

**History of Modern Philosophy**  
(non-traditional)  
Spring 20XY

**Instructor:** Dr. Graham Clay

**Email:** gclay [at] nd.edu

**Course Description:**

The social and scientific progress culminating in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries ushered in a bold new era of philosophical ideas and systems. Spanning roughly from Descartes (1596-1650) to Kant (1724-1804), this era is what we now call "modern philosophy." While the modern philosophers had much to contribute to other domains, we will focus on their innovations in epistemology, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and ethics. In particular, we will examine their views on skepticism(s), mind-body interaction, personal identity, mental representation, happiness, and the origins and demands of morality. Understanding the positions of the modern philosophers in these domains is crucial because many contemporary philosophical debates take them as starting points.

**Course Goals:**

By the end of this course, you should expect to have:

- Improved your ability to read philosophical texts, and especially historical texts
- Improved your ability to evaluate philosophical arguments and positions
- Improved your philosophical writing abilities
- Learned about the positions of some of the philosophers of the early modern period
- Learned some of the basic tools of logic
- Be prepared to take more advanced seminars in philosophy

**Grading:**

20% - Weekly Tasks

5% - Verbal Contributions During Lectures

Philosophy is a contact sport. This class is training for a life of doing philosophy, so you must engage with me and your classmates during lectures by asking questions and responding to others' claims. If you ask a question or make a comment at least once a week (or so), you will get a perfect score.

15% - Writing Assignments

Every week, there will be a writing assignment on the readings for the week. The goal of the assignment is to evaluate the extent to which you understood the readings in question. I will give some comments on your responses, but these assignments are intended as simple checks of your comprehension, so you should

come to office hours if you are running into trouble. The assignments will be posted and received on Sakai.

#### 40% - Essays

##### 15% - Mid-Term Essay

Topics for this 4-6 page essay will be supplied several weeks in advance and will concern the modern philosophers discussed prior to the mid-term break.

##### 25% - Final Essay

Topics for this 4-6 page essay will be supplied several weeks in advance and will concern the modern philosophers discussed after the mid-term break.

#### 40% - Exams, Quizzes

##### 10% - Review Quizzes

The goal of these quizzes is to check your understanding of the philosophers listed. Your lowest score will be dropped.

##### 30% - Final Exam

Your final exam will be a mixture of short answer questions and essay questions, and it will be completed in class on the exam day assigned by the college. All of the topics of the course will be fair game--it is a comprehensive exam. You will have the full time to complete the exam, but it should only take 2/3 of the time.

## Class Schedule

(subject to change depending on pace, class interests, etc.)

Tuesday, January 16 -            *Introductions, Course Details, Preliminaries*

### Unit 1: Epistemology – Skepticisms and Responses

Thursday, January 18 -            *Descartes + Hobbes*

- Reading #1:** - Excerpts from *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Letter of Dedication, Preface to the Reader, Synopsis, and Meditations 1, 2).  
 - Excerpts from *Third Set of Objections and Replies* (Objections I-IV).  
 - Excerpts from *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (I.66-I.71).

### **Writing Assignment #1**

Tuesday, January 23 -            *Zera Jacob + Walda Heywat*

- Reading #2:** - Excerpts from Jacob's *Treatise* (Chapters 1-5).  
 - Excerpts from Heywat's *Treatise* (Chapters 5-6).

Thursday, January 25 -         *Descartes*

**Reading #3:** - Excerpts from *Meditations* (Meditations 2-4).  
 - Excerpts from *Second Set of Replies* (Definitions I-IV and Axioms III-V).

**Quiz #1: Descartes + Zera Yacob + Walda Heywat**

Tuesday, January 30 -         *Hume*

**Reading #4:** - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Sections IV).

Thursday, February 1 -         *Hume*

**Reading #5:** - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Sections V, VII)

**Writing Assignment #2**

Tuesday, February 6 -         *Kant*

**Reading #6:** - Excerpts from *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Preamble Sections 1-5).  
 - Excerpts from *Critique of Pure Reason* (B Introduction).

Thursday, February 8 -         *Kant*

**Reading #7:** - Excerpts from *Prolegomena* (First Part Remarks II-III; Second Part Sections 21a-23, 27-33).  
 - Excerpts from *Critique* (B Aesthetic).

