

## Rethinking the Ordinary: The Philosophy of Stanley Cavell

Course No.: \_\_\_\_\_ XXX-XX  
Semester, Year: TBD  
Meeting Time: TBD  
Meeting Place: TBD  
Course web page: <http://>; WebCT; or Blackboard

---

**Instructor:** Joe Ulatowski  
**Email:** oohlah@msn.com  
**Office Phone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX  
**Office Hours:** MWF or TR  
Virtual Office Hours Thursday evening 730p – 830p online (see website for details)

**Course Description:** Stanley Cavell is one of the most colorful and widely read philosophers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His work garners tremendous respect from philosophers, literary theorists, and film connoisseurs alike. The aim of this course is to explore Cavell's views – philosophy through personal confession and acute self-awareness. Cavell has an interest in a complex array of issues, and this course will try to touch on each of these: (1) moral perfectionism, (2) Wittgensteinian themes (philosophy as therapy), (3) the ordinariness of language, and (4) the Hollywood comedy of remarriage. No prior knowledge of Cavell's writings is necessary for success in this class.

**Required Texts:** Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* Expanded Edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002) ISBN

Stanley Cavell (1982), *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) ISBN

Stanley Cavell (1991), *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*, The Paul Carus Lectures, 1988, Series 17 (Peru, IL: Open Court, Inc.)

Stanley Cavell (2005), *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). ISBN

Stanley Cavell (2002/1972), *The Senses of Walden* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). ISBN

**Suggested Texts:**

J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962) ISBN

Richard Eldridge (ed.), *Stanley Cavell* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003) ISBN 0-521-77972-3

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays*

Richard Fleming and Michael Payne (eds.), *The Senses of Stanley Cavell* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989)

Russell Goodman (ed.), *Contending with Cavell*

Stephen Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Elizabeth Anscombe, 3d. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1958)

**Requirements:** Actually doing philosophy involves class discussion, in which students dialogue back and forth with the instructor and with each other. This class will be a seminar style course that places a premium on class discussion. Since this is the case, attendance is vital for success in the course.

**Presentation.** The student will complete a one-page summary of a reading designated by the instructor. The student should outline at least one argument in the reading and demonstrate that s/he has a command of the argument. If too confused by the argument, then summarize what you think the main argument of the reading is and present a few questions or criticisms of the main argument.

**Examinations.** There will be one take home mid-term examination, and one in-class final examination. The final exam will be comprehensive. The instructor also reserves the right to give an unannounced quiz at any time, though this is uncommon.

**Final Paper.** The student will be expected to complete one 10-12 page paper on a topic of the student's choice. More information, i.e., suggested topics, will be distributed sometime toward the middle of the semester. The student must submit a brief prospectus of the paper by DUE DATE, a bibliography by DUE DATE, and a detailed outline by DUE DATE.

*Failure to complete any of these requirements will severely effect the your grade.*

**Grading:**

There are no averages in this class, so put your calculators away. Grades will be determined according to a linear point scale. The more points you accumulate the higher your grade. In-class participation is worth a total of 100 points, each presentation is worth 50 points (100 total points available), each one-page summary of the major argument in an assigned paper is worth 25 points (250 total points available), and the final paper is worth a total of 200 points. The total number of points available equals 650.

The grading scale is as follows: 585 for an A-, 520 for a B-, 455 for a C-, 390 for a D-. Anyone who fails to earn 390 points fails the class.

**Course** The table below outlines the approximate dates on which each topic will be discussed.  
**Schedule &** Some topics will require additional time, particularly more discussion time, so this is not  
**Assignments:** a schedule set in stone. This fact emphasizes the importance of attending class regularly as well as the importance of participating in class discussion.