# History of Philosophy (Second-level degree)

## Prof. Giuseppe D'Anna

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Evil exists in the world. We experience it in a lot of circumstances; in relation to ourselves and other people. However, how is it possible that divine perfection accepts and allows evil? The issue of evil has characterised the whole history of philosophy, which has provided the most disparate solutions to it. The course aims to explore the topic of evil in *Leibniz’s Theodicy Essays*, where it is analysed from a metaphysical perspective, in an attempt to find a rational justification that is not in contradiction with divine omnipotence, absolute wisdom, and omniscience. Furthermore, in Leibniz’s perspective, the issue of evil intersects with the one of man’s freedom and the responsibility for sin.

In particular, the course aims to:

1. Provide students with an overall historical-philosophical and theoretical framework of the concept of evil in the modern age, as well as an introduction to Leibniz’s thought with a focus on the issue of evil.
2. Carry out a critical comparison between Bayle’s and Leibniz’s positions, explaining their arguments concerning the relationship between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, especially on the issue of evil and its moral and metaphysical nature
3. Problematise the modern ideas related to the concept of ‘evil’ and assess their current relevance.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Know and learn in-depth the philosophical meaning of the concept of ‘evil’ in the modern age through Leibniz’s thought.
2. Know and develop the ability to apply the philosophical lexicon learnt during the analysis of texts to the historical-philosophical context taken into consideration and apply the same ability to other historical-philosophical contexts.
3. Know how to communicate and argue philosophical positions relating to the topics covered, having in mind the historical-conceptual elements and lexical tools learnt during the course.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course will be focused on the analysis of Leibniz’s thought, especially in relation to the issue of evil. It will analyse the *Theodicy Essays* published in 1710. Thanks to this work written by Leibniz and the arguments contained in it, students will be able to deduce the answers of philosophy to the origins of evil, which still is a very complex and relevant topic, especially if it is analysed in relation to divine perfection. Through the issue of evil and the problematisation of the best of all possible worlds, the course will also examine the inevitable issue of man’s freedom and responsibility.

***READING LIST***

Leibniz, *Saggi di teodicea. Sulla bontà di Dio, la libertà dell’uomo e l’origine del male* (students can choose any edition. During the course, the lecturer will provide the teaching material that he considers appropriate)

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be delivered by means of lectures with active student participation, both in terms of class discussion and of submitting papers for presentation and discussion during the course. Moreover, during the course, the lesson will be held as a seminar with the participation of specialists in the subject matter with whom students will be invited to interact. The material available to students will be optimised with the support of the Blackboard platform on the University website (*http://blackboard.unicatt.it*).

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by means of an oral exam.

The exam is designed to ascertain: 1) that students have read the course texts closely and in full; 2) students’ ability to present the content and logical structure of these texts faithfully and accurately; 3) students’ aptitude for presenting arguments and clearly expressing even difficult and complex concepts; 4) students’ use of appropriate style and lexicon.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The prerequisite for attending the course is the knowledge of a manual of History of Philosophy. Further information may be provided at the beginning of lectures and posted on the lecturer’s noticeboard in the Department of Philosophy.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.