

PHILOSOPHY 303/ Spring 2016  
History of Modern Philosophy  
Prof. Ted Kinnaman

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course we will be studying the great philosophers of the early modern period, running from 1641 to 1785. You will write four papers, each of which will count for 25% of your grade for the semester. The papers ought to be no fewer than six but no more than eight pages long. I will assign several topics, from which you will choose four. The due dates for the papers are given on the syllabus; in each case, one week before the due date I will distribute the prompt for that paper. Everyone **MUST** write the first paper, on Descartes. Before the Descartes paper, there will be a couple of short, ungraded writing assignments intended to help you get ready for the first larger paper.

**COURSE GOALS:** Our goals in this course are to gain an understanding of the philosophical issues that were the subject of debate in the 17th and 18th centuries; to see the relevance of these issues for philosophy today; and to learn to develop philosophically informed judgments on these issues. The central issues we will be discussing include skepticism and knowledge, the foundations of modern science, and the mind/body problem. To do well in this course, you need to understand the books we read— the issues the authors address, the claims they make on these issues, and their arguments for these claims. But— and this is very important— you also need to think about how you would answer these questions, and what the strengths and weaknesses are of the philosophers' arguments. You will also need to present your thoughts in clearly written essays, in which you explain the philosophers' views (making specific reference to the texts), and offer arguments for your considered judgments on the questions we discuss. You can find a statement of standards for good writing in philosophy at <http://philosophy.gmu.edu/undergraduate/writing-standards>.

**CLASSROOM PROCEDURE:** The lectures are intended to help you better understand some of the most important passages in the assigned texts. On the syllabus below, you will see that for every day of lecture, there is an assigned text to read. The lecture will be devoted to explaining that text: What question the author is addressing; what key terms mean; what the author's argument is; and (usually) what problems there are with the author's argument. Because philosophy reading is often rather difficult, I suggest that you read the text once before lecture (or at least try it), and again after lecture. Our classroom meetings will consist mostly of lecture, but I will also ask you questions for discussion, and answer any questions you have. When my schedule allows it, I will try to post discussion questions on Blackboard, both as a guide to what we will discuss in our meetings and as an aid in understanding the reading. You will find it difficult to do well in the class without attending lecture regularly, and you should make it your goal to attend every lecture. In lecture, you should be prepared at least to listen politely to what I and other students have to say. This means not distracting others by talking to your neighbor or leaving class unnecessarily. It also means no use of cellphones during class meetings, including sending and receiving text messages.

REQUIRED BOOK: Ariew and Watkins, eds., *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2009).

Week One-- Tues., 1/19: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Letter of Dedication (pp. 35 - 7).  
Thur., 1/21: First Meditation (pp. 40 - 3).

Week Two-- Tues., 1/26: First and Second Meditation (pp. 40 - 7).  
Thur., 1/28: Descartes, Third Meditation (pp. 47 - 54).

Week Three-- Tues., 2/2: Descartes, Third Meditation.  
Thur., 2/4: Descartes, Fourth Meditation (pp. 47 - 58).

Week Four-- Tues., 2/9: Descartes, Sixth Meditation (pp. 61 - 8).  
Thur., 2/11: Descartes, Sixth Meditation (pp. 61 - 8), and Galileo, *The Assayer*, "Corpuscularianism" (pp. 21 - 4).

Week Five-- Tues., 2/16: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Bk. I (pp. 144 - 64).  
Thur., 2/18: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Bk. I (conc.) and Bk. II, to Proposition 7 (pp. 164 - 7). [**Paper #1 due**]

Week Six-- Tues., 2/23: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Bk. II, to Proposition 44 (pp. 164 - 83).  
Thur., 2/25: Leibniz, "Discourse on Metaphysics" (Sections 1-3, 5-9, and 12-16).

Week Seven-- Tues., 3/1: Leibniz, "Discourse on Metaphysics" (Sections 24-30 and 33-36; also Letters to Arnauld, pp. 248 - 254).  
Thur., 3/3: Leibniz, conc. [**Paper #2 due**]

[March 7 - 13: Spring Break]

Week Eight-- Tues., 3/15: Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part 1, Sections 1-33 (pp. 438 - 53), and *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (Dialogue 1 [pp. 454 - 74]).  
Thur., 3/17: Berkeley, cont'd. [**Paper #3 due**]

Week Nine-- Tues., 3/22: Berkeley, *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, Dialogue 2 (pp. 474 - 484).  
Thur., 3/24: Berkeley, *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, Dialogue 3 (pp. 484 - 503).

Week Ten-- Tues., 3/29: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections I-III (pp. 533 - 542).

Thur., 3/31: Hume, *Enquiry*, Section IV (pp. 542 - 8). **[Paper #4 due]**

Week Eleven-- Tues., 4/5: Hume, *Enquiry*, Section IV, cont'd.

Thur., 4/7: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections V - VII (pp. 548 - 543).

Week Twelve-- Tues., 4/12: Hume, conc., Sections VIII, X, and XII (pp. 564 - 75; 577 - 86; and 593 - 600).

Thur., 4/14: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Preface and Preamble (pp. 661 - 72).

Week Thirteen-- Tues., 4/19: Kant, *Prolegomena*, First Part of the Main Transcendental Question (pp. 673 - 9).

Thur., 4/21: Kant, *Prolegomena*, First Part, cont'd. **[Paper #5 due]**

Week Fourteen-- Tues., 4/26: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Second Part (pp. 679 - 95) and *Critique of Pure Reason*

("Transition to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories" [pp. 744 - 6]).

Thur., 4/28: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Third Part.

**The last paper (i.e. paper #6) will be due in my mailbox in Robinson B465A at the time of the scheduled final exam for the course. As of the drafting of this syllabus, that has not been announced.** You may also submit the final paper (and all other papers, along the way) electronically.

LATE SUBMISSIONS: I am usually generous about accepting assignments a bit after the due date if the student has cleared this with me beforehand. If, however, you hand in an assignment late without talking to me first, you should count on being penalized in some way. If the paper is only slightly late, I may mark it down a grade; if it is very late, I will not accept it at all.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: A general rule of thumb is, if you say something in a paper that you would not have said if you had not read Smith, even if you do not quote Smith word for word, then you need to footnote Smith. Anyone who cites or otherwise refers to the work of someone else without acknowledging this fact in a footnote will be referred to the Honor Committee.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

<http://ods.gmu.edu>

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