

History of Modern Philosophy – Fall 2014 (PHIL 3200)

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Class time: Tuesday & Thursday, 2–3:15 pm
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursdays 1–2pm
and by appointment

Course Description

This course is required for the philosophy major, and it will examine the history of western philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The advent of the scientific and political revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have deeply influenced the way we think about our place, as human beings, in a clockwork universe, which functions according to pre-set, discoverable natural laws. What is a human being: just an automaton, with each organ part of a system of pulleys and levers? Or is there something more to the notion: e.g. feelings, and morality? Is a human being just a body, or is it also a mind? Are we inherently social creatures or, on the contrary, our actions are always determined by self-interest? These are just a handful of questions that philosophers aimed to answer, by evaluating the changes taking place around them, and, in some cases, by being the engine behind those very changes, both on the scientific and on the political front.

The lectures are designed to give you some perspective on each work as a whole as well as provide a careful analysis of the more significant passages. As we shall see, there are two major ways of answering the questions above: from a rationalist point of view, or from an empiricist standpoint. We will begin our survey of these two philosophy rich centuries with a discussion of the works of the so-called “Rationalists”, characterized primarily by their reliance on innate ideas and the use of reason in the quest to gain knowledge about ourselves and the external world. We will continue by investigating the key tenets of the so-called “British Empiricists”, who reject innate ideas and think instead that sensations are at the origin of our knowledge, imperfect as it is, of both ourselves and the external world. We will end the class with an examination of the synthesis of these traditions in the works of Thomas Reid (1710-1796) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

This course will focus not only on metaphysical and epistemological questions and their bearing on scientific inquiry, but also on the gradual movement from a theological framework (which dominated Western philosophy for centuries before Descartes) to the progressive ideals of the Enlightenment period. We will be studying primary texts written by major figures of western philosophy, who helped shape not only the development of philosophy, but also of some other academic disciplines, such as mathematics, physics and psychology.

Course Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of some major issues regarding the nature of the relationship between philosophical and scientific inquiry, and, especially, what can constitute knowledge of the external world and what are its limits.

2. To gain an appreciation of the place of philosophy within the complex intellectual and social issues of the time.
3. To appreciate the distinct issues surrounding the study of history of philosophy:
 - (i) why is history of philosophy relevant? (value)
 - (ii) how should we study the history of philosophy? (method)
 - (iii) who writes the history of philosophy, and with what purpose?
 - (iv) who gets included, who gets excluded, and why?
4. To gain the necessary tools for constructing a charitable interpretation of a difficult text.
5. To develop the students' ability to extract and analyze, in writing, arguments from a difficult text.
6. To become familiar with the use of thought experiments to advance a thesis.

Assignments and Grading

Readings / Attendance / Participation: 20% (of total grade)

Class attendance is **required**, and you are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings. This portion of the grade is awarded for *quality*, not quantity of attendance. Quality participation involves advancing the discussion with relevant contributions.

Students with legitimate excuses (as determined by me) may be given an option of making up for up to three absences by turning in some additional work.

The assigned readings must be completed **prior** to class for the day they are assigned.

Two short papers (4–5 pages), analyzing an argument from one of the reading assignments. Each counts 20% towards the final grade. These essays are due at the beginning of class, on the following dates:

9/30 (first essay)

10/28 (second essay)

Final take-home exam, in the form of a 5–7 pages essay: 40%. The final exam must be submitted online, via Blackboard, on or before: **12/15**

Note: the date and time of the final examination are set by the Registrar's office according to the days and times of the class meeting; I have no say in exam scheduling. Please do not ask to take the exam early; if you know now that you will have commitments that make you unable to submit the final paper on Blackboard, do not enroll in this class.

No extra-credit work will be given, so make your regular work count.

Late assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade per day.

Course Policies

Blackboard / E-mail: I expect all students to check their university e-mail accounts. Unless an email from a student requires immediate action, it is my policy to reply to emails within one business day. I also expect all students to check Blackboard regularly for announcements and other information. The assignments will be both distributed and submitted via Blackboard.

Grading: I use Blackboard's system for converting percentages to letter grades: 90-100 is the A range, 80-89 is the B range, 70-79 is the C range, etc., with pluses and minuses assigned proportionally (for example, 87-89 is a B+, 83-86 is a B, and 80-82 is a B-).

The grades are assigned in the following manner: A – for excellent work; B – for good work; C – for fair work; D – for work that is sub-par; F – for work that does not meet the minimum requirements.

Simply meeting the minimum requirements for this course does not entitle a student to a grade of A or B.

