

# PHL 202: HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

## SPRING 2019

INSTRUCTOR: Alison Peterman  
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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:15-4:15, Lattimore 520

TIME AND LOCATION: Tuesday/Thursday, 11:05-12:20, Gavett 312

TEXTS: There is no textbook for the course. All readings are available for download from Blackboard and can be found under 'Course Materials'.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers selected philosophical topics and philosophers from the late 16th century through the 18th century. It focuses on philosophy in Europe but includes some work by philosophers from Africa and China. This period is very rich in wonderful philosophy, much of it in dialogue with what we would now call the natural sciences, but which were, at that time, perfectly continuous with what we now call philosophical inquiry. We will study the ingenious, surprising, beautiful and influential questions and theories of a number of thinkers from this period, including René Descartes, Sor Juana de la Cruz, Anton Wilhelm Amo, David Hume, Mary Shepherd, and Margaret Cavendish. We will think with them and others about the sources of knowledge, the nature and epistemological role of perception, the relationship between the mind and the body, matter and motion, and the existence and significance of God.

**This syllabus is under development. Suggestions welcome!**

### POLICIES

Please let me know right away if you need special accommodations because of a documented condition that interferes with your learning.

My pronouns are she/her/hers. Please email me at the beginning of the course letting me know your preferred gender pronoun: <https://www.gsafewi.org/wp-content/uploads/What-the-heck-is-a-PGP1.pdf>.

Please review the class schedule sometime in the next week and let me know if there are any issues.

Please turn off your cell phones when you arrive; if you are texting I will ask you to leave. If you need to have your cell phone handy because of an emergency, please let me know before class. No laptops in class (except for students with a documented need for one).

I do not use Microsoft Word. \*Please\* send me all of your attachments (papers, drafts, etc.) as PDF files, preferably with your last name in the title.

Feel free to write me emails, but please take a moment to write them in polite and thoughtful way. Start with “Dear Alison,” or “Dear Professor Peterman,” and not “Hi” or “Hey” or no introduction. End with a signoff. I would strongly recommend taking this advice for your other professors, too.

Student success at the University of Rochester includes more than just academic performance. Please feel comfortable speaking with me about challenges you are experiencing within and outside of the classroom so that I may submit a CARE report on your behalf. A CARE report is submitted when the level of concern for a student necessitates inclusive, multi-layered support from the campus community. The CARE network administrator shares information only with staff who need to know it in order to help you.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students and faculty at the University must agree to adhere to high standards of academic honesty in all of the work that we do. As freshmen, students read and sign an academic honesty policy statement to indicate that they understand the general principles upon which our work is based. The College Board on Academic Honesty website gives further information on our policies and procedures: [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty).

### ASSESSMENT

#### READING QUIZZES (12%):

I will give 8 very short quizzes on the reading during the semester, worth 2% each. They will be unannounced and held in the first 5 minutes of class. I'll drop your two lowest, so you can miss two for whatever reason without penalty. For this reason, makeups will only be given under the \*MOST EXTENUATING\* of circumstances.

#### PARTICIPATION (8%):

Asking questions and contributing to class discussion in a way that suggests that you have done the reading will contribute 8% of your final grade. Coming on time and prepared also counts. If participating will be a problem for you, please let me know right away so that we can arrange an alternate method of assessment.

#### ESSAYS (40%):

There will be two essays of 5 pages apiece, each worth 20% of your final grade.

#### EXAMS (40%):

There will be two exams held during class time, each worth 20% of your final grade. You may opt out of taking the second exam if you are happy with your grade as calculated without it.

### CREDIT HOUR REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with the College credit hour policy, which awards 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week, students are expected to devote at

least one hour each week to identifying the main lines of argument in course readings, working alone or in groups.

#### A NOTE ON PHILOSOPHY PAPERS:

Writing a philosophy paper is a special skill that takes some practice to learn. Especially if you have never taken a philosophy class before, you should not feel discouraged if it takes a little time to get used to it. I am happy to read a draft of your paper and provide you with comments on it if you get it to me five full calendar days before the due date. Papers should be properly quoted and cited. You are not expected to consult other sources, but if you do, you must cite them, whether they are books or articles or web pages. Please do not send me Word files entitled “Paper”. Please send PDF attachments with an informative name.

#### COURSE ORGANIZATION

These texts have been chosen to fit with the others in virtue of a set of shared themes. But there are a number of reasons it is hard to read them in thematically-organized cluster: some texts fit multiple themes equally well, single texts should be kept together, and at least some respect for chronology is desirable. So I have ordered them by trying to optimize all of these. To deal with departures from chronology, I have included dates for each text and we will frequently refer to a timeline in class; please do take a moment, before reading each text, to think about where it fits historically. To help us keep an eye on shared themes, I have adopted a “hashtag” system. Each set of readings will have one or more theme hashtags associated with it. You should each text’s themes in mind as you read, and think about how that text relates to other texts that we have read with the same hashtag. In discussing them in class, we will focus on drawing out those themes.

The hashtags for the course are:

- # Substance, essence, and causation
- # Reasons, ends, and harmony
- # Mind, knowledge, and perspective
- # Human nature, difference, and equality
- # Happiness, love, and the good

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The readings listed for each day are to be read *before* the lecture on that day.

### Week 1

January 17

- \* Al-Ghazali, “Deliverance from Error” (c. 1105), selections (optional, to be discussed in class)

### Week 2

January 22

- \* Zera Yacob, *Hatata* (‘Inquiry’) (1667), selections
- \* Walda Heywat, *Hatata* (c. 18th century), selections  
#MindKnowledgePerspective #HumanNatureDifferenceEquality

January 24

- \* René Descartes, *Meditations* 1-3 (1641)  
#MindKnowledgePerspective

### Week 3

January 29

- \* Meditation 4  
#MindKnowledgePerspective

January 31

- \* *Meditations* 5 and 6  
#SubstanceEssenceCausation

### Week 4

February 5

- \* Elizabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence with Descartes*, selections (1643)
- \* Anton Wilhelm Amo, *Inaugural Dissertation*, selections (1734)
- \* First paper assigned  
#SubstanceEssenceCausation #HumanNatureDifferenceEquality

February 7

- \* Sor Juana de la Cruz, *Response of the Poet to Sor Filotea* (1691)  
#MindKnowledgePerspective #HumanNatureDifferenceEquality

### Week 5

February 12

- \* Marie de Gournay: “The Ladies Complaint” (1626)
- \* Margaret Cavendish, selections (1668)

#SubstanceEssenceCausation #HumanNatureDifferenceEquality

February 14

\* Cavendish, selections

#SubstanceEssenceCausation #HumanNatureDifferenceEquality

Week 6

February 19

\* Baruch Spinoza: Skim the *Ethics*, Part I (1677)

\* Spinoza: Carefully read the Appendix to Part I

\* Isaac Newton: *General Scholium*

#SubstanceEssenceCausation #ReasonsEndsHarmony

February 21

\* Spinoza: *Ethics* Part II, Propositions 1-19 and 49

\* Spinoza: Letter 15 to Oldenburg

#MindKnowledgePerspective

Week 7

February 26

\* Gottfried Leibniz: *Primary Truths* (1686)

#MindKnowledgePerspective

February 28

\* Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), selections

#MindKnowledgePerspective #SubstanceEssenceCausation #ReasonsEndsHarmony

Week 8

March 5

\* Leibniz: *Monadology* (1714)

#MindKnowledgePerspective #SubstanceEssenceCausation #ReasonsEndsHarmony

March 7

**EXAM 1**

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

March 19

\* John Locke: *Essay* Book II, Chapter I-XII (1689)

#MindKnowledgePerspective

**First paper due**

March 21

- \* John Locke: *Essay* Book II, Chapter XXI, 1-5, and XXIII  
#SubstanceEssenceCausation

Week 10

March 26

- \* Leibniz and Clarke: Correspondence (1715), selections
- \* Émilie du Châtelet: *Foundations of Physics* (1740), selections  
#SubstanceEssenceCausation #ReasonsEndsHarmony

March 28

- \* Alexander Pope: *Essay on Man* (1733-4)
- \* Voltaire: *Candide* (1759), selections
- \* Voltaire: Poem on the Lisbon Disaster (1756)
- \* Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Letter to Voltaire regarding the poem (1756)  
#ReasonsEndsHarmony

Week 11

April 2

- \* Bernard Mandeville: *The Grumbling Hive* and *The Fable of the Bees* (1714), selections
- \* Émilie du Châtelet: Preface to her translation of *The Grumbling Hive*  
#HappinessLoveGood

April 4

- \* Émilie du Châtelet: *Discourse on Happiness*  
#HappinessLoveGood

Week 12

April 9

- \* Francis Hutcheson: selections (1725)
- \* John Balguy: *The Foundations of Moral Goodness* (1727), selections
- \* Catherine Trotter Cockburn: selections  
#HappinessLoveGood

April 11

- \* David Hume: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)  
#MindKnowledgePerspective #SubstanceEssenceCausation

Week 13:

April 16

- \* David Hume: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

#MindKnowledgePerspective #SubstanceEssenceCausation

April 18

\* David Hume: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Week 14

April 23

\* David Hume: *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, selections (1751)

#MindKnowledgePerspective #HappinessLoveGood

April 25

\* Mary Shepherd: *Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect*, selections (1824)

#SubstanceEssenceCausation

**Second paper due**

Week 15

April 30

**Exam 2**