

COURSE #

HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

INSTRUCTOR

Alexander Englert

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Time: TBA

Location: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an overview of philosophical thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, focusing on fundamental questions in epistemology, metaphysics and theology. The principal philosophers to be discussed are Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant, with somewhat less time devoted to Leibniz, Elisabeth of Bohemia, Catharine Cockburn, Anne Conway, and Berkeley. In particular, we will be exploring topics such as: the nature of the soul, personal identity, free will, knowledge of the external world, the nature of space, classical social contract theory, the value of humanity, and arguments regarding God's existence and nature.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

You should leave this course with an understanding of these philosophers: their aims and methods, the problems they confronted, as well as the theories they advanced. You should also acquire a sense of the broader trajectory of early modern philosophical thought. Knowledge of early modern philosophy is essential preparation for more advanced philosophical studies and for understanding the intellectual history of the West. The course should help develop your capacity for interpreting and logically analyzing complex arguments and for expressing your ideas both orally and in writing.

REQUIRED TEXT

1. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources (2nd Ed.)*, ed. by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins. Hackett Publishing, 2009.
2. Selections from *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Atherton (Blackboard)
3. Other readings will be uploaded on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To successfully pass this course, you will need to complete all of the following requirements:

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| 1. Short Paper (4-5 pages) | 15% |
| 2. Midterm Examination | 25% |
| 3. Four Quizzes | 20% (4 x 5%) |
| 4. Final Paper (6-8 pages) | 25% |
| 5. Attendance/Participation | 10% |

SHORT PAPER: You must write one short papers (4-5 pages) during the semester. First and foremost, I want to see in this that you have understood and taken seriously the arguments put forth by the philosophers in question. After a brief exposition of the argument in your own words, I will

ask you to reflect on your own about the topic at hand with guiding questions. Late papers will be penalized. Plagiarized papers will receive an F.

MIDTERM EXAMINATION: The midterm will be a combination of short answers and longer responses that cover content from the first half of the semester. There will be no make-ups for this examination if you miss the class on which it is scheduled. If you have a commitment that already keeps you from attending, speak to me immediately.

FOUR QUIZZES: At four points in the semester, you will receive a short reading quiz. These will not be announced beforehand.

FINAL PAPER: The final paper will, like the short paper, ask that you analyze an argument and then respond with your own well-supported reflections, arguments, etc.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: Daily attendance is required for success in this course. The first two unexcused absences will be forgiven, but each subsequent unexcused absence will affect your grade. See course policies for further details. This course is a seminar. Accordingly, all students are expected to contribute to class discussions consistently.

SCHEDULE

All the readings will be in *Modern Philosophy* volume or posted online via Blackboard. Read the editors' introductions for biographical information on the philosophers we will be discussing (and any of the associated texts, if the mood takes you).

UNIT I: THE SELF

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION AND “I THINK”

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| Day 1 | Introduction to the course, no assigned reading. |
| Day 2 | Descartes' “cogito” Meditation II: Concerning the Nature of the Human Mind (pp. 43-47) Hobbes' Objections Against Meditation II (and Descartes' replies) (pp. 76-79) |

WEEK 2 – THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

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| Day 3 | Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia (pp. 93-99, on Blackboard) |
| Day 4 | Locke on personal Identity: “Of Identity and Diversity,” from <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (pp. 367-377) |

WEEK 3 – THE FREE WILL

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| Day 5 | Leibniz on Free Will: “Letters to Arnauld” (pp. 248-254) |
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Day 6 Hume on Free Will: “Of Liberty and Necessity” from Hume’s *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (pp. 564-575)

WEEK 4 – FREEDOM AND RATIONALITY

Day 7 Kant on rationality and autonomy: selections from *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (on Blackboard)

Day 8 Kant on rationality and autonomy: the fact of reason and other excerpts from the *Critique of Practical Reason* (on Blackboard)
First Paper Due! (TurnItIn via Blackboard)

UNIT II – THE WORLD

WEEK 5 – QUALITIES AND KNOWING THE WORLD

Day 9 Primary and Secondary Qualities: Galileo’s *Assayer* (pp. 21-24)
Selection from Locke’s *Essay* (pp. 362-367)
Selection from Catharine Trotter Cockburn’s *Defense* (selection on Blackboard)

Day 10 Knowledge of the external world Descartes’ Meditation I: Concerning Those Things That Can Be Called Into Doubt (pp. 40-43)
Descartes’ Meditation VI: Concerning the Existence of Material Things, and the Real Distinction between Mind and Body (pp. 61-68)
“Of our Knowledge of the Existence of Other Things” (secs. 1-7) from Locke’s *Essay* (pp. 441-443)

WEEK 6 – NATURE AS IMMATERIAL OR MATHEMATICAL

Day 11 Berkeley’s Immaterialism: *Principles of Human Knowledge*, secs. 1-33 (pp. 487-493)

