

PHIL 322-W1
Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*
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Spring Semester 2021
Credit Hours: 3

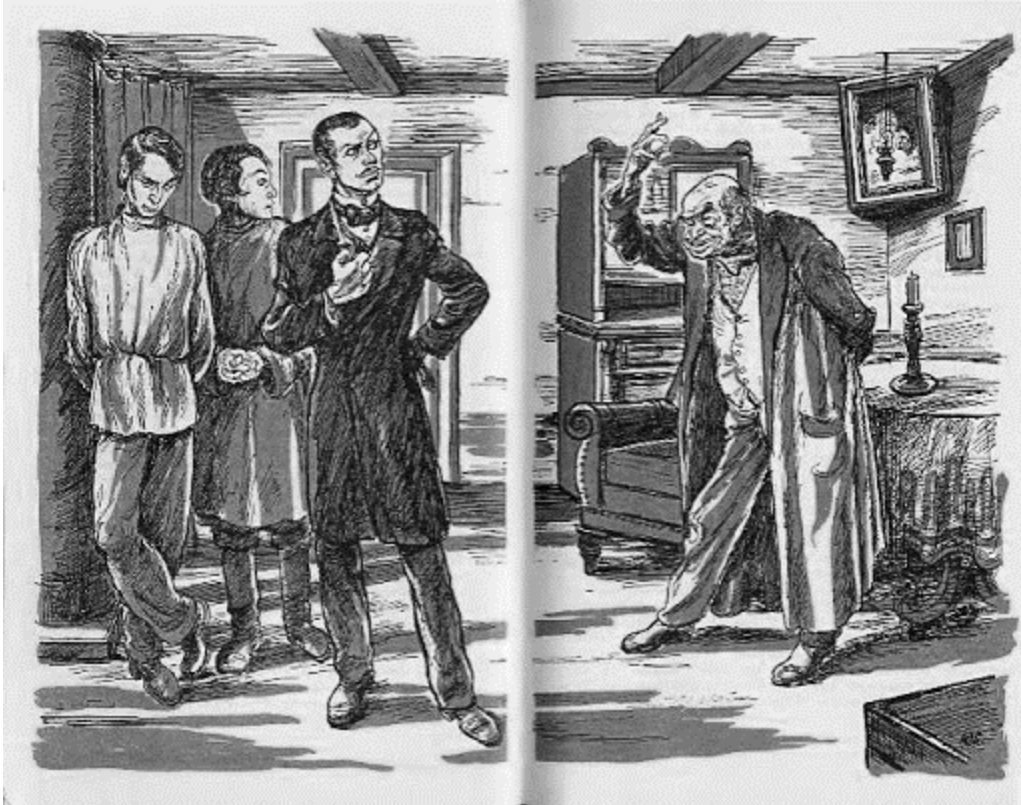


Illustration of a scene in Book III by William Sharp;
Fyodor Karamazov (right) and his three sons (from left: Alyosha, Ivan, Dmitiri)

Course Description:

The main purpose of our course is to learn to read and appreciate the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (originally published 1879-1880). It is an amazing thing - it's a gripping, suspenseful story of the murder of a man named Fyodor Karamazov, and the role his sons (the "brothers Karamazov") play in his death. But it is also a deep book, full of ideas about Russian society, politics, court systems, philosophy, religion, family relationships, and much else. It will be fun to read, but I hope that it will also change the way you think about many important things in life.

Our class will be distinctive in a couple of ways:

First, we will focus entirely on the novel – it is the only required reading in the course. *I will expect everyone to read the whole novel*, but that is all that I will expect you to read in the class. There will be no accompanying articles, no other works by Dostoevsky, nothing. The novel is around 800 pages, and our class runs for approximately 8 weeks. That means you'll need to prepare to be reading an average of around 100 pages a week.

Second, our focus in reading the novel will be on its **religious and philosophical themes**. One of the most important features of the novel, as we'll see soon, is the way Dostoevsky deals with religious and philosophical debates: he puts ideas in the minds of his characters, and lets them try to live them out and debate with others, and then see what happens. His way of arguing against a philosophical or religious position is often to suggest, by means of his story, that it's impossible to live out, or that living it out makes someone unhappy (or insane, or destructive, etc.). I'll be helping you understand these ideas and debates as we go along, while hopefully also being able to encourage you to think about how they relate to ideas *you* want to live out in your own life.

Required Text:

-Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2002).

College Competencies and Learning Outcomes:

College-wide Competencies

Holy Cross College has five College-wide Competencies and related learning outcomes:

- CC1: Critical and creative thinking
- CC2: Written and oral communication
- CC3: Human and spiritual growth
- CC4: Technology and information management
- CC5: Quantitative reasoning

In this course, we will be engaging with the first three competencies. After this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the philosophical ideas and debates that Dostoevsky thought were central to human life. (CC1, 3)
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of positions in philosophical debates about, for example, economic and criminal justice, human psychology, the nature of morality, the existence of God, and the relationship between faith and rational argument. (CC1, 3)

- Articulate clearly debates about abstract topics in philosophy and religion, and argue forcefully for your own position concerning them. (CC1, 2)
- Reflect productively on the important similarities and differences between contemporary American and 19th century Russian culture. (CC3)
- Develop stronger skills in close reading (and *re*-reading) of complicated texts. (CC1)

Course Assignments:

15%	Worksheets (twice weekly)
20%	Reflections (once weekly)
20%	Final Exam (essay questions)
45% (total)	A four-stage Course Project, culminating in a final essay
5%	Stage I - Philosophical idea description
5%	Stage II - Passage analysis
15%	Stage III - Essay (Rough Draft)
20%	Stage IV - Essay (Final Draft)
	(Optional: personal reflection for 5% extra credit)

Worksheets: For each of the course's 8 weeks, you will receive 3-4 lecture videos, making up a total of approximately 25 course "lessons" in total. (See schedule below.) You will also receive two worksheets, which will cover the content of one or two lessons from that week. In total we should have 16 worksheets, each of which will be worth 1% of your final grade. (I'll drop the lowest grade, to make it 15% total, as above.) Worksheets will be graded on a pass/fail basis, depending on whether you give a good faith effort to complete all parts of the sheet to the best of your ability. In rare cases, half credit may be given.

Reflections: Once a week, I will ask you to pick out a favorite quotation from the assigned reading of the week and reflect on its role in the novel as a whole, its importance for some philosophical or religious issue, or its relevance to your personal life in some way. Reflections should be 300-500 words in length. Reflections will be given grades of 100, 75 or 0. A grade of 100 will be given to reflections that start from an understanding of the quotation, but then branch out from it to talk in a thoughtful way about its broader impact, either on the novel or on their own thinking. A grade of 75 will be given to reflections that have some significant problem (they're not long enough, are just summaries of the events of the novel, are just personal opinions without relationship to the novel, etc.). Grades of 0 will be given if the assignment is not turned in, or what's turned in is obviously unacceptable.

Course Project: The major assignment in the course is an assignment in four stages, where the ultimate goal is the production of a substantial (at least 2000 words) essay on some philosophical topic that is discussed or otherwise dealt with in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The essay will include not

just description of the idea and passages in the novel, but an explanation of the student's own view on the matter and how the novel informs it. In the **first** stage, I will ask you to write a brief (500-750 words) description of a philosophical idea or debate that is dealt with in the novel and that interests you enough to write your paper about it. I will provide a list of possible ideas/debates and brief descriptions of them in an early lecture video. In the **second** stage, I will ask you to write a brief (500-750 words) analysis of an important passage in the novel that deals with your chosen philosophical idea. The goal will be to explain what the characters in the passage are saying about that idea, and how that's relevant to your understanding of the idea. In the **third** stage, you will write a rough draft of the essay (at least 1500 words). In the **fourth** stage, you will write a final draft (at least 2000 words). There will be an optional **fifth** stage, for extra credit, for which you would write a brief (500-750 words) personal reflection on how reading the novel has changed your views on your chosen philosophical idea/debate.

Final Exam: There will be a final exam that tests your knowledge of the novel and of the religious and philosophical issues we will discuss in the class. It will be made up entirely of essay questions, and you will have some choice in which questions you answer. I'll tell you more about the format as the date for the exam approaches.

The **Course Project**, **Final Exam**, and your overall final grade will be graded by the normal letter grade system, as follows:

A = 94-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D = 60-69
A- = 90-93	B = 83-86	C = 73-76	F = 59 or below
	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	

Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy:

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying another person's answers or allowing someone to copy your work on assignments, quizzes, or tests, whether in paper or electronic format. Plagiarism is presenting another's words or ideas as one's own, either paraphrasing or directly quoting, without proper citation. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is a serious academic offense. As with all of your courses at Holy Cross, you are expected in this class to uphold your responsibilities as stated in the MCI Student Handbook "to uphold the principle of unquestioned honesty, and refrain from any activity or behavior that would suggest academic dishonesty." Failure to meet this responsibility could result in an academic sanction and a disciplinary conference or Conduct Board

- A. Three fundamental principles should guide your choices: (1) all assignments you submit must be your own; (2) when you present, quote, or paraphrase anything that is the work or idea of others, including other students—be it from print sources (books, journal articles, etc.) or electronic sources (websites, social networks, chats, comment sections, forum discussions, blogs, etc.)—you must give full credit using accurate and complete citations;

- and (3) if you are uncertain about ground rules for a particular assignment, ask the professor for clarification. Use an established citation format as directed by the professor.
- B. To avoid plagiarism, you must always indicate when the ideas or words come from another source. If you quote verbatim, you must use the exact words and punctuation (including mistakes) of the original source, and the text must be marked as a quotation through the use of quotation marks or block quotation format. If you paraphrase another person's ideas, you must still cite the original source. For paraphrasing, it is not enough to copy the original verbatim and then make some small changes to wording and arrangement; a paraphrase is restatement or rewording in your words.
- C. Examples of violation include, but are not limited to, the following:
- a. Supplying or receiving completed papers, outlines, or research for submission by any person other than the author;
 - b. Submitting the same, or essentially the same, paper or report for credit on two different occasions;
 - c. Supplying or receiving unauthorized information about the form or content of an examination prior to its administration;
 - d. Supplying or receiving partial or complete answers, or suggestions for answers, assistance in the interpretation of questions on any examination from any source not explicitly authorized, including copying or reading another student's work, or consulting notes or other sources during an examination;
 - e. Copying (or allowing the copying of) assigned work or the falsification of information;
 - f. Removing study or research materials and equipment intended for common use in assigned work without authorization;
 - g. Using unauthorized technology (computer, calculator, cell phone) on examinations and assignments;
 - h. Altering any materials or apparatus and, thereby, interfering with another student's work.
 - i. Submitting research papers or other work purchased from web sites or other sources that sell academic material.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism means presenting, as one's own, the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else. Plagiarism occurs when one uses the exact language of someone else without putting the quoted material in quotation marks or a text paragraph and noting its source (exceptions are well-known quotations - from the Bible or Shakespeare, for example). In formal papers, the source is acknowledged in a footnote; in informal papers, it may be put in parentheses or made a part of the text: "Robert Sherwood says." When a writer uses the exact words of another writer or speaker, the student must enclose those words in quotation marks and cite their source. A second type of plagiarism is more complex. It occurs when the writer presents, as his or her own, the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, and/or the pattern of thought of someone else, even though the student expresses it in his or her own words. The language may be the student's; nevertheless, he or she is presenting and taking credit for the work of another. The

student is, therefore, guilty of plagiarism if he or she fails to give credit to the original author of the pattern of ideas. (<https://www.saintmarys.edu/portal/first-year/policies>, accessed 12-03-2019)

Tentative Schedule:

DATES	EVENTS IN NOVEL	ASSIGNED READING	ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE WEEK
Week 1 – Jan. 13-19 (Assignments due January 19)	-Introduction to the Novel -Background Description of the Karamazov Family	pp. 3-33	-2 Worksheets (including syllabus quiz) -1 Reflection
Week 2 – Jan. 20-26 (Assignments due January 26)	-Gathering at the Monastery -Background on Dmitri and Smerdyakov	pp. 34-126	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection -Course Project Stage I: Philosophical Idea Description
Week 3 – Jan. 27-Feb. 2 (Assignments due February 2)	-A Scene at Fyodor Karamazov’s House -Various Characters Tear Themselves Apart	pp. 127-212	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection
Week 4 – Feb. 3-9 (Assignments due February 9)	-Ivan Reveals Himself to His Younger Brother	pp. 213-282	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection -Course Project Stage II: Passage Analysis
Week 5 – Feb. 10-16 (Assignments due February 16)	-Back at the Monastery: Father Zossima’s Life and Death	pp. 283-363	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection
Week 6 – Feb. 17-23 (Assignments due February 23)	-Dmitri’s Troubles	pp. 364-512	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection -Course Project Stage III: Rough Draft
Week 7 – Feb. 24-Mar. 2 (Assignments due March 2)	-The Next Generation -Ivan’s Descent	pp. 515-655	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection
Week 8 – Mar. 3-9 (Final Assignments due March 9)	-The Trial and the Aftermath	pp. 656-776	-2 Worksheets -1 Reflection -Course Project Stage IV: Final Draft -Final Exam