *all* reports to be held on or after October 23 will be due on Thursday, October 16. The short paper will serve as the basis for your term paper. The grade on the short paper will account for about 20 percent of the final grade. To see examples of all that is required for a good paper, click on the following links: [Sample 1](#), [Sample 2](#).
- 6) A term paper (12-15 pages including bibliography; typed or printed in no larger than size 12 font; double-spaced; with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and your name on every page; and carefully proofread) in which all of your research on the topic, and all of your own brilliance, are formulated carefully and in the scope which the subject demands. Term papers must be turned in to me – *together with the copy of the short paper you handed in to me and which I returned to you with my comments* – at the latest on the last day of class. I will not be able to complete your grade for the course (you will receive an Incomplete) unless I receive both papers at the end of the semester. The grade on the term paper will account for about 25 percent of the final grade.

Syllabus

1. Th 8/21 – Introduction: The syllabus, documentation and style, academic integrity
2. T 8/26 – What is Sin? [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 10-31]
3. Th 8/28 – Sins as Cultural Constructions [read for today: Newhauser, “Introduction”]; The Sins on MTV-1
4. T 9/2 – The Sins on MTV-2; Practical Ethics: Decision Making
5. Th 9/4 – Origins: Monastic Culture [read for today: from Evagrius, *The Praktikos*, pp. 16-26 (the eight evil thoughts)]
6. T 9/9 – Accidia (Sloth) [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 32-43]
7. Th 9/11 – Sin and Social Change [read for today: Little, “Pride Goes before Avarice”]; All Topic Descriptions Due Today
8. T 9/16 – Aristocratic Society [read for today: from Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, pp. 290-301 (pride v. humility)]; Student report _____; Student report _____
9. Th 9/18 – Superbia (Pride); [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 132-49]; Student report _____; Student report _____
10. T 9/23 – Medieval and Classical Cultures [read for today: Martin of Braga, *De ira*]; Student report _____; Student report _____
11. Th 9/25 – No class: Rosh haShanah
12. T 9/30 – Ira (Wrath); [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 113-31]; Student report _____; Student report _____
13. Th 10/2 – Academic Culture; Systems of Vices and Virtues; Student report _____; Student report _____

14. T 10/7 – Invidia (Envy); [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 44-61]; Student report _____; Student report _____
15. W 10/9 – Sin and Confession [read for today: from Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Parson’s Tale,” pp. 530-64 (vices and contrary virtues)]; Student report _____; Student report _____

(10/11 – 10/14, No class: Fall Break)

16. Th 10/16 – Peasant/Bourgeois Society [read for today: from William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, pp. 42-63, 270-79 (B.5: sins’ confession) (pdf)]; Student report _____; Student report _____; short paper for all reports to be held on or after October 23 due today
17. T 10/21 – Accidia (Sloth); Student report _____; Student report _____
18. Th 10/23 – The Seven Deadly Sins and Modernity I [read for today: Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic”]; Student report _____; Student report _____
19. T 10/28 – Ambiguity and Moral Theology [read for today: Newhauser, “On Ambiguity in Moral Theology”]; Student report _____; Student report _____
20. Th 10/30 – Avaritia (Greed); [read for today: Poggio Bracciolini, *On Avarice*; from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 97-112]; Student report _____; Student report _____
21. T 11/4 – The Seven Deadly Sins and Modernity II [read for today: from Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, I.iv, pp. 79-91, 1085-88 (procession of sins)]; Student report _____; Student report _____
22. Th 11/6 – Gula (Gluttony); [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 81-96]; Student report _____; Student report _____

(T 11/11: No class: Veterans Day)

23. Th 11/13 – Vices as Virtues [read for today: Brecht and Weill, *The Seven Deadly Sins*];
Student report _____; Student report _____

24. T 11/18 – Luxuria (Lust); [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 62-80]; Student
report _____; Student report _____

25. Th 11/20 – Rethinking Sin I [read for today: Pynchon et al., *Deadly Sins*, essays by Pynchon,
Gordon, Updike, and Trevor]; Student report _____; Student report

26. T 11/25 – Rethinking Sin II [read for today: Pynchon et al., *Deadly Sins*, essays by Vidal,
Howard, Byatt, and Oates]; Student report _____; Student report

(11/27 – 11/28: No class: Thanksgiving Break)

27. T 12/2 – New Sins?; [read for today: from Kleinberg, *7 Deadly Sins*, pp. 150-65]; Student
report _____; Student report _____

28. Th 12/4 – Epilogue; Final Paper due today (with the copy of the short paper you handed in to
me earlier in the semester)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY!

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see: <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Plagiarism is generally defined as using another's words, ideas, materials or work without acknowledging the source. You are responsible for knowing how to use someone else's work how to acknowledge that source properly.

You might want to read an article about plagiarism at US universities that appeared in *The New York Times* in 2010:

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/education/02cheat.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&hp