Electronics Policy: Students are not allowed to use any electronic devices in the classroom (laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.). Exceptions will be made only if the student disabilities office asks me to. I would prefer not to have to enforce this rule; but experience teaches me that I might need to. Any unauthorized use of electronic devices will be penalized: the student will have her/his grade reduced by 2% for each such use.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic dishonesty, being unfair to other students, and disrespectful to me, will not be tolerated. I strictly follow the university's policies on academic integrity. Each student is expected to know the University policy on plagiarism as it is stated on <http://osrr.missouri.edu/guidelines/index.html>. Students caught plagiarizing on a paper, exam, or any assignment, will be reported to the Office of the Vice Provost for investigation. Proper citations are an easy way of avoiding this problem. If you are unsure about how to cite in your paper, please see me.

Academic Accommodations: If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Disability Center (<http://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu>), S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

Flexibility: Strictly adhering to a particular guideline is not always the most sensible course of action. So, I reserve the right to alter the course plan, reading schedule, grading policies, etc. throughout the semester, when the need arises.

Required Texts

The following texts are all required and they may be purchased at the campus bookstore. Please bring the relevant books with you to lecture. Please quote only from the assigned editions.

Atherton, Margaret. *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period (WPEMP)*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1994. ISBN-13: 978-0872202597

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. ISBN-13: 978-0521558181.

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1993. ISBN-13: 978-0872202290

Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Hackett Publishing Company, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0872205932

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1991. ISBN-13: 978-0872201323

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1996. ISBN-13: 978-0872202160

Course Topics and Reading Schedule

The following list of topics may be changed. Any changes will be announced on Blackboard.

Week 1	8/26	No readings – Course overview and introduction to the study of the history of modern philosophy
	8/28	The limits of knowledge: the method of doubt Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> I, pp. 1–15 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 63-67
Week 2	9/2	<i>Meditations</i> I, pp. 1–15 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 63-67
	9/4	The Nature of Mind and the Cogito Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> II, pp. 16-23 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 68-77

Week 3	9/9	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> II, pp. 16-23 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 68-77
	9/11	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> II, pp. 16-23 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 68-77
Week 4	9/16	Arguments for the existence of God; the Source of Errors Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> III & IV, pp. 24-43 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 78-80
	9/18	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> III & IV, pp. 24-43 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 78-80
Week 5	9/23	The Nature of Body and the Argument for the Existence of Bodies Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> V & VI, pp. 44-62 Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> –“Objections and replies”, pp. 95-115;
	9/25	HOW TO WRITE A PHILOSOPHY PAPER Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> V & VI, pp. 44-62
Week 6	9/30	FIRST PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> VI Descartes’ correspondence with Elisabeth of Bohemia (WPEMP) – pp. 9-21
	10/2	Anne Conway – “Principles of Philosophy” – WPEMP, pp. 46-76 Leibniz: First Principles and the Pre-established Harmony <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , pp. 1-41
Week 7	10/7	Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham: “Letters to Leibniz” (WPEMP), pp. 77-95
	10/9	Locke: Against Innate Ideas and Principles Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book I.i-iii, pp. 4-14; Book II.x, pp. 60-63
Week 8	10/14	Locke: the Origin and Development of Our Ideas Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book II.i-iii, pp. 33-42; Book II.v-vii, pp. 44-46; Book II.xii, pp. 66-68.
	10/16	Locke: On General and Personal Identity Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book II.xxvii, pp. 133-150
Week 9	10/21	Locke: On Knowledge Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book IV.i-iv, pp. 224-254 Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book IV.ix-xi, pp. 274-292 Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book IV.xv, pp. 302-305 Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book IV.xvi, pp. 305-312
	10/23	Catharine Trotter Cockburn: <i>Vindication of an Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , WPEMP, pp. 126-146
Week 10	10/28	SECOND PAPER DUE BEFORE CLASS Hume: On Impressions and Ideas Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , pp. 1-15
	10/30	Hume: On Induction and Necessary Connection Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , pp. 15-53

Week 11	11/4	Hume: On Skepticism Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , pp. 102-111
	11/6	Reid's Nativism: The <i>Experimentum Crucis</i> Reid, <i>Inquiry into the Human Mind</i> , pp. 54-76 (COPIES DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS) The Hume-Reid exchange, <i>Inquiry</i> , pp. 255-65 (COPIES DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS)
Week 12	11/11	Reid's Reply to the Skeptic Reid, from <i>Inquiry</i> , pp. 167-72
	11/13	Reid: On Memory and Personal Identity Reid, <i>Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man</i> , pp. 253-279 (COPIES DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS)
Week 13	11/18	Kant – <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> , pp. 9-22
	11/20	Kant – <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> , pp. 23-34

THANKSGIVING RECESS: November 22 – November 30

Week 14	12/2	Kant – <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> , pp. 35-59
	12/4	Kant – <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> , pp. 64-84
Week 15	12/9	Closing remarks: Lessons from the Rationalists and the Empiricists
	12/11	Review