

PHIL 3010: MODERN PHILOSOPHY: DESCARTES TO REID
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
FALL SEMESTER 2005

Section 07-459: MWF 9:05 am – 9:55 am, Peabody Hall, Room 105

Instructor: Dr. Dan Forbes

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Office Hours: MW 11:30 am – 12:30 pm; also by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the thought of some major figures in the history of modern philosophy in the Western tradition. The problems with which these thinkers grapple are not only intrinsically interesting but also continue to be important and influential in contemporary philosophical debates. The overarching theme of this course will be *the nature of ideas*. This theme will be our guide to examining and evaluating the major positions in metaphysics and epistemology in early modern thought. These thinker's accounts of the nature of ideas touch on philosophical topics that are continuing subjects of philosophical research: skepticism and certainty; necessity, contingency, and free will; the relationship between the mind and the body; proofs for the existence of God; conceptions of causality and substance; and rationalism, empiricism, and idealism. Some previous acquaintance with philosophy is presumed (i.e., at least an introductory course in philosophy, such as PHIL 1000 or PHIL 2200).

Students should approach this course with two goals in mind:

- (1) To become familiar with the philosophical problems of the early modern period, the positions philosophers took to address these problems, and the arguments that they made to justify or critique these positions;
- (2) More importantly, to *refine and deepen* the skill of analyzing and critiquing arguments, both philosophical and non-philosophical. Students should look not only for *weaknesses* in the arguments of these thinkers, but also look for the *strengths and insights* in the arguments.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Available in the Off-Campus and Baxter Street Bookstores:

René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 4th edition. (Green paperback)

Nicolas Malebranche, *Philosophical Selections*, ed. Steven Nadler. (White paperback)

Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and Selected Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley. (White paperback)

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler. (Tan paperback)

George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. Kenneth Winkler. (Gray paperback)

David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp. (Blue and black paperback)

Thomas Reid, *Inquiry and Essays*, ed. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer. (Light brown paperback)

Available online through UGA Libraries course reserves:

“Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia,” in *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margaret Atherton, 9-21. Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1994.

Available online through GALILEO databases (Philosopher's Index):

Thomas M. Lennon, "Through a Glass Darkly: More on Locke's Logic of Ideas." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004): 322-337.

Some handouts and resources will be distributed via WebCT (<https://webct.uga.edu>). A UGA e-mail account is required for access to WebCT.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance of class meetings is **mandatory**. Each student is allowed a maximum of **three unexcused** absences. Students with four or more unexcused absences may be subject to academic withdrawal from the course without notice. *Excused* absences do not count toward this limit. As a rule, for an absence to be excused the student must provide some sort of written documentation (for example, a note from the Health Center). What counts as an excusable absence is at the instructor's discretion.

Students are required to read all assigned material by the date it is assigned on the syllabus. The instructor may call upon students during lectures and discussions to evaluate their knowledge of the assigned material. Students may be asked specific questions about the reading assignment, or they may be asked to present questions or problems they have in understanding the reading assignment. Evidence that a student is not keeping up with the reading (repeated failure to answer questions when called upon, or to present specific questions or problems) will affect his or her participation grade.

Students are required to actively participate in class discussions of the course material. Thoughtful discussion with other students and the instructor are essential to understanding of philosophical issues as well as to developing and refining the skill of critical thinking. Having difficulty understanding the readings is no excuse for not actively participating in discussions! Indeed, it is a positive reason to participate *more* — by asking specific questions about the difficult parts of the material. Asking questions is an excellent way of actively participating. Participation is 10% of the final grade.

The remainder of the grade for the course is determined by two quizzes, two 4-6 page papers, a mid-term examination, and a cumulative final examination. The format of the quizzes will be short answer. The format of the examinations will be short answer and essay. **There will be no make-up quizzes or exams unless the student can provide documentation demonstrating extraordinary circumstances;** what constitutes an acceptable reason for missing an exam is entirely at the discretion of the instructor.

Assigned papers are due **at the beginning of class** on the dates indicated in the course schedule. **Late papers will not be accepted unless the student is granted an extension.** Any request for an extension must be made **at least 24 hours** before the class period the paper is due. Students have the option of participating in peer review groups in order to improve their argumentative writing. Details regarding this option, as well as details concerning topics and format of papers, will be discussed in class.

The University of Georgia's academic honesty code is in effect and will be enforced in order to protect all students' legal rights. Students are **required** to consult the policy (<http://www.uga.edu/~ovpi>) in order to familiarize themselves with the University of Georgia's policies regarding academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, etc.).

GRADING BREAKDOWN:

Two Quizzes (5% each)	10%
Two 4-6 page papers (20% each)	40%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	20%
Participation	10%

GRADING CRITERIA:

Papers and exam essays will be graded on a scale. A basic outline of the scale is as follows:

A: Your work demonstrates a superb understanding of the material and presents the argumentation in a clear, precise, and concise manner; **and** your work engages in insightful philosophical analysis and critique of the material.

B: Your work demonstrates a good understanding of the material and presents the argumentation accurately and intelligibly; **and** your work engages in acceptable philosophical critique of the material.

C: Your work exhibits an average understanding of the material but indicates that you are struggling to fully grasp it, and shows some problems in presenting the argumentation fully and accurately; **and** your work gives some indication that you are struggling to engage with the material in meaningful philosophical critique.

D: Your work exhibits significant weaknesses in understanding of the material, but presents some portions of the argumentation and shows some evidence that you are struggling to understand it; **and** your work fails to engage in philosophical critique of the material but shows some attempt to evaluate it in some way.

F: Your work exhibits little understanding of the material and does not present the argumentation accurately; **and** your work fails to engage the material in any critically meaningful way.

There is room for a great deal of variation in the quality of presentation, analysis, and criticism of arguments. In order to reflect this, a system of pluses and minuses and “borderline” grades (for example, “A-/B+”) will be used.

DISCLAIMER:

It is the student’s responsibility to read this syllabus carefully and learn and understand the policies, requirements, and due dates. This syllabus indicates a general plan for the course; some changes may be necessary. It is the student’s responsibility to keep informed of any changes that are made over the course of the academic term.

TIPS AND HINTS:

Some of the assigned readings are quite difficult and require careful reading to grasp the arguments. You are required to read the assignment before the material is covered in class, but it is wise to read it once again after the lecture. You should also think carefully and critically about the material as you read it — in particular, if you disagree with the philosopher, you should try to identify *exactly* what is wrong with the argument(s) he or she presents.

If you are still unsure about the material even after repeated readings, ask questions about it in class or see me during office hours. Do **NOT** allow yourself to sit quietly mystified by the philosophers’ terminology and reasoning. The exams and papers require that you demonstrate some degree of *understanding* of the material, and are not just exercises in memorization and regurgitation. If you do not make an effort to understand the material, you will not succeed in this course.

COURSE OUTLINE (PRELIMINARY):

AUGUST

- 19 Syllabus; Logic and Argumentation; Rationalism and Empiricism
- 22 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Dedicatory Letter, Preface to Reader, Synopsis, and 1st Meditation (pp. 47-63)
- 24 Descartes, 2nd Meditation (pp. 63-9)
- 25 (Thursday) **ADD/DROP ENDS**
- 26 Descartes, 3rd Meditation (pp. 69-81)
- 29 Descartes, 3rd Meditation, continued
- 31 Descartes, 4th and 5th Meditations (pp. 81-92)

SEPTEMBER

- 2 Descartes, 6th Meditation (pp. 92-103)
- 5 **LABOR DAY HOLIDAY — NO CLASS**
- 7 Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Correspondence with Descartes (library e-reserves) (pp. 9-21)
- 9 **FIRST QUIZ**; Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* (pp. 3-12)
- 12 Malebranche, *Search* (pp. 13-23)
- 14 Malebranche, *Search* (pp. 24-35)
- 16 Malebranche, *Search* (pp. 36-45)
- 19 Malebranche, *Search* (pp. 46-50, 92-98); How to Write a Philosophy Paper (Thesis, Organization, Argumentation, and Documentation)
- 21 Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Definition 1 through Proposition 16 (pp. 31-44)
- 23 Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Definition 1 through Proposition 16, continued
- 26 Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 17 through Appendix (pp. 44-62)
- 28 **FIRST PAPER DUE**; Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part II, Definition 1 through Proposition 13 (pp. 63-72)
- 30 Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition 13 Scholium through Proposition 32 (pp. 72-85)

OCTOBER

- 3 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- 5 Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 4-23)
- 7 Locke, *Essay*, Book I, Chapter 4; Book II, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 23-41)
- 10 Locke, *Essay*, Book II, Chapter 8 (pp. 47-56), Chapter 12 (pp. 66-68), Chapter 17 (pp. 85-89)
- 12 Locke, *Essay*, Book IV, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 224-34), Chapter 4 (pp. 250-4), Chapter 10 (pp. 275-84)
- 14 **MIDPOINT WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE**;
- 17 Locke, *Essay*, Book IV, Chapter 11 (pp. 284-92)
- 19 Thomas M. Lennon, "Through a Glass Darkly: More on Locke's Logic of Ideas" (GALILEO database)
- 21 Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Nature*, Introduction (pp. 7-21)
- 24 Berkeley, *Treatise*, Part I, §§1-33 (pp. 23-35)
- 26 Berkeley, *Treatise*, Part I, §§34-66 (pp. 35-49)
- 28 **FALL BREAK — NO CLASS**
- 31 Berkeley, *Treatise*, Part I, §§67-100 (pp. 49-62)

NOVEMBER

- 2 Berkeley, *Treatise*, Part I, §§101-134 (pp. 62-78)
- 4 Berkeley, *Treatise*, Part I, §§135-156 (pp. 78-87)
- 7 **SECOND QUIZ**; Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Sections 2 and 3 (pp. 96-102; pp. 102-7 optional)
- 9 Hume, *Enquiry*, Section 4 (pp. 108-18)
- 11 Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections 5 and 6 (pp. 119-33)
- 14 Hume, *Enquiry*, Section 7 (pp. 134-47)
- 16 Hume, *Enquiry*, Section 8 (pp. 148-164)
- 18 Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, Essay One, Chapter 1 (pp. 129-141)

- 21 **SECOND PAPER DUE;** Reid, *Essays*, Essay One, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 141-159)
23 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY — NO CLASS**
25 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY — NO CLASS**
28 Reid, *Essays*, Essay Two, Chapters 5 & 10 (pp. 159-175)
30 Reid, *Essays*, Essay Two, Chapters 14, 17, 18 (pp. 175-190)

DECEMBER

- 2 Reid, *Essays*, Essay Two, Chapters 19 & 20 (pp. 190-206)
6 Reid, *Essays*, Essay Four, Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 218-233)
7 Catch-Up & Review
14 **FINAL EXAMINATION:** 8:00 am – 11:00 am