ICS Calendar Title: The Aesthetics of Compassion
ICS Course Code: ICS 220104 F24
Instructor: Dr. Rebekah Smick, rsmick@icscanada.edu, 416-979-2331 ext. 288
Term and Year: Thursdays, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, Fall 2024

1. Course Description

The emotion of "pity" (*eleos*) or "compassion" is at the heart of Athenian tragedy, the great forbear of Western tragic drama. For Aristotle, creating feelings of pity and fear in an audience was thought to provoke a catharsis of those emotions that enabled a positive moderation of our passionate natures. But, as George Steiner has observed, the subject matter of tragedy places those emotions in a register beyond the ordinary. As fundamental human responses to extraordinary human suffering, they signal the "core of dynamic negativity" that underwrites authentic tragedy. Raising the problem of human pain and fragility in the face of circumstances potentially beyond human control, representations of human suffering have a metaphysical and, more particularly, theological dimension that has long provoked philosophical interest in the dynamics of tragic drama. In this course, we will examine the interface between philosophy, theology, and works of tragic drama as that interface pertains to the psychology and aesthetics of compassion. Looking to such writers as Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche and Simone Weil, we will investigate the place of compassion in Western philosophy and theology and the roles that art and imagination have played in the stimulation of compassionate response.

2. Course Requirements

- **Class participation.** Students will be expected to participate in class discussions on the required readings. **20% of final mark**
- **Seminar presentation.** Students will be expected to lead class discussion of the seminar's weekly readings. **30% of final mark**
- **Research paper on an approved topic.** Students at the Master's level will submit a 4000-5000 word research essay on an approved topic; essays by doctoral students will be 5000-7000 words. A one-page proposal with initial bibliography will be handed in **during class on November 14.** Final papers are due **Thursday, 30 January 2025. 50% of final mark.** TST students will submit their papers on **Thursday, 19 December 2024.**

Possible Paper Topics
In addition to the figures treated in class, students might consider investigating the aesthetics of compassion in the thought of any of the following thinkers: Thomas Aquinas, Edmund Spenser, John Dryden, Renee Descartes, David Hume, Baruch Spinoza, William Blake, Joseph Addison, Francis Hutcheson, Lord Shaftesbury, Gottfried

Lessing, Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Marcel Proust, Emily Bronte.

3. Required Readings

*Note: Items on the ICS Library Reserve Shelf from this list may be borrowed overnight.

Plato. *The Ion.* In *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. B. Jowett. New York: Scribner Open Access - [ICS Stacks: B358 .C3 1997 c.1]

Plato. *The Symposium.* In *Plato: Complete Works.* Ed. J.M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997. Open Access, [ICS Stacks: B358 C3 1997 c. 1]

- "Diotima's Speech" 201d-212c

Plato. *The Republic*. Ed. Andrea Tschemplik. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005. Open Access

- Book X, 602c-608b ("How poetic imitation affects the soul"-"Ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry," pp. 362-369)

Aristotle. *The Poetics.* Ed. S.H. Butcher. New York: Dover, 1951. Open Access

- Chap. 6, 1449b27-28; Chap. 9, 1451a37-1452a11; Chap. 11, 1452a22-1452b13; Chap.13, 1452b28-1453a34; and Chap. 14, 1453b1-27

Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse.* Trans. George Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Open Access

- Book 2, Chapter 8

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria, Vol. II.* Trans. H.E. Butler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985. Open Access

- Book VI. II. 23-36

Martha Nussbaum. "Luck and the Tragic Emotions" In *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 378-394 [ICS Stacks: BJ192 .N87 1986]
(A digital copy of this text will be made available to students in Google Classroom)

Lucius Annasus Seneca. *Moral Essays*. Translated by John W. Basore. The Loeb Classical Library. London: W. Heinemann, 1928-1935. 3 vols. Open Access

- Volume I, *On Mercy*, I. xix. 2 - xxi. 3; II. iv. 3 - II. vi. 3
- Paul, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine.* Translated by D.W. Robertson. Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press, 1958. Book I.x.10 – I.xiii.12; Book I.xvii.16; Book I.xxii.20-21; Book I.xxx.31-33; Book I.xxxi.34-I.xxxii.35. Open Access

Augustine. *The City of God against the Pagans*. Translated by David S. Wiesen. The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. III. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, Book IX, Chaps. 4 and 5. Open Access [ICS print copies are in Hamilton Collection]

Augustine. "Tractate 60." In *Tractates on the Gospel of John 55-111*. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1994, pp. 28-32.
(Students can access this resource as an eBook from the UofT library catalogue)