Day 12 Corpuscularianism and the mathematization of nature:
Descartes’ *Principles of Philosophy* (on Blackboard)
Boyle’s “Of the Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular or Mechanical Philosophy” (pp. 338-345)

WEEK 7 – THE NATURE OF SPACE

Day 13 Newton’s Theory of Space: Selection from Newton’s *Principia* (on Blackboard, pp. 312-316)
“Of Simple Modes and First, of the Simple Mode of Space” from Locke’s *Essay* (pp. 342-346)

Day 14 du Châtelet on the Nature of Space: Selection from *Foundations of Physics* (on Blackboard, pp. 709-718)

WEEK 8 – THE IDEALITY OF SPACE

- Day 15 Kant and the *Critique of Pure Reason* (on Blackboard, pp. A19/B33-A36/B53)
- Day 16 “Remark II” to Part I of the *Prolegomena* (pp. 734-737)

UNIT III – HUMANITY

WEEK 9 – MIDTERM & HOBBS

- Day 17 **Midterm Examination!**
- Day 18 No assigned readings – come to class on time!

WEEK 10 – HOBBS & LOCKE

- Day 19 Hobbes on Nature and the Social Contract from *Leviathan* (read all of the selection on Blackboard)
- Day 20 Locke on Nature and the Social Contract from *Second Treatise of Government* (read all of the selection on Blackboard)

WEEK 11 – ROUSSEAU & KANT

- Day 21 Rousseau on Nature and the Social Contract from *The Social Contract* (read all of the selection on Blackboard)
- Day 22 Kant on Enlightenment and Human Progress (all on Blackboard)
Read all of: “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment” as well as “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim”

WEEK 12 – KANT’S HYPOCRISY

- Day 23 Mills’ Critical Take on Social Contract Theory from *The Racial Contract* (read all of the selections on Blackboard)
- Day 24 Kant’s Hypocrisy Regarding Human Dignity, no required reading

UNIT IV – GOD

WEEK 13 – COSMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

- Day 25 The Cosmological Argument: “Of Our Knowledge of the Existence of God” from Locke’s *Essay* (pp. 435-441)
Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part IX (pp. 667-669)

- Day 26 The Ontological Argument: Descartes' "Meditation V: Concerning the Essence of Material Things, and Again Concerning God, The He Exists" (pp. 58-61)
"On the Impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the Existence of God" from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (selection on Blackboard)
Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (selection on Blackboard)

WEEK 14 – THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

- Day 27 Hume's *Dialogues*, Parts II and V (pp. 653-658; pp. 664-667)
- Day 28 Divine Perfection: Leibniz and *Discourse on Metaphysics*, secs. 1-7, 28-31 (pp. 224-228, pp. 241-244)

WEEK 15 – KANT AND THE RATIONALITY OF BELIEF

- Day 29 The Problem of Evil, Hume's *Dialogues*, Parts X and XI (pp. 669-679)
- Day 30 Kant and Faith, "On the Ideal of the Highest Good" from *Critique of Pure Reason* (on Blackboard, 884-893)

WEEK 16 – FINAL EXAM PERIOD

Final Papers Due! (date TBA)

COURSE POLICIES

ELECTRONICS: No electronics may be used in class unless otherwise noted. This includes laptops, tablets, phones, etc.

OFFICE HOURS: I encourage you to come and meet with me during my office hour. Philosophy requires much reflection and dialogue. Should my office hour be inconvenient for you, please get in touch with me and we will be able to find a time that works for us both. Also, please come by and discuss your papers as you plan them.

CONDUCT: It is always important to show respect to your fellow human beings, especially those with whom you disagree. Do not interrupt each other; do not make others feel small; etc. Be a mensch!

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is mandatory. The first two unexcused absences will not count against the attendance portion of the grade, but each subsequent absence will lead to a -.5% decrease. Students more than a couple minutes late to class will be marked late. (If you arrive after attendance has been taken, it is your responsibility to let me know at the end of class that you are present, otherwise it will count as an absence.) Three late attendances will count as one absence.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Absences will be excused only for documented medical emergencies,

or extreme documented family emergencies. Here are some examples of things that will not count as excused absences: “Traffic was bad and I had trouble finding a parking spot”; “I had to work”; “I had a dentist appointment”; “I was out of town with my family.”

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: There is a zero tolerance policy regarding violations of the university’s academic integrity policy. Violations will be prosecuted to the fullest extent. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the academic integrity policy. Please turn in your own work – everyone will be happier in the end. If you have questions or are concerned that something you are doing constitutes plagiarism, please contact me and we will work it out.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: If you require special accommodations because of a disability, please get in touch with JHU’s Student Disability Services: studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

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