History of Modern Philosophy
Spring 2014

Instructor: Alison Peterman
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Office Hours: Thursdays 9:00-11:00, Lattimore 521

Time and Location: TR 11:05-12:20, Gavett Hall 310

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 Descartes, Leibniz, Hume 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 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).
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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

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

Week 1: Introduction

January 16: Introduction

Week 2: Descartes

January 21
* Meditation 1 (AW 40-43).

January 23
* Meditation 2 (AW 43-47).
* Hobbes/Descartes: Third Set of Objections and Replies, Against Meditation II (AW 76-79).

Week 3: Descartes

January 28
* Descartes: Meditation 3 (AW 47-54).

January 30
* Descartes: Meditation 4 (AW 54-58).

Week 4: Descartes

February 4
* Descartes: Meditation 5 (AW 58-61).

February 6
* Descartes: Meditation 6 (AW 61-68).
* First paper assigned.
Week 5: Spinoza

February 11
* Descartes catch-up (no reading)

February 13
* Spinoza: *Ethics* Part I, skim Propositions 17-36 and read carefully the Appendix to Part I (AW 152-164).

Week 6: Leibniz

February 18
* Leibniz: *Primary Truths* (AW 265-268).

February 20
* First paper due.

Week 7: Leibniz

February 25

February 27
* Voltaire: *Candide*, excerpt on Blackboard.

Week 8: Leibniz

March 4
* Leibniz-Clarke: *Correspondence*, excerpt on Blackboard.

March 6
* Exam 1

SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Locke

March 18

March 20

Week 10: Locke

March 25

March 27
* Second paper assigned.

Week 11: Berkeley

April 1
* Berkeley: *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Preface and part of the First Dialogue (AW 454-464, up to ‘Hyl.: “I frankly admit, Philonous, that it is in vain to stand out any longer”).

April 3:

Week 12: Berkeley and Hume

April 8

April 10
* Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Author’s Advertisement and Section I (AW 533-538).
* Second paper due.

Week 13: Hume

April 15
* Hume: *Enquiry* Section II-VI (AW 538-548).

April 17
* Hume: *Enquiry* Section V-VI (AW 548-556).

Week 14: Hume

April 22
* Hume: *Enquiry* Section VII (AW 556-564).
* Kant: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Preface (AW 661-665).

Week 15

April 29

* Exam 2