

PH 204: History of Philosophy: Early Modern
Skidmore College
Fall 2007
Section 001
M/W, 4:00-5:20, Tisch 204

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Tues/Thurs, 2:00-3:00
and by appointment

Course description:

This is a survey course in which we will study major European philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We will focus on readings from Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant with supplementary secondary readings on these four philosophers as well as Spinoza, Leibniz, and Berkeley. The issues we consider will be mainly metaphysical and epistemological and will include the sources, scope, and limits of human knowledge; the nature of the mind and its relation to the body; the existence of God; and the possibility of free will.

Required texts:

- Descartes, Rene, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th edition, trans. Cress, Hackett
- Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, abridged, ed. Winkler, Hackett
- Hume, David, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 2nd edition, ed. Steinberg, Hackett
- Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd edition, ed. Popkin, Hackett
- Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, abridged, trans. Pluhar, Hackett
- Photocopied readings to be handed out in class

Course policies and procedures:

- **Assignments and grading:** Final course grades will be based on the following:
 1. **Exams:** You will take three in-class essay exams, spaced more or less evenly throughout the semester. Exam dates and format details will be announced at least one week in advance. **Each exam will count as 20% of your final course grade.**
 2. **Papers:** You will write two papers (roughly five or six pages each). Topics and due dates will be announced at least one week in advance, but the first paper will be due around mid-semester and the second paper will be due at some point after the last class. Detailed instructions for papers will be provided. **Each paper will count as 15% of your final course grade.**
 3. **Class preparedness and participation:** You should read the assigned texts carefully before the class session during which they will be discussed. Please bring the assigned readings to class. You should be attentive in class and actively participate. Feel free to raise your hand at any time. **Class preparedness and participation will count as 10% of your final course grade.**

- **Late papers and missed exams:** Late papers will be accepted no later than three class sessions after the due date. Within that time, three points will be deducted for each class session they are late. No make-up exams will be given except in cases of extreme emergency.
- **Grading system:** For each exam and paper, as well as for class participation, you will be given a numerical grade based on a maximum of 100 points. Final course numerical grades will be computed according to the percentages indicated above. These numerical grades will be converted into final course letter grades according to the following system:

97.5-100	A+
92.5-97.4	A
90.0-92.4	A-
87.5-89.9	B+
82.5-87.4	B
80.0-82.4	B-
77.5-79.9	C+
72.5-77.4	C
70.0-72.4	C-
67.5-69.9	D+
60.0-67.4	D
00.0-59.9	F

- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is essential for success in this course. Reading the assigned texts is important, but the central concepts, arguments, and theories from the readings will be clarified in lecture and discussion. Class participation also makes up a significant part of the course grade. Therefore you should make the effort to attend every class session. When absence is absolutely necessary, you should get the notes you missed from another student in the class. After reviewing those notes, contact me with any questions you have.

Please arrive on time for class. I will take attendance at the beginning of each session. Each student will be allowed two opportunities to have his/her name removed from the absence list after class if he/she was late. It is the student's responsibility to request removal of his/her name from the list immediately after the class for which he/she was late. Each late arrival after the third will be counted as an absence.

Each student will be allowed **three absences** without direct penalty. For each absence beyond the third, three points will be deducted from the student's final course numerical average. Excessive absences will also adversely affect class participation grades. Any student who misses more than a third of the class sessions will receive an F for the course.

- **Paper submissions:** All papers must be submitted in hard copy only. No electronic submissions will be accepted.
- **Extra credit:** There will be no extra credit.

- **Academic integrity:** All students will be held to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. I recommend that you consult the college's statements on academic integrity, plagiarism, cheating, the honor code, etc. in the Academic Information Guide available at <http://www.skidmore.edu/administration/dean-studies/AcademicIntegrity.htm>. If any of this is unclear, speak with me and I will answer your questions. We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it when the first paper is assigned. Before handing in papers, I highly recommend that you consult Skidmore's Academic Integrity Checklist available at <http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/writingbrd/aic.htm>
- **Mutual respect:** I would like to encourage and maintain a friendly and comfortable class atmosphere. This requires, at a minimum, that we all show the proper respect for each other. Racist, sexist, and otherwise offensive language and behavior will not be tolerated.
- **WebCT page:** There is a WebCT page for this course. The WebCT entry page can be found at <http://webct.skidmore.edu/webct/public/home.pl> . There will be important course documents, announcements, and other information posted on WebCT that will not be handed out in hard copy. Each student should familiarize him/herself with the use of WebCT during the first week of the course.
- **Accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability, please bring me your semester memo of accommodations as soon as you obtain it. If you think that you need accommodations but do not yet have them, set up a meeting with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Student Academic Services, in Starbuck Center.
- **Meeting with your instructor:** Please meet with me whenever you have any questions, comments, problems, or worries. I have scheduled office hours and I will also be able to make appointments for other times. Email is also a good way to get in touch with me.