MPH 490: Topics in Philosophy—Metaphysics

The Catholic University of America
The Metropolitan School of Professional Studies
Mr. Matthew Pietropaoli, MA
Spring, 2017
Class Time 5:30PM-9:45PM, Wednesday
Class Location: Pangborn 203
Office Hours: 3:30-5:30, W, TH in Starbucks (on Monroe Street), and by appointment
Office Phone Number: 518 321 0743
Email Address: 58pietropaol@cardinalmail.cua.edu.

Course Description: Metaphysics is a study of how things in the world tie together. Its’ root lies in the Greek: “Meta,” meaning “beyond,” and “physics,” meaning what is physical or visible. It addresses such issues as the existence of the soul or even the existence of God. It asks questions like what makes an animal to be an animal and not a plant or a human being? Or what is the difference between something that’s artificial and something that’s natural? How can something change and yet still remain the same? How can I have many different characteristics but still be one person? How are things similar to each other at a fundamental level and yet still distinct and unique? What is time really like? What is the ultimate meaning of our lives? We will pursue answers to these and similar questions throughout this course.

Course Goals: This course is designed to assist the students in various ways. One main goal of this course is that students learn important philosophical concepts pertaining to the fundamental issues of existence. A second goal is that students gain an ability to read and analyze well philosophical texts. A third goal is to foster the intellectual capacities of the students: their ability to think clearly and logically, their ability to write lucid, well organized, and well-worded papers, and their ability to express themselves succinctly and logically. Finally, and most importantly, this course is designed to give students concepts and ideas relevant for living a fulfilling and happy life. In other words, this course is designed to help the students live examined lives.

Course Requirements
1. Regular class attendance and participation, including quizzes and in-class essays
2. Two in-class exams, one during the semester and one final
3. Two papers, each 2-3 pages long
**Required Texts**


The required text is available in the CUA Bookstore.

---

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td></td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>77-76</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td></td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Grading Determination**

- **Papers**: 30% (1st Paper=15%; 2nd Paper =15%)
- **Exams**: 45% (Mid-Term Exam=20%; Final Exam=25%)
- **Participation (Including Quizzes and Essays)**: 25%

---

**Academic Integrity**: CUA has a very strict policy about academic integrity. More than anything, having academic integrity means taking responsibility for your work, your ideas, and your effort, and giving credit to others for their work, ideas, and effort. Academic integrity relates especially, but not exclusively, to plagiarism. **Any and all forms of plagiarism are strictly prohibited**.

One of the goals of the academic program here at The Catholic University of America is to foster good writing habits. Essential to this is the development of your ability to express your own ideas. This requires that you distinguish in a paper or other written work your own thoughts from those of others. The unacknowledged use of another’s idea is called plagiarism. Academic integrity is expected of all students. Faculty are required to initiate the imposition of sanctions when they find violations of academic integrity such as plagiarism, improper use of one’s own work, cheating, and fabrication. **For undergraduate students the presumed sanction for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course**. Circumstances may warrant a more serious sanction, such as suspension or expulsion. In exceptional cases, mitigating circumstances may warrant a lesser sanction than the presumed sanction.

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty; it is presenting the work of another as if it were your own. It can include quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, or utilizing the published or unpublished work of others without proper acknowledgment. **Most frequently, it involves the**
unacknowledged use of books or articles in periodicals, magazines, newspapers, and on the Internet. However, any unacknowledged use of another’s ideas constitutes plagiarism; this includes the use of papers written by other students, interviews, radio or TV broadcasts, etc. For a further discussion on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see The Bedford Handbook, Eighth Edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), pp. 690-693.

Please note as well, that any form of cheating is a violation of academic integrity and is thus punishable by the same standards as plagiarism. Cheating includes the use of texts or notes during a closed book exam or quiz, looking at another’s test or quiz, or employing any other outside aid. This also includes writing someone else’s paper or essay. In addition, using one’s own paper twice for two different classes is an example of violating academic integrity. Such dishonesty reflects laziness and immaturity, and it will not be tolerated. Moreover, in order to protect your own work, do not leave unattended any paper or essay. Nor should you let another student look over your paper so that he or she “can get ideas” for his or her own paper. Protect yourself from others copying off from your work. Please note, too, that there is no group work in the class; therefore, you should not collaborate with classmates on work that is to be submitted for an individual grade. For more information about what academic integrity means at CUA, including your responsibilities and rights, visit http://integrity.cua.edu.

Class Attendance: You are expected to attend every class. Attendance is required and will be checked on a daily basis. Attendance counts toward the assessment of your final grade. After all, this class meet only once per week, so attendance is crucial for gaining the most out of your academic experience. Being in class is how you learn the material, learn from your fellow students, question and consider ideas from new perspectives, and really embrace the task of being a student. Consequently, a missed class will result in a lowering of your overall grade. One unexcused missed class will result in a loss of 2 points on your overall grade. Two such missed classes will result in a 10 point loss. Three unexcused absences or more will result in failure for the course. If, for any reason, you need to miss class, please contact me ASAP. We can meet at some later date to discuss the missed class and to see about making up for missed work.

