

History of Modern Philosophy
(traditional canon)
Spring 20XY

Instructor: Dr. Graham Clay

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Course Description:

The social and scientific progress culminating in the 17th and 18th 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 in other domains, we will focus on their innovations in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, and philosophy of science. Understanding the positions of the modern philosophers like Hume and Leibniz 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% - Essays15% - 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, Quizzes10% - Review Quizzes

After we have concluded our study of a modern philosopher, the first class where we begin to discuss the subsequent philosopher will begin with a 15-minute review quiz. The goal of these quizzes is to check your understanding of the philosopher just covered. 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*

Thursday, January 18 - *Descartes + Hobbes*

- Reading #1:**
- Excerpts from *Discourse on the Method* (Parts 1, 2).
 - 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).

Tuesday, January 23 - *Descartes*

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

Writing Assignment #1

Thursday, January 25 - *Descartes*

- Reading #3:** - 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)

Tuesday, January 30 - *Elisabeth + Arnauld*

- Reading #4:** - Excerpts from Elisabeth's correspondence with Descartes.
 - Excerpts from *Fourth Set of Objections and Replies*.

Quiz #1: Descartes

Thursday, February 1 - *Malebranche*

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

Writing Assignment #2

Tuesday, February 6 - *Leibniz*

- Reading #6:** - Excerpts from *Discourse on Metaphysics* (Sections 1-13, 30).
 - Excerpts from *Theodicy*.

Quiz #2: Malebranche

Thursday, February 8 - *Leibniz*

- Reading #7:** - Excerpts from *Postscript of a Letter to Beauval*.
 - Excerpts from *Discourse* (Sections 14, 33).
 - Excerpts from Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld.
 - Excerpts from *A New System of Nature*.
 - Excerpts from *Monadology* (Paragraph 17).

Writing Assignment #3

Tuesday, February 13 - *Leibniz*

- Reading #8:** - Excerpts from *Monadology* (Paragraphs 1-19, 49-58, 78-81, 84-90).

Thursday, February 15 - *Locke + Leibniz*

- Reading #9:** - Excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Book I, Chapters ii-iv).
 - Excerpts from *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (Book I, Chapters ii-iii).

Quiz #3: Leibniz

Tuesday, February 20 - *Locke*

- Reading #10:** - Excerpts from *An Essay* (Book II, Chapters i-vii, xii-xvii)

Thursday, February 22 - *Locke*

- Reading #11:** - Excerpts from *An Essay* (Book II, Chapter xxiii).

Writing Assignment #4

Tuesday, February 27 - *Locke*

- Reading #12:** - Excerpts from *An Essay* (Book IV, Chapters i-iii, ix-xi).

Thursday, March 1 - *Berkeley*
Reading #13: - Excerpts from *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Introduction).

Quiz #4: Locke

Tuesday, March 6 - *Berkeley*
Reading #14: - Excerpts from *Principles* (Part I, Sections 1-33).
Writing Assignment #5

Thursday, March 8 - *Berkeley*
Reading #15: - Excerpts from *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (First Dialogue).

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)**

Tuesday, March 20 - *Berkeley*
Reading #16: - Excerpts from *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Second and Third Dialogues).

Thursday, March 22 - *Hume*
Reading #17: - Excerpts from *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings* (Parts 2, 5, 9).
 - Excerpts from *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book 1, Part 2, Section 6; Book 1, Part 3, Section 3; Book 1, Part 3, Section 7; Book 1, Part 3, Section 14).
 - Excerpts from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Sections X, XI).

Quiz #5: Berkeley

Tuesday, March 27 - *Hume*
Reading #18: - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Sections I-III).
 - Excerpts from *Treatise* (Introduction; Book 1, Part 1).

Writing Assignment #6

Thursday, March 29 - *Hume*
Reading #19: - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Section IV).
 - Excerpts from *Treatise* (Book 1, Part 3, Sections 1-3).

Tuesday, April 3 - *Hume*
Reading #20: - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Sections V, VII)
 - Excerpts from *Treatise* (Book 1, Part 3, Sections 4-7, 14).

Writing Assignment #7

Thursday, April 5 - *Hume*
Reading #21: - Excerpts from *Treatise* (Book 1, Part 4, Sections 4, 6).

Tuesday, April 10 - *Hume*

Reading #22: - Excerpts from *Enquiry* (Section VIII).

Thursday, April 12 - *Kant*

Reading #23: - Excerpts from *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Preamble Sections 1-5).

- Excerpts from *Critique of Pure Reason* (B Introduction).

Quiz #6: Hume

Tuesday, April 17 - *Kant*

Reading #24: - Excerpts from *Prolegomena* (First Part Remarks II-III; Second Part Sections 21a-23, 27-33).

- Excerpts from *Critique* (B Aesthetic).

Writing Assignment #8

Thursday, April 19 - *Kant*

Reading #25: - Excerpts from *Prolegomena* (Third Part Sections 50-82).

- Excerpts from *Critique* (The antimony of pure reason).

Tuesday, April 24 - *Kant*

Reading #26: - Excerpts from *Prolegomena* (Third Part Sections 50-82).

- Excerpts from *Critique* (The antimony of pure reason).

Writing Assignment #9

Thursday, April 26 - *Reid*

Reading #27: - Excerpts from *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (Letter of Dedication; Chapters I, VI)

Quiz #7: Kant

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