

Early Modern Philosophy

PHIL 3323: Fall Semester 2019

Class Meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00-11:15am

Class Meeting Location: JO 4.102

Instructor: Dr. Katherine Davies

Office Hours: Mondays 1-2pm, Wednesdays 2-3pm and by appointment

Office Hours Location: JO 5.104

Email: Katherine.Davies@utdallas.edu

Course Description

This course covers the Early Modern period of philosophy in the western, European philosophical Tradition. It consists in an intensive study of texts significant in the history of philosophy from the Renaissance through the Age of Enlightenment, circa 1500-1800. Special attention will be paid to the metaphysical and epistemological positions of Rationalism and Empiricism over the course of this period, culminating in the development of Transcendental Idealism. We will first read the rationalists Descartes and Spinoza, then turn to the empiricists Locke and Hume, before engaging with Kant's purported resolution of the fundamental disagreement of the rationalist and empiricist position. Along the way, we will engage with philosophical questions pertaining to Doubt and Certainty, the existence or nonexistence of God, Substance, the relationship between Feeling and Rationality, Personal Identity, Causation, and Enlightenment. We will also engage commentary on and elaboration of philosophical insights generated by these canonical thinkers. Prerequisites: Upper-division standing or any previous PHIL course or instructor consent required.

Required Texts

Students must purchase physical copies of the exact editions listed

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, Oxford University Press ISBN: 9780192806963

Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometrical Order*, Cambridge University Press ISBN: 9781107655638

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Hackett Publishing Company ISBN: 9780872202160

David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Hackett Publishing Company ISBN: 9780872202290

All other materials will be provided electronically via eLearning

Learning Outcomes

In addition to exploring the topics described above, during this course students will learn how to:

- 1) Read, understand, and evaluate complex philosophical texts (including for arguments, presuppositions, perspective, and purpose)
- 2) Formulate a thesis by identifying, developing, and clearly presenting their own perspective on a problem, question, idea, or text, and making clear its context and significance
- 3) Support their thesis with appropriate evidence (argument and exegesis), using philosophical sources to support and situate their interpretation of a text and/or stand on an issue
- 4) Organize and effectively communicate their ideas to both philosophical and non-philosophical audiences

Assignments

Figure-Based Assignments (choose three out of four to total 60%)

After reading each major figure during the semester, an assignment will be offered. Each student must complete **three out of four** of these offered assignments.

Descartes Written Exam (20%)

After reading Descartes, an exam will be offered. The exam is designed to ensure reading and comprehension. The questions on the exam will draw heavily on key topics from the readings discussed in class. It will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and a short answer essay question. Questions will be drawn from the handouts provided for each day's reading.

Spinoza Recorded Conversation (20%)

After reading Spinoza, students will have the opportunity to teach someone else about Spinoza's philosophy. For this assignment, students must find someone (a friend, acquaintance, family member, etc.) who has ideally never taken a philosophy class and record a conversation between the student and conversational partner. This assignment will assess the student's understanding as well as their capacity to make that understanding transparent to others. A list of suggested conversational topics will be provided.

Locke Essay (20%)

After reading Locke, a traditional argumentative paper will be assigned. This essay will ask the student to draw out the main arguments Locke develops for Empiricism and to indicate how these arguments oppose Descartes' and/or Spinoza's Rationalism. This paper will be 3-4 pages, regularly formatted, and a prompt will be provided.

Hume Creative Project (20%)

After reading Hume, students have the opportunity to complete a creative project inspired by Hume's philosophy. This project could take the form of a musical or artistic art work, imagined journalistic coverage of a fictional or nonfictional event, a scene from a play, a short story, etc. There is no limit, in principle, to the possible manifestations of this project. However, it must be clear how this project is built from or responding to aspects of Hume's philosophy. If the submission does not make this clear on its own, please provide an accompanying artist statement. More details will be provided.