Michael Psellos. "Sermon on the Crucifixion." Trans. Elizabeth A. Fisher. In "Image and Ekphrasis in Michael Psellos" Sermon on the Crucifixion." *Byzantinoslavica*, 55 (1994) 1, 44-55. (A digital copy of this text will be made available to students in Google Classroom)

Hermannus Alemannus. "Translation of Averroes" "Middle Commentary" on Aristotle's *Poetics*: Extracts' of Aristotle.*"* In *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c.1100-c.1375: The Commentary Tradition.* Eds. A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 289-313.
(A digital copy of this text will be made available to students in Google Classroom)
(Print copy available at ICS Stacks, PN88 .M395 1991, or from Trinity College Library or E.J. Pratt Library)

Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy*. Trans. Mark Musa. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.
Open Access

- *Inferno*, Canto I, Canto II, Canto V, Canto VI, Canto VIII, Canto XIII, Canto XX
- *Purgatorio,* Canto XXVII, Canto XXX,
- *Paradiso,* Canto XIII, Canto XXXIII

William Shakespeare. *The Tempest*. Ed. Frank Kermode. London: Methuen, 1961.
Open Access

Arthur Schopenhauer. *On the Basis of Morality.* Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Indianapolis: New York, 1965. Part III, chaps V-VIII
(A digital copy of this text will be made available to students in Google Classroom)
[ICS Stacks – B3144 .U252 E5 2005]

Fyodor Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment.* Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Random House, 1992
Open Access Version or students can purchase their own copy

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin, 1982 | [ICS Stacks – B3313 .A43 .E5]
Open Access Version

- II: "On the Compassionate;" III: "On the Vision and the Riddle;" IV: "The Cry of Distress;" IV: "The Ugliest Man."

_____. From *The Birth of Tragedy.* In *Tragedy*. Eds. John Drakakis and Naomi Liebler. London and New York: 1998, pp. 53-64. Open Access

Simone Weil. *Waiting on God*. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 38-46.
Students can access this text as an eBook from the UofT library catalogue

- "The Love of God and Affliction," pp. 38-46
- "Forms of the Implicit Love of God," pp. 48-82.

Simone Weil. *Gateway to God*. Ed. David Raper. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
Open Access. (Students need to purchase this text. Available from Amazon CA, Google Books, or to borrow a copy from a UofT library branch, which has print copies at E.J. Pratt, Knox, and Robarts]

- "Additional pages on the Love of God and Affliction," pp. 87-102.

4. Some Recommended Readings

Barton, R. B., Klaudies, A., and Micklich, T. *Sympathy in Transformation: Dynamics between Rhetorics, Poetics and Ethics.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.

Bell, Richard. *Simone Weil: The Way of Justice and Compassion*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1963.

Blowers, Paul M. "Pity, Empathy and the Tragic Spectacle of Human Suffering: Exploring the Emotional Culture of Compassion in Late Ancient Christianity." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Volume 18, Number 1, Spring (2010), pp. 1-27.

Brueck, Katherine T. "The Sacramental Poetics of Simone Weil." In *The Redemption of Tragedy: The Literary Vision of Simone Weil*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995

Carr, Brian, "Pity and Compassion as Social Virtues," *Philosophy*, Vol. 74, No. 289 (1999), pp. 411-429.

Carrol, Noel. “Art, Narrative, and Moral Understanding.” In *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*. Ed. Jerrold Levinson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998

Cartwright, David. “Kant’s View of the Moral Significance of Kindhearted Emotions and the Moral Insignificance of Kant’s View.” *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 21 (1987), 291-304.

Dox, Donnalee. *The Idea of the Theater in Latin Christian Thought: Augustine to the Fourteenth Century*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Eagleton, Terry. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Faber, Alyda. “*Dancer in the Dark*: Affliction and the Aesthetic of Attention.” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2006), pp. 85-106.

Fisher, E.A. “Image and Ekphrasis in Michael Psellus- Sermon on the Crucifixion.” *Byzantinoslavica*, 55.1 (1994), 53

Fitzgerald, Allan D. “Mercy, Works of Mercy.” In *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009.

Frazer, Michael L. “The compassion of Zarathustra : Nietzsche on sympathy and strength.” *The Review of politics* (2006), vol. 68, no1, pp. 49-78

Fulton, Rachel. *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Guyer, Paul. “Pleasure and Knowledge in Schopenhauer’s Aesthetics.” *In Schopenhauer, Philosophy, and the Arts*. Ed. Dale Jacquette. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

HaCohen, Ruth. “The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference.” *Poetics Today*, 22: 3 (Fall 2001), 607-650.