Use of Technology: I am a bit old-fashioned when it comes to certain things. First, unless you have written permission to do so, you will not be permitted to use computers in the class. (Written permission can be obtained from the Disability Support Services (DSS) for students with special needs. See below in Disability Support Services for contact info). Computers can be just too distracting. Similarly, you are not allowed to video or audio record this class unless you obtain written permission to do. Such permission can be obtained from DSS. Second, the use of cell phones is strictly prohibited. This means no making or receiving calls, NO TEXTING, no browsing the web, no playing “Clash of Clans,” etc. Trust me, there is no text message that it so important that you have to check it right now. Third, I do have an email account, and I will respond to your emails promptly. However, you can also meet with me in person.

Readings: You are expected to do the assigned readings for each class before the start of that class. You are also expected to bring your books to class as we discuss the readings. To do the readings properly, you have to give your full attention to the text. As you read, underline and
note material you think will be important. Note also any material you find confusing or weird and ask me about it in class. These texts can be difficult, but with patience, persistence, and thoughtfulness you can understand the readings.

**Participation:** It is important to be an active participant in this class and to give your full attention to the class. This means that you take notes during lectures, that you ask and answer questions, and that you read from the texts when called upon to do so. It also means that you come to class with the assignments completed for that day. When you participate in class, you learn the course material better. You’ll also receive a better class participation grade.

Please note, as well, that part of your participation grade includes quizzes and essays. These quizzes will be unscheduled. They can occur at any class. They will usually consist of questions based on the readings for that day. The quizzes will be closed book. Also, for the essays, they will be an in class assignment. You will write a one or two paragraph essay on a topic related to the readings for that day. I will give notice before hand for when such assignments will take place.

**Papers:** You will have 2 papers due this semester. Each paper should be about 2-3 pages in length. Papers must be stapled and printed on 11’’ X 8 ½’’ paper. The paper must be printed with black ink and be double spaced in 12 pt., times new roman font. Papers are due at the start of class on the assigned date.  **The First Paper is Due on Wednesday, 01/25. The Second Paper is Due on Wednesday, 02/15.**

It is very important to turn in your assignments on time. **For every day that your paper is late, you will lose a letter grade for the assignment.** Thus, an A paper due on Wednesday that is handed in on Thursday, will automatically have a B. Such a paper handed in Friday will automatically have a C. Finally, if your paper is late, you must hand in your papers to me personally, either in class or in my office. In short, hand in your papers on time. However, in the case of truly extraordinary circumstances, please see me if you will be unable to hand in a paper on time.

Moreover, feel free to contact me beforehand to meet about your paper. You can also give me a rough draft to look over. For more information on papers, please see the “Tips for Success on Essays”, which is available on Blackboard. Also, see below in Campus Resources for the resources available to you on campus to assist with your paper-writing.

**Exams:** There will be two exams during this semester. **The first will be held on Wednesday, 02/01. The final exam will be held on Wednesday, 02/22.** The final exam is cumulative, but it will be weighted to address the most recent material. Also, unless extraordinary circumstances arise, you must take the exam on the scheduled day. Finally, please see the “Tips for Success on Exams,” available on Blackboard, for more information.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Student may feel that they need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability. In that case, students need to make a formal request through the Office of Disability Support. You can contact Disability Support Services at
202-319-5211 in Pryzbyla Room 201. Only through a formal request approved by the Office of Disability Support Services can an accommodation be made for a student in class. Students requiring accommodations should register early with the Office of Disability Support. Moreover, please feel free to address these issues with me privately. Working in concert with the Office of Disability Support Services, I will do my best to accommodate your needs. Remember to seek out help early on so that you can have the appropriate accommodations.

**Make-Up Policy**: Unless extraordinary circumstances arise, I will not allow students to make-up for missed exams or quizzes. If you miss an exam or a quiz, you will receive a failing grade for that exam or quiz. However, in the case of truly exceptional situations, I may be able to accommodate a make-up exam. Please see me to address such situations.

**Campus Resources**: When needed, be sure to take advantage of the student support services offered by the Center for Academic Success (CAS), Mullen Library, second floor. The Counseling Center [personal] is in 127 O’Boyle Hall, (202 319-5765.) Mullen Library is also a valuable resource.

**Class Schedule**

Wed 01/11 *The One and the Many* (OM): Chapters 1 and 2.

Wed 01/18 OM: Chapters 4 and 5; **In Class Writing Assignment**

Wed 01/25 OM: Chapters 6 and 7; **First Paper Due; In Class Writing Assignment**

Wed 02/01 OM Chapters 8 and 9; **Mid-Term Exam.**

Wed 02/08 OM Chapters 11, 12, and 13; **In Class Writing Assignment**

Wed 02/15 OM, Chapters 15, 16, and 17; **Second Paper Due; In Class Writing Assignment**

Wed 02/22 OM Chapters 14 and 19; **Final Exam**

**FINAL EXAM WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND.**

Schedule is subject to change at Instructor’s discretion