**Quiz #2: Hume + Kant**

Tuesday, February 13 -         *Reid*

**Reading #8:** - Excerpts from *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (Letter of Dedication; Chapters I, VI)

Thursday, February 15 -         *Reid*

**Reading #9:** - Excerpts from *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (Letter of Dedication; Chapters I, VI)

**Writing Assignment #3**

### Unit 2: Philosophy of Mind/Metaphysics – Mind-Body

Tuesday, February 20 -         *Descartes*

**Reading #10:** - Excerpts from *Meditations* (Meditations 5, 6).  
 - Excerpts from *Second Set of Replies* (Definitions V-VII).  
 - Excerpts from *Principles* (I.51-I.53, I.60, II.4)

Thursday, February 22 -         *Elisabeth + Arnauld*

**Reading #11:** - Excerpts from Elisabeth's correspondence with Descartes.  
 - Excerpts from *Fourth Set of Objections and Replies*.

**Quiz #3: Elisabeth + Arnauld**

Tuesday, February 27 -         *Amo*

**Reading #12:** - Excerpts from *The Apathy of the Human Mind* (Chapters 1-2).

Thursday, March 1 - Conway  
**Reading #13:** - Excerpts from *Principles* (Chapter 6).  
**Writing Assignment #4**

Tuesday, March 6 - Cavendish  
**Reading #14:** - Excerpts from *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (Chapters 1-8, Appendix).

Thursday, March 8 - Cavendish  
**Reading #15:** - Excerpts from *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (Chapters 10-19).  
**Quiz #4: Amo + Conway + Cavendish**  
**Mid-Term Essay Due via email at 5PM EST**

Tuesday, March 13 - **Mid-Term Break (NO CLASS)**  
Thursday, March 15 - **Mid-Term Break (NO CLASS)**

### Unit 3: Philosophy of Mind – Representation

Tuesday, March 20 - Locke + Leibniz  
**Reading #16:** - Excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Book I, Chapters ii-iv).  
 - Excerpts from *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (Book I, Chapters ii-iii).

Thursday, March 22 - Locke  
**Reading #17:** - Excerpts from *An Essay* (Book II, Chapters i-vii, xii-xvii)  
**Writing Assignment #5**

Tuesday, March 27 - Locke  
**Reading #18:** - Excerpts from *An Essay* (Book II, Chapter xxiii).

Thursday, March 29 - Hume  
**Reading #19:** - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Sections II-III).  
**Quiz #5: Locke + Leibniz + Hume**

Tuesday, April 3 - Malebranche  
**Reading #20:** - Excerpts from *Search for Truth* (Book 3, Part 2, Chapters 1-5).  
 - Excerpts from *Search* (Elucidation 10).

### Unit 4: Ethics – Happiness and Morality

Thursday, April 5 - du Châtelet  
**Reading #21:** - Excerpts from "Discourse on Happiness" (Pages 349-359).  
**Writing Assignment #6**

Tuesday, April 10 - du Châtelet  
**Reading #22:** - Excerpts from "Discourse on Happiness" (Pages 359-365).

- Thursday, April 12 - *Elisabeth + Descartes*  
**Reading #23:** - Excerpts from Elisabeth's correspondence with Descartes.  
**Quiz #6: du Châtelet + Elisabeth + Descartes**
- Tuesday, April 17 - *Leibniz*  
**Reading #24:** - Excerpts from "Meditation on the Common Concept of Justice."  
 - Excerpts from "Happiness."
- Thursday, April 19 - *Trotter*  
**Reading #25:** - Excerpts from *Remarks Upon Some Writers and Defence of Mr Locke's Essay*.  
**Writing Assignment #7**
- Tuesday, April 24 - *Conway*  
**Reading #26:** - Excerpts from *Principles*.
- Thursday, April 26 - *Astell*  
**Reading #27:** - Excerpts from *Letters Concerning the Love of God*.  
**Quiz #7: Leibniz + Trotter + Conway + Astell**
- Tuesday, May 1 - *Catch Up Day, Summary of Semester*
- Thursday, May 10 - *Final Exam; Final Essays Due*  
**Final Essay due on paper in the exam room at the assigned time**