Halliwell, Stephen. *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

James, Susan. *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth Century Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Tragedy and Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Keaty, Anthony. “The Christian Virtue of Mercy: Aquinas’ Transformation of Aristotelian Pity.” *Heythrop Journal*. Vol. 46, Issue 2 (April, 2005), 181-198.

Kirsch, Arthur. "Virtue, Vice, and Compassion in Montaigne and the Tempest." *Studies in English Literature. 1500-1900,* 37, 2 (1997), 337-362.

Kobialka, Michal. *This Is My Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Konstan, David. *Pity Transformed*. London: Duckworth, 2001.

Levene, D.S. "Pity, Fear and the Historical Audience: Tacitus on the Fall of Vitellius." In *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*. Eds. Susanna Norton Braund and Christopher Gill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997

McCarthy, John A. "Criticism and Experience: Philosophy and Literature in the German Enlightenment." In *Philosophy and German Literature, 1700-1990*. Ed. Nicholas Saul. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 13-56.

Morrison, Karl F. *I Am You:Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Compassion: The Most Basic Social Emotion." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13 (1996), 27-58.

_____. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

_____. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

_____. "Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity." In *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*. Ed. A. Rorty. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 261-290.

_____. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Pattison, George. "Desire, Decreation and Unknowing in the God-relationship: Mystical Theology and its Transformation in Kierkegaard, Simone Weil and Dostoevsky." In *Subjectivity and Transcendence*. Ed. Arne Grøn. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007, pp. 193-211.

Pensky, Max. *Melancholy dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the play of mourning*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993.

Pinotti, A. , Du Bos, “L’empatia e i neuroni specchio.” In *Jean-Baptiste Du Bos e l’Estetica dello Spettatore*. Ed. L. Russo. Roma: Centro Internazionale di Studi Estetici, 2007, 203-212.

Springsted, Eric. *Simone Weil and the Suffering of Love*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1986.

Steiner, George. *The Death of Tragedy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Webb, Ruth. “Imagination and the Arousal of the Emotions in Greco-Roman Rhetoric.” In *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*. Eds. Susanna Norton Braund and Christopher Gill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Wessel, Susan. *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Williams, Rowan. *Dostoevsky: Language, Faith and Fiction*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2010.

_____. *On Augustine*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016.

_____. *The Tragic Imagination (The Literary Agenda)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Young, Julian. *Schopenhauer*. London: Routledge, 2005.

5. Reading Schedule

1. Sept. 12	Introduction
2. Sept. 19	Plato, *The Republic*, *The Ion, The Symposium* ● Book X, 602c-608b; ● Complete *Ion*; ● Diotima’s Speech
3. Sept. 26	Aristotle’s *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* ● *Poetics*, Chap. 6, 1449b24-1450a9; Chap. 9, 1451a37-1452a11; Chap. 11, 1452a22-1452b13; Chap. 13, 1452b28-1453a34; and Chap. 14, 1453b1-27 ● *Rhetoric,* Book 2, Chapter 8 Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* ● Book VI.II.23-36

4. Oct. 3	Nussbaum, “Luck and the Tragic Emotions” Seneca, *On Mercy* ● I. xix. 2 - xxi. 3; II. iv. 3 - II. vi. 3 Paul, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* ● I.x.10 – I.xiii.12; I.xvii.16; I.xxii.20-21; I.xxx.31-33; I.xxxi.34-I.xxxii.35. Augustine, *City of God* ● Book IX, Chapters 4 and 5 Augustine, “Tractate 60,” *Tractates on the Gospel of John*
5. Oct. 10	Michael Psellos, “Sermon on the Crucifixion” The Middle Commentary of Averroes ● Commentary extracts
6. Oct. 17	Dante, *The Divine Comedy* ● *Inferno*, Cantos I, II, V, VI, VIII, XIII and XX ● *Purgatorio*, Cantos XXVII and XXX ● *Paradiso,* Cantos XIII and XXXIII
Oct. 21-25	Reading Week - no class
7. Oct. 31	William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* ● complete play
8. Nov. 7	Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality* ● Part III, Chaps. V-VIII
9. Nov. 14	Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* ● Parts 1-3
10. Nov. 21	Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* ● Parts 4-6 and Epilogue
11. Nov. 28	Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Birth of Tragedy* ● *Zarathustra,* II, III, IV ● *Tragedy,* pp. 53-64
12. Dec. 5	Simone Weil, *Waiting on God* ● “The Love of God and Affliction,” pp. 38-46 ● “Forms of the Implicit Love of God,” pp. 48-82 Simone Weil, *Gateway to God*

	● "Additional pages on the Love of God and Affliction," pp. 87-102
13. Dec. 12	● Wrap up

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