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Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:15-4:15 pm, Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 pm, and by appointment

Course Overview

The Scientific Revolution generated discoveries and inventions that went well beyond what the human eye had ever before seen—extending outward to distant planets and moons and downward to cellular structures and other microscopic entities, none of which had been previously observed. But these new discoveries, and the scientific methods that were evolving during this time, also demonstrated fundamental flaws in how we understood ourselves as humans and our relationship to the rest of the universe.

As a result of this (among other things), in the 17th and 18th century there were radical changes in our philosophical conceptions of the nature of reality, human freedom, the relationship between mind and body, and the extent and limits of our knowledge. Philosophers wrestled with these questions with a passion. These questions were not abstract intellectual pursuits—they reached to the heart of distinctively human concerns. We will survey the philosophical systems of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. We will see a variety of theories, some that will seem tame and quaint by contemporary standards, and others that will blow your mind, and we will put each one to the philosophical test.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance & Participation.
2. Two 5-7 page papers (30% each).
3. Two sets of peer reviews of classmates' papers (calculated as part of the paper grades).
4. Two exams (20% each).

Course Text

The following text will be available at the Skidmore Shop:

Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources, edited by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (Hackett Publishing Co., ISBN: 978-0872204409).

Any additional readings will be available on the course website, which you can access at <http://blackboard.skidmore.edu>.

Papers

There are two 5-7 page papers, due on the following schedule:

Oct. 12: First Draft of Paper 1 due
Oct. 19: Final Draft of Paper 1 due

Nov. 16: First Draft of Paper 2 due
Nov. 23: Final Draft of Paper 2 due

I am generally not considered an “easy grader” on papers. One of the most common mistakes students fall into with their writing is in thinking that their first draft is pretty close to their final draft. In my experience (both personally and in working with other students), a first draft is a *long way* from being a final draft, and it often takes several rounds of careful revision before you have something close to a good final draft. So, allow yourself some time for your paper—you’ll be glad you did.

If you are relatively new to philosophical writing and would like additional guidance on how to write a good philosophy paper, I recommend the following book, available from your standard online bookstores:

Vaughn, Lewis, *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophical Essays* (Oxford University Press, ISBN: 978-0195179569).

Peer Reviews

For each of the two papers, you will be asked to provide constructive comments on two of your peers' first drafts, and you will also receive feedback on your drafts from two of your classmates. The aim of this is to engage in a collaborative effort to improve each person's argument. I will provide more details on the review procedure closer to the due date for the first draft of paper one.

Attendance & Participation

I expect you to attend class regularly, on-time, having read the assigned readings, ready to discuss them. I will not assign a formal grade for this, since it is simply a base-line expectation for the class.

The Precipice: Any student who misses 8 or more classes, whether or not any of those absences are excused, will automatically fail the class.

Grading Policy

I will follow the evaluation rubric outlined in the course catalog (p. 49) when assigning grades:

A+, A	Distinguished work
A-, B+, B	Superior Work
B-, C+, C	Satisfactory Work
C-, D+, D	Passing, poor-quality work
F	Failure, no credit earned

Late Work: Any late work will be graded down by 1/3 of a grade for each day that it is late. You will receive no credit for work that is more than a week late.

Example: a B paper will receive a B- if handed in one day late; it will receive a C+ if it is handed in two days late; etc.

I do not allow make-up exams.

Honor Code

In keeping with the Honor Code, I must give you some sense of what constitutes "honesty and integrity" in your work for this class. The main things I would be concerned about in this class are:

- a. Papers: any sources that you use in your paper must be properly quoted and cited. I don't expect you to do any outside research for the papers in this class—the only source that you will need is the course text. But if you do happen to consult other sources (whether formal research materials in the library or less formal research materials such as online write-ups), you must identify the source. If there is any uncertainty about what constitutes plagiarism or unauthorized aid on the papers, you should discuss it with me.

Of course, you are free to make use of peer reviews, visits to the Writing Center, meetings with me, etc., to sharpen your paper. In fact, I encourage wide use of such aids.

- b. Exams: you may study together (again, I encourage it!), but you may not make use of any notes or help from others (in any form) during the exams.

If you are in doubt about whether anything else constitutes a violation of the honor code, it is your responsibility to consult with me first. Any violation of the honor code will result in failure of the class.

Tentative Schedule

Below is a tentative reading schedule. It is very likely that we will get off schedule, in which case I will update the schedule along the way.

