

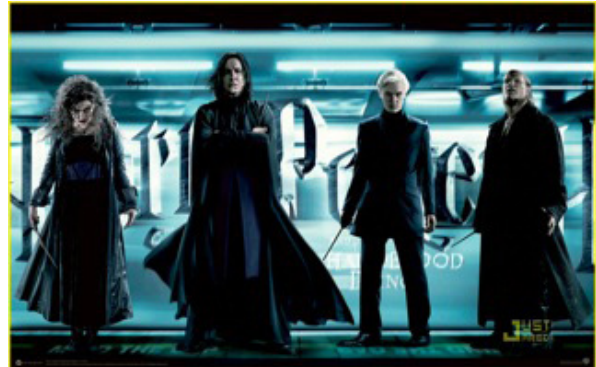
Harry Potter: Confronting the Problem of Evil

UHON 302-009 | W | 10:00-12:30 | SHC 12 | 37700

Fulfills A&S Group V: Humanities

Dr. Sheri Karmioli

Sometimes when we watch the evening news, it might seem as if evil surrounds us. From the random drive-by shooting of a child to a storm that claims thousands of victims, we live with evil in many different forms, even as we struggle with its meaning in our personal lives. Since the publication of J.K. Rowling's first novel, some parents and religious leaders have maintained that they see evil in the Harry Potter series. And, indeed, there are many literary allusions to evil, some of which stretch back to antiquity. How then should we comprehend the evil that is presented in Harry Potter? Is the battle between good and evil that defines these books in some way different from the evil that permeates our nightly news? In this class, we will focus our attention on historical and literary depictions of evil and how evil functions in Rowling's seven novels. In addition, we will consider how she uses ancient and medieval conceptions of good and evil to illuminate the problems of evil in our own world. As we read these novels (and for most of you—reread them) we will reflect on the ethical dilemmas that Rowling presents, her characters' responses to evil, and what readers might learn from books in which good does, in fact, sometimes defeat evil, even if only for a short period of time.



Student Comments

"She always thought of good activities and brought out some very interesting discussion pertaining to the books."

"I liked the well-rounded readings, discussions, and point of views"

"I loved talking about Harry Potter. It made me feel better."

"This class was amazing and one of the highlights of my week. I am now planning on attending Hogwarts with a major in Defense Against the Dark Arts and a minor in Charms."

Readings

David Baggett & Shawn E. Klein, *Harry Potter and Philosophy*

Edmund M. Kern, *The Wisdom of Harry Potter: What our Favorite Hero Teaches us about Moral Choices*

Travis Prinzi, *Harry Potter & Imagination: The Way Between Two Worlds*

Requirements

An analytical essay, presentation, class discussion leader, one lengthy research project, and active participation in seminar discussions and activities.

About the Instructor

Sheri Karmioli has a Ph.D. in 16th and 17th century British literature. Most of the classes that she teaches focus on social inequity, prejudice, and the marginalization of people, who are classified as expendable members of society. Sheri has been honored with awards for her teaching and has received two fellowships, including one for study at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.