

HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

SPRING 2017

INSTRUCTOR: Alison Peterman
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OFFICE HOURS: T/Th 12:30-1:30 pm, Lattimore 520

TIME AND LOCATION: T/Th 11:05-12:20, LeChase 160

TEXT: *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, Second Edition, Eds. Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009). Supplementary readings available on Blackboard.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers selected philosophical topics and philosophers from the 17th and 18th centuries. One reason why this period was such a fertile and exciting one in the history of philosophy is that it was filled with developments in what we would now call the natural sciences, but which were, at that time, perfectly continuous with what we now call philosophical inquiry. The questions that we will study were palpably influenced by this milieu, and in addition to being independently interesting questions with ingenious, surprising, beautiful and influential answers furnished by the thinkers in this period, they illuminate the foundations and development of our empirical sciences. We will be thinking along with René Descartes, David Hume, Mary Shepherd, Margaret Cavendish 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.

There were also extremely important geopolitical, social and religious upheavals during the “modern” period which generated developments in ethics and political philosophy. While our class will focus primarily on questions in metaphysics and epistemology, we will keep an eye to these important features of the historical landscape and their influence on the philosophy that we will be studying.

POLICIES

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

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. 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.

You must bring your textbook to every class!

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.

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 and 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.

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. (As above: please do not send me Word files entitled "Paper". Please send PDF attachments with an informative name.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Week 1: Introduction

January 19

Week 2: Descartes

January 24: Meditation 1 and 2 (AW 40-47)

January 26: Meditation 3 (AW 47-54)

Week 3: Descartes

January 31

* Meditation 3 (AW 54-58)

February 2

* Meditation 4 (AW 54-58)

Week 4: Descartes

February 7

- * First paper assigned

February 9

- * Meditation 5 (58-61)
- * Aphantasia article (Blackboard)

Week 5: Cavendish and Spinoza

February 14

- * Meditation 6 (AW 61-68)

February 16

- * Skim *Ethics* Part I (AW 144-160)
- * Carefully read the Appendix to Part I (AW 160-164)
- * Epistle 32 to Oldenburg (AW 142-143)

Week 6: Spinoza

February 21

- * *Ethics* Part II, Propositions 1-19 and 49 (AW 164-174, 184-187)

February 23

- * *Ethics* Parts III and IV, selections (online)
- * *Ethics* Part V, selections (AW 188-195)

Week 7: Leibniz

February 28

- * Leibniz: *Primary Truths* (AW 265-268).
- * First paper due.

March 2

- * Leibniz: *Monadology* 1-48 (AW 275-279).

Week 8: Leibniz

March 7

- * Leibniz: *Monadology* 49-90 (AW 279-283).
- * Voltaire: *Candide*, excerpt on Blackboard.

March 9

* Exam 1

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

March 21

* Emilie du Chatelet: *Discourse on Happiness* [NOTE: in the document on Blackboard, the discourse itself does not start until page 349.]

March 23

* Locke: *Essay* Book II, Chapter I-VII (AW 322-332).

Week 10: Berkeley

March 28

* Locke: *Essay* Book II, Chapter VIII-XII (AW 332-342).

March 30

* Locke: *Essay* Book II, Chapter XXI 1-5 (AW 348-349) and XXIII (AW 359-367).

Week 11: Berkeley

April 4

* No reading

April 6

* Berkeley: first half of First Dialogue (AW 454-464).

Week 12: Alison is out of town at a conference. An online lecture will be posted.

* Berkeley: second half of First Dialogue (AW 464-474).

* Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Author's Advertisement and Section I-III (AW 533-542).

Week 13: Hume

April 18

* Hume: *Enquiry* Section IV (AW 542-548).

April 20

* Hume: *Enquiry* Section V-VI (AW 548-556).

Week 14: Mary Shepherd

April 25

- * Selections from *Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect* (online)
- * Second paper due.

April 27

- * Selections from *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe*

Week 15: Exam

May 2:

- * Exam 2