

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

SPRING 2024

INSTRUCTOR

Daniel John Sportiello, Ph.D.
Welder Library 103
dsportiello@umary.edu
701-355-8109

OFFICE HOURS

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays,
2:00 PM–2:50 PM, and
Tuesdays and Thursdays,
9:30 AM–10:15 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of recent philosophical developments from Hegel through Nietzsche and the present period. Topics may include existentialism, pragmatism, phenomenology, analytic philosophy, and personalism. Philosophical foundations for influential figures such as Freud, Weber, Foucault, and Derrida may also be addressed.

COURSE OUTCOMES

This course asks you to do all of these:

- Identify some of the major figures in contemporary philosophy and summarize their positions on various key issues.
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of various philosophical positions.
- Outline the basic movements of contemporary philosophy.

Note that, to measure your attainment of these outcomes, you must do certain assessments.

ASSESSMENTS

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on twenty-two reflections, on three tests, on a paper, and on an exam:

- Twenty-two reflections will determine twenty percent of your final grade. You must submit each reflection on Canvas prior to the start of the relevant class. However, your lowest two grades will be dropped.
- Three tests will determine thirty percent of your final grade. You must submit each test on Canvas prior to the end of the relevant day.
- A paper will determine twenty-five percent of your final grade. You must submit this paper on Canvas prior to the end of the relevant day.
- An exam will determine twenty-five percent of your final grade. You must submit this exam on Canvas prior to the end of the relevant day.

Note that, if you fail to do an assessment by the time that it is due—for any reason—then you may receive a grade of zero on that assessment. Because of this, you should not wait until the last minute to do any assessment! Note also that, to do well in these assessments, you must do certain readings.

READINGS

These readings are available at the bookstore—though you are free to buy them elsewhere:

- *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy: After Kant*. Volume 1, *The Interpretive Tradition*. Edited by Richard Schacht. New York: Norton, 2017. ISBN: 978-0393974683.
- *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy: After Kant*. Volume 2, *The Analytic Tradition*. Edited by James Conant and Jay Elliott. New York: Norton, 2017. ISBN: 978-0393929089.
- Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos H. Papadimitriou. *Logicmix: An Epic Search for Truth*. Art by Alecos Papadatos. Color by Annie Di Donna. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009. ISBN: 978-1596914520.
- Anthony Kenny. *A New History of Western Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0199656493.

Any other readings are available on Canvas.

BENEDICTINE VALUES

All six of our [Benedictine Values](#) are implicated in this course. At its heart, though, is Hospitality—that is, a sort of vulnerability to the ideas of others.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because discussion plays a crucial role in this course, it is crucial that you not only attend class but also listen attentively and contribute seriously to that discussion—not occasionally but every time that we meet. You should, in other words, be present at and participating in every class—unless, of course, you provide an official university excuse.

I reserve the right to drop you should you miss ten classes without an official university excuse. This is in accord with the excessive absence policy, which is available for review [online](#).

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Though laptops, tablets, and smartphones are profoundly useful, they are also profoundly distracting—not only to you but also to others. Therefore, you may not use laptops, tablets, and smartphones in class unless, at your request, I have given you permission to do so.

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

It should go without saying that academic dishonesty of any sort is wrong. Worse than that, though, academic dishonesty reveals a serious confusion regarding the reasons that one is in a course in philosophy—or, for that matter, at a university—in the first place. Such dishonesty is occasion for as much pity as anger.

Presenting the work of another as your own is academically dishonest. Whenever you copy the words of another, therefore, you must place those words within quotation marks and cite their source. (This goes for the words of any artificial intelligence, by the way!)

As a deterrent, let me promise that I will prosecute every instance of academic dishonesty. But do not misinterpret this promise: if you feel that you do not understand something well enough to explain it in your own words—whether in this course or in any other—then come to me for help. We will work together to overcome whatever difficulty stands in your way.