	Date	Topics	Readings
1.	Wednesday, Sept. 9	Introduction to Course: Philosophy, Science, and Religion at the beginning of the 17 th century	
2.	Monday, Sept. 14	Descartes & the Strategy of the Meditations	<i>Meditations</i> , Letter, Synopsis, and First Meditation (pp. 22-30).
3.	Wednesday, Sept. 16	Descartes on <i>Res Cogitans</i>	<i>Meditations</i> , Second Meditation (pp. 30-34).
4.	Monday, Sept. 21	Descartes' Proof for the Existence of God	<i>Meditations</i> , Third Meditation (pp. 34-41).
5.	Wednesday, Sept. 23	Descartes & the Cartesian Circle	<i>Meditations</i> , Fourth Meditation (pp. 41-45).
	Monday, Sept. 28	No Class	
6.	Wednesday, Sept. 30	Descartes on the Real Distinction Argument	<i>Meditations</i> , Fifth Meditation (pp. 45-48).
7.	Monday, Oct. 5	Descartes on Dualism and Interactionism	<i>Meditations</i> , Sixth Meditation (pp. 48-55); ☞ Selections from Correspondence with Elisabeth
8.	Wednesday, Oct. 7	Malebranche on Causation	<i>The Search After Truth</i> , Book 6, Part 2, Chap. 3 (pp. 401-404).
9.	Monday, Oct. 12	Spinoza's Argument for Substance Monism	<i>Ethics</i> , Part 1, through the scholium to Prop. 11 (pp. 129-134) Draft of Paper 1 Due
10.	Wednesday, Oct. 14	Spinoza on Necessitarianism and Parallelism	<i>Ethics</i> , Part 1, through the end (pp. 134-149) Peer Reviews for Paper 1 Due
11.	Monday, Oct. 19	Spinoza on Mind-Body Identity	<i>Ethics</i> , Part 2, through the scholium to Prop. 13 (pp. 149-157) Final Draft of Paper 1 Due
12.	Wednesday, Oct. 20	Leibniz on the Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God & the Choice of the Best World / Threat of Necessitarianism	<i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , sections 1-16 (pp. 184-193)
13.	Monday, Oct. 26	MIDTERM EXAM	
14.	Wednesday, Oct. 28	Leibniz on <i>Per Se</i> Possibility & the Predicate-in-Subject Principle	<i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , sections 30-36 (pp. 202-207)
15.	Monday, Nov. 2	Leibniz's Arguments for Idealism: No Explanatory Regress	<i>Monadology</i> (235-243)
16.	Wednesday, Nov. 4	Leibniz on Human Freedom and the Problem of Evil	Letters to Arnauld (pp. 208-214, 217-220); ☞ Selection from the <i>Theodicy</i> (handout)
17.	Monday, Nov. 9	Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities / Berkeley's Argument for Idealism from Perceptual Relativity	<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , Bk. 2, Chap. 8 (pp. 285-290); <i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> . Preface and First Dialogue (pp. 413-433).
18.	Wednesday, Nov. 11	Berkeley on Skepticism and the Problem of Unperceived Objects	<i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> . Second Dialogue (pp. 433-443)
19.	Monday, Nov. 16	Berkeley's Master Argument	<i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> . Third Dialogue (pp. 443-461); <i>Principle of Human Knowledge</i> , Part I, §§18-20 (pp. 474-475) Draft of Paper 2 Due

20.	Wednesday, Nov. 18	Hume on the Copy Principle, Relations of Ideas, & Matters of Fact	<i>An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , sections 1-3 (491-499) Peer Reviews for Paper 2 Due
21.	Monday, Nov. 23	Hume's Skeptical Argument	<i>An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , section 4 (499-506) Final Draft of Paper 2 Due
THANKSGIVING BREAK (NOV. 25 – NOV. 29)			
22.	Monday, Nov. 30	Hume's Skeptical Solution and the Idea of Necessary Connection	<i>An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , sections 5 and 7 (506-512, 514-522)
23.	Wednesday, Dec. 2	Kant on the Aspirations of Metaphysics: the Synthetic A Priori	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , B Preface, Introduction, and the Transcendental Aesthetic (pp. 635-653)
24.	Monday, Dec. 7	Kant's Copernican Revolution, compared with Berkeley and Leibniz	<i>Prolegomena</i> , Remarks II and III (pp. 594-597)
25.	Wednesday, Dec. 8	Kant on Skepticism, Knowledge of Bodies, and the Neglected Alternative	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , the First Antinomy (pp. 703-709)
	Thursday, Dec. 17	FINAL EXAM – 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	

Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Sept. 6				1 – Sept. 9 Classes Begin			
2 Sept. 13		2 – Sept. 14	Sept. 15 Drop/Add Deadline	3 – Sept. 16			
3 Sept. 20		4 – Sept. 21		5 – Sept. 23			
4 Sept. 27		Sept. 28 No Classes		6 – Sept. 30			
5 Oct. 4		7 – Oct. 5		8 – Oct. 7			
6 Oct. 11		9 – Oct. 12 Paper One Draft One due		10 – Oct. 14			
7 Oct. 18		11 – Oct. 19 Paper One Final Draft		12 – Oct. 20		Oct. 23 Study Day	
8 Oct. 25		13 – Oct. 26 Midterm Exam		14 – Oct. 28			
9 Nov. 1		15 – Nov. 2		16 – Nov. 4			
10 Nov. 8		17 – Nov. 9		18 – Nov. 11			
11 Nov. 15		19 – Nov. 16 Paper Two Draft One due		20 – Nov. 18 Withdrawal Deadline			
12 Nov. 22		21 – Nov. 23 Paper Two Final Draft		Thanksgiving Vacation			
13 Nov. 29		22 – Nov. 30		23 – Dec. 2			
14 Dec. 6		24 – Dec. 7		25 – Dec. 8		Dec. 11 Last Day of Classes	
					Dec. 17 Final Exam 6:00 – 9:00 PM		