**PHILOSOPHY 303/ Spring 2020**

**History of Modern Philosophy**

**Prof. Ted Kinnaman**

Office: Robinson B465A Office phone: 993-1289

Office hours: Weds., 1:00-2:00; Thurs., 3:00-4:00 Email: tkinnama@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course we will be studying the most important 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, in the week before the due date I will distribute the prompt for that paper. Everyone MUST write the first paper, on Descartes. In addition, before the Descartes paper, there will be a short, ungraded (but required) writing assignment 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 document about writing papers I’ve posted on Blackboard, and 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 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 send questions to you via email, 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. Please note: LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM. I have instituted this rule because of strong evidence that using a laptop to take notes is less effective for learning than taking notes on paper. You will need to buy the book in its paper version, and take notes on paper.

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

Tues., 1/21: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Letter of Dedication (pp. 35 - 7).

Thurs., 1/23: Descartes, First Meditation (pp. 40 - 3).

Tues., 1/28: Descartes, First and Second Meditations (pp. 40 - 7).

Thurs., 1/30: Descartes, Second Meditation (cont’d.). **[Short essay due]**

Tues., 2/4: Descartes, Third Meditation (pp. 47 – 54).

Thurs., 2/6: Descartes, Fourth Meditation (pp. 47 - 58).

Tues., 2/11: Descartes, Sixth Meditation (pp. 61 - 8). **[Assignment for paper #1 posted]**

Thurs, 2/13: Descartes, Sixth Meditation (pp. 61 - 8), and Galileo, The Assayer, “Corpuscularianism” (pp. 21 - 4).

Tues., 2/18: Spinoza, Ethics, Bk. I (pp. 144 - 64).

Thurs., 2/20: Spinoza, Ethics, Bk. I (conc.) and Bk. II, to Proposition 7 (pp. 164 - 7). **[Paper #1 due]**

Tues., 2/25: Spinoza, Ethics, Bk. II, to Proposition 44 (pp. 164 - 83).

Thurs., 2/27: Leibniz, “Discourse on Metaphysics” (Sections 1-3, 5-9, and 12- 16).

Tues., 3/3: Leibniz, “Discourse on Metaphysics” (Sections 24-30 and 33-36; also Letters to Arnauld, pp. 248 - 254). **[Assignment for paper #2 posted]**

Thurs., 3/5: Leibniz, conc.

March 10 – 12: **SPRING BREAK**

Tues., 3/17: Locke, *Essay* (Book I; Book II, Chaps. I - VIII and XXIII; Book III, Chap. 3).

Thurs., 3/19: Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part 1, Sections 1-33 (pp. 438 – 53), and *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (Dialogue 1 [pp. 454 - 74]). **[Paper #2 due]**

Tues., 3/24: Berkeley, Dialogues, cont’d.

Thurs., 3/26: Berkeley, *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, Dialogue 2 (pp. 474 - 484).

Tue., 3/31: Berkeley, *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, Dialogue 3 (pp. 484 - 503). **[Assignment for paper #3 posted]**

Thurs., 4/2: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections I-III (pp. 533 - 542).

Tues., 4/7: Hume, *Enquiry*, Section IV (pp. 542 - 8).

Thurs., 4/9: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections V - VII (pp. 548 - 543). **[Paper #3 due]**

Tues., 4/14: Hume, conc., Sections VIII, X, and XII (pp. 564 - 75; 577 - 86; and 593 - 600). **[Assignment for paper #4 posted]**

Thurs., 4/16: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Preface and Preamble (pp. 661-72).

Tues., 4/21: Kant, *Prolegomena*, First Part of the Main Transcendental Question (pp. 673 - 9]).

Thurs., 4/23: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Second Part (pp. 679 - 95) and *Critique of Pure Reason* (“Transition to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories” [pp. 744 - 6]). **[Paper #4 due; assignment for paper #5 posted]**

Tues., 4/28: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Second Part (cont’d.).

Thurs., 4/30: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Third Part. **[Paper #5 due]**

**The last paper (i.e. paper #6) will be due in Blackboard by noon on Monday, May 11.**

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.

REWRITES: I am frequently asked about my policy regarding the re-writing of papers—so frequently that I think it makes sense to put it in the syllabus. Strictly speaking, I do not allow rewrites. Instead, if you are unhappy with the grade you receive on an assignment, I will count that paper for something less (how much less is entirely up to me) than its allotted 25% of the grade *if* you meet two conditions: First, you must meet with me twice to talk about writing—once to talk about the paper that didn’t go well, and another to talk with me about a later paper while you’re in the process of writing it. Second, your other papers must show significant improvement from the one you were unhappy with.

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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