COURSE INFORMATION

This course, PHI 406 01, meets for fifteen weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:00 PM in Welder Library 205. It is worth three credits, is an elective for majors and minors in philosophy, and is graded according to the usual scale. (Note that there won't be any rounding.)

STATEMENT ON WORKLOAD

Since this is a three semester-credit undergraduate-level course lasting fifteen weeks, students can expect to spend a minimum of three hours a week instructional time and another six hours a week studying outside of instructional time.

STATEMENT ON EXCUSED ABSENCES

The University has a policy on excused absences related to sponsored or sanctioned activities and events. The policy is available for review [online](#). Students participating in such activities and events are expected to review this policy and comply with it. As long as appropriate prior notification is given according to this policy, students and faculty reach a mutual agreement concerning make-up work, and students complete the work in question, faculty shall not penalize a student for missing a class or exam when they were granted an excused absence from the university. Any questions concerning the policy may be referred to the course instructor who may refer the question to the athletic director, the student activities director, or academic affairs for an answer.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are expected to read the University of Mary's [Academic Honor Code and Honor System](#) and abide by all the standards of conduct and requirements contained therein. When a student is in doubt about whether or not an action might constitute an Academic Honor Code violation, he or she should request clarification from the instructor *before* the action in question is undertaken.

STATEMENT ON REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The University of Mary, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and in the spirit of our mission, offers support for disabled students who provide the required documentation. Students with disabilities who need accommodations should apply to the [Office of Student Accessibility Services](#). For further information, contact Dr. Lynn Dodge, coordinator of Student Accessibility Services, in the Student Success Center. You can reach her at 701-355-8264 or ljdodge@umary.edu.

COURSE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

Students should communicate any questions or concerns relating to this course to the following individuals in the order listed below. To learn more about the University of Mary's process for responding to academic concerns, students should read its policy, which is available for review [online](#).

Dan Sportiello, Associate Professor of Philosophy > Vacancy, Associate Dean of Arts and Letters > Vacancy, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences

1	Tuesday	January 9	No Class		
	Thursday	January 11	Introduction		
2	Tuesday	January 16	Nineteenth	Kant	Reflection 1
	Thursday	January 18	Nineteenth	Hegel	Reflection 2
3	Tuesday	January 23	Nineteenth	Kierkegaard	Reflection 3
	Thursday	January 25	Nineteenth	Marx	Reflection 4
4	Tuesday	January 30	Nineteenth	Schopenhauer	Reflection 5
	Thursday	February 1	Nineteenth	Nietzsche	Reflection 6
5	Tuesday	February 6	Nineteenth		Test 1
	Thursday	February 8	Analytic	Frege	Reflection 7
6	Tuesday	February 13	Analytic	Russell	Reflection 8
	Thursday	February 15	Analytic	Early Wittgenstein	Reflection 9
7	Tuesday	February 20	Analytic	Carnap	Reflection 10
	Thursday	February 22	Analytic	Later Wittgenstein	Reflection 11
8	Tuesday	February 27	Analytic	James	Reflection 12
	Thursday	February 29	No Class		
9	Tuesday	March 5	Analytic	Quine	Reflection 13
	Thursday	March 7	Analytic	Kuhn	Reflection 14
10	Tuesday	March 12	Analytic	Davidson	Reflection 15
	Thursday	March 14	Analytic	To Be Determined	Reflection 16
11	Tuesday	March 19	Analytic		Test 2
	Thursday	March 21	Continental	Husserl	Reflection 17
12	Tuesday	March 26	Continental	Early Heidegger	Reflection 18
	Thursday	March 28	Catching Up		

13	Tuesday	April 2	Continental	Sartre	Reflection 19
	Thursday	April 4	Continental	Later Heidegger	Reflection 20
14	Tuesday	April 9	Continental		Paper
	Thursday	April 11	Continental	To Be Determined	Reflection 21
15	Tuesday	April 16	Continental	Foucault	Reflection 22
	Thursday	April 18	Continental		Test 3
16	Tuesday	April 23	No Class		Exam
	Thursday	April 25	No Class		