Final Essay (25%)

During finals week, after we have read Kant a final paper will be required. For this assignment, students must set Kant's philosophy into conversation with at least two other philosophers we have read in the course, showing how Kant's philosophy either critiques or is compatible with their project(s). This paper must be thesis-driven and argumentative. On our second to last class meeting, students will workshop their ideas for this final essay with one another. On our last class meeting, students will give an ungraded, mini-presentation (2-3 minutes) about their final essay to the class as a whole. More details and possible prompts will be provided.

Effort and Improvement (15%)

The reading for this course is dense and difficult. Effort thus counts for something. This may take the form of exemplary class participation (predicated on attendance), extra work on your writing, or meetings during office hours with the instructor to further discuss the course material. This grade is intended to reward effort, improvement, and the quality of your engagement with the course beyond merely completing the explicit assignments.

Course Mechanics

(1) Attendance

Regular attendance is a requirement for this course. More than five unexcused absences will affect your final course grade. You cannot pass this class if you have nine or more unexcused absences. Excused absences must be arranged with instructor well in advance.

(2) Late Paper/ Extension Policy

Assignments are due at the time and date specified in the assignment instructions. Assignments will be submitted **online only** via Turnitin (with the possible exception of the Hume Creative Project) on our eLearning course site (instructions will be provided). Any Assignments submitted within 24 hours after the time and date specified will be penalized one-half letter grade, and will be penalized by an additional full letter grade for each additional 24 hour period they are late. Those assignments

more than 72 hours (3 days) late will not be accepted. Extensions for extenuating circumstances must be requested at least one week before an assignment is due.

(3) Technology Policy

Cell phones, tablets, laptops, and all other electronic devices are **prohibited** in the classroom, except by special permission. When electronic materials are distributed via the eLearning site, you are required to PRINT those materials and bring hard copies to our class meetings.

(4) Discursive Practices and Academic Integrity

This course will operate on the basis of open communication and respect. Demonstrated disrespect for others on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, class, age, disability, etc., will not be tolerated. Because a significant objective of this class is to make you a better reader and writer, plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported. Please familiarize yourself with UTD's policy: <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/dishonesty/>

(5) Accommodation Policy

This course is designed with all students in mind, but we are not all the same. The instructor would like to work with each student individually so that the course and its requirements fit with their abilities. If you would like to discuss such matters, please contact the instructor during the first week of class. Under UTD policy, for an accommodation to be officially considered, a student must register with Student AccessAbility. Please be in contact with this office here: <https://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess/>

Schedule of Readings

August 19: Course Introduction, Syllabus Overview, Galileo and Cavell Excerpts in-class

Rationalism: Descartes and Spinoza

August 21: René Descartes *Meditations*, "First Meditation," pgs. 11-17

August 26: Descartes, "Second Meditation," pgs. 17-24

August 28: Descartes, "Third Meditation," pgs. 25-37

September 2: *No Class, Labor Day*

September 4: Descartes, "Fourth Meditation," pgs. 38-45

September 9: Descartes, "Fifth Meditation," pgs. 45-51

September 11: Descartes, "Sixth Meditation," pgs. 51-64

September 16: Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes from *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period* pgs. 11-21 (pdf provided)

September 18: **Descartes In-Class Exam**

September 23: Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometrical Order*, Part 1 “Of God,” Definitions, Axioms, and Propositions, 1-20, pgs. 3-23

September 25: Spinoza, Part 1 “Of God,” Propositions 21-34 and Appendix, pgs. 23-41

September 30: Spinoza, Part 3 “Of the Origin and Nature of the Emotions,” Preface, Definitions, Postulates, and Propositions 1-26 pgs. 93-114

October 2: Spinoza, Part 3 “Of the Origin and Nature of the Emotions,” Propositions 27-52, pgs. 114-135

October 7: Spinoza, Part 3 “Of the Origin and Nature of the Emotions,” Propositions 53-59 and Definitions of the Emotions, pgs. 135-156

October 9: Genevieve Lloyd “The Man of Reason” (pdf provided)

October 13: **Spinoza Audio File Due on eLearning by 5pm**

Empiricism: Locