

Political Science 4813: Nietzsche and Christianity

Professor Darrell Dobbs
Office Hours: 1:00 - 4:00 Th & by appointment
421 Wm. Wehr Physics

Marquette University
Class time: 9:30 - 10:45 T TH
418 Wm. Wehr Physics

Course Rationale

The nineteenth-century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, ventured to declare that *God is dead*. This declaration summarizes the current crisis of Western civilization, a crisis which consists in a widespread disbelief in the metaphysical underpinnings of traditional morality -- that is, in the basis upon which one hopes that the righteous will be rewarded if not on earth at least, ultimately, in heaven. A "great politics" is needed, Nietzsche argues, to address this crisis of belief. A new breed of philosopher-legislators is needed to reestablish civilization on a less dubious standard of values. This new civilization is needed, Nietzsche maintains, if we are ever again to find life loveable for its adventure and joy and not simply for its comfort and security. In this class, we shall undertake a close reading of Nietzsche's insightful diagnosis of the philosophical and social pathologies of modernity, and assess the rehabilitative utility of his signature notions of the "will to power" and the "eternal return." We shall keep in mind, however, that Nietzsche is not alone in deploring the lethargy of Western civilization's "last men. Thus, we shall also assess the challenge to Nietzschean atheism posed by Christian orthodoxy, particularly as celebrated in works by G.K. Chesterton and Josef Pieper.

Requirements, Expectations and Grading:

You are to attend every meeting of this class, having read the assigned texts carefully. You will be asked to prepare daily summaries of, and questions on, points of interest raised by the required reading. There will also be a midterm examination and a final project or examination. Your daily work will determine 40%, the midterm examination 30%, and the final examination 30% of your final grade. Absences may be excused upon written request made via email by class time of the day of your absence. Every two *unexcused* absences will lower your final grade by one step: e.g., B ---> BC.

You should expect to spend approximately 5 hours each and every week preparing and studying for this class, in addition to your regular attendance. (If you carry a load of fifteen credit hours, and follow this rule of thumb in all your classes, you will still be spending less time developing your own "human capital" than you will spend enlarging your employer's capital after you have graduated! I hope you think you are worth the investment.)

Date	Assigned Reading
Week 1	Introductions; Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (W. Kaufman, trans.) pp.1-3
Week 2	Nietzsche, pp.9-32
Week 3	Nietzsche, pp.35-56
Week 4	Nietzsche, pp.59-76
Week 5	Nietzsche, pp.79-94; pp. 97-118
Week 6	Nietzsche, pp.121-141
Week 7	Nietzsche, pp.145-170
Week 8	Nietzsche, pp.173-198; Midterm Break
Week 9	Nietzsche, pp.201-237; Midterm Examination
Weeks 10-13	Chesterton, <i>Orthodoxy</i> , chs.1-2; ch.3; ch.4; ch.5; ch.6; ch.7; ch.8-9; Thanksgiving Break
Weeks 14-15	Josef Pieper, <i>In Tune with the World</i> , chs.1-2; chs.3-4; chs.5-6; chs.7-9