PHI 435 2018 Spring Syllabus

## PHI 435 Syllabus - History of Philosophy I

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| Location | Pawling Hall, 105 |
| Instructor | Dan Sheffler |
| Email | daniel\_sheffler@georgetowncollege.edu |
| Web | <https://sage.georgetowncollege.edu/course/view.php?id=3721> |
| Schedule | <http://dansheffler.com/phi435schedule/> |
| Presentations | <http://dansheffler.com/phi435presentations/> |
| Semester | Spring 2018 |
| Credit Hours | 3 |

## Required Texts

All texts will be made available on Sage.

## Course Description and Learning Outcomes

*From the Catalog*: A survey of leading 20th century philosophers. Russell, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Husserl, Moore, Davidson, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida represent some of the figures to be considered. Prerequisite: one course in philosophy. Even Springs

*From Me*: In this course we will be examining the spirit of modern philosophy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In order to capture the unique character of this period we will focus on “the inward turn” that began in the Enlightenment but became dominant during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will begin with some stage-setting by reading some contemporary commentary on the broad trajectory of Western thought and reading some Descartes and Pascal. We will then examine thinkers such as Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century and thinkers such as Russell, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Lewis. At the end of the course we will examine the divergence between analytic and continental philosophy in the contemporary literature. We will examine this “inward turn” critically, asking such questions as, “Was it necessary?” and “Was it good?”

## Learning Outcomes

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| Learning Outcome | Assessment |
| To gain an understanding of the primary questions, terminology, and theories in nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy | Reading Quizzes, Defenses |
| To learn to carefully read philosophical texts | Reading Quizzes, Defenses |
| To gain the capacity to communicate difficult philosophical thinking in clear, concise prose. | Final Paper, Defenses |

## Grading

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| --- | --- |
| Reading Quizzes | 30% |
| Defenses | 40% |
| Final Paper | 30% |

The first portion of your grade will come from regular (short) reading quizzes. These will be completed on Moodle and will typically consist of five multiple-choice questions on the reading for the day. These quizzes are due before class on the day when the corresponding reading assignment is due. There is a time limit on these quizzes and they can only be taken once, so it is advisable that you complete them just as soon as you complete your reading. You will not have enough time to search the reading for the answers if you have not read it, but you may keep the reading assignment open to aid in the completion of the quiz. You will quickly find that you really must do the reading and do it quite carefully to do well on these quizzes.

The second and largest portion of your grade will come from a series of “defenses” that you will make in class throughout the semester. For each class, one student will have chosen the day’s reading to “defend.” Once every student has defended once we will pick the next round of readings and cycle through again. This cycle will repeat until the end of the semester. When it is your day to defend, you will need to come to class with a 500 word minimum interpretation of the day’s reading. In this interpretation, you will need to take a stand on what the author is saying and whether you agree with it or not and *argue* for this stand both with reference to the text and with reference to reality. Further, every class, two students will be assigned as “questioners” for the day. When it is your day to defend, these questioners will begin the class by asking you tough questions about how we should understand the reading and you will need to both present your view and defend that view against cross examination. If other students or I have questions for you during this time we are also free to ask. I will allow this process to run its course for approximately 30 minutes before we use the day’s defense as a launch pad for a more free seminar-style discussion. Defense days will be tough and this process is designed to force you to engage the text we are reading at an extremely deep level. (When I went through a similar process as an undergraduate and graduate student, I came to understand texts more thoroughly than I ever had before.) After each defense, you will receive a simple letter grade and some brief feedback from me.

At end of the semester, you will submit a final research and argument paper (3000 words) on Moodle building upon one of the defenses that you have made in the semester that also incorporates research into the secondary literature on the text you have chosen. You will need to provide a draft of this paper at the beginning of April and we will have a peer review and discussion of this draft. (By the way, 3000 words is a typical length for a conference presentation, and if you are interested in going further in philosophy, I would be more than happy to work with you to craft this semester paper into a suitable conference submission and find a conference to submit it to.)

**Grading Scale:**

(I round all values to the nearest whole percent.)

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| --- | --- |
| A | 100–90% |
| B | 89–80% |
| C | 79–70% |
| D | 69–60% |
| E | 59–0% |

## Attendance

Although attendance does not compose its own segment of the grade, it is mandatory and failure to attend class will adversely impact your grade. Roll will be taken at the beginning of every class period. Perfect attendance will result in an extra credit of +2 percentage points. The first 2 unexcused absences will not count against you, but beginning with the 3rd absence, each absence will subtract 2 percentage points from your final grade. This goes to a **limit of 7 unexcused absences** at which point you can no longer pass the class. For your reference:

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| --- | --- |
| Number of Absences | Percentage Change to Final Grade |
| 0 |  |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |
| 6 |  |
| 7 |  |

I keep track of absences by calling roll at the beginning of each class. If you do not respond when I call your name (perhaps because you are not there) you will be marked as absent. This means that if you walk in late it is your responsibility to check in with me each and every time. Lateness, especially if egregious or repeated, may be counted as an absence for the day. You are always welcome to look at your record and I encourage you to do so because it is your responsibility to keep track of how many absences I have recorded. This is especially important for students who are in danger of failing the class because of absences. I probably will not notice when you have six absences, so I am unlikely to notify you when you are in danger of failing.

Whenever a student knows in advance that he or she will miss class (as for a scheduled college-sponsored activity), the student should discuss the absence with me prior to the event, and the student’s participation in the event should be confirmed by a communication from the event sponsor. When a student’s participation in college-sponsored activities or other scheduled events will require multiple absences, the student should discuss the potential for those absences with me prior to the end of the first week of classes.

Students missing class or an exam due to an excused absence (e.g. for sickness) bear the responsibility of informing me about their absence within one week following the period of the absence and of providing appropriate documentation for the absence. Excused absences are not taken into account in the above adjustment to the final grade. It is entirely the student’s responsibility to make up missed work. Make up work (including exams) must be submitted within one week of return to class. In general, I do not excuse on-line assignments.

## E-mail and Internet

You are expected to have an active e-mail account that you check regularly. Section related announcements will be made via e-mail (e.g. if I am sick, pointers for home work, change in due dates). Also, e-mail is the best way for contacting me outside of class.

You are expected to have access to a stable internet connection as reading quizzes are carried out through Moodle. I will not reset quizzes because of internet trouble (doing so is simply too easy to abuse and has been in the past). Instead, I will be dropping the lowest reading quiz score for everyone.

## Respectful Behavior

Mature, respectful behavior is expected in class. The primary concern is that all students are able to enjoy a focused, helpful classroom. This means that I expect you will among other things: arrive to class on time, stay awake, refrain from taking cell phone calls, playing games, or doing work for other classes. I will warn you once during a semester if a particular behavior is disruptive. If this behavior happens again, I may ask you to leave resulting in an absence for the day.

Class time is primarily focused on discussion of the material for which I expect you to be fully engaged. For this reason, I prohibit the use of electronic devices in class.

## Academic Integrity

Cheating robs other students of a fair grade. If it is determined that a student has cheated, all students involved will receive a grade of zero for the assignment. If the case is egregious, I will direct the case to the appropriate university dean for official sanction. Please see the Academic Honesty Policy in your Student Handbook.

## Disability Accommodations

If you are registered to receive accommodations for a disability, please discuss them with me during the first week of class. You will need official documentation from Lloyd Clark in the Wellness Center (x7074).

## Schedule

(See [separate document](http://dansheffler.com/phi435schedule/) for our projected schedule of topics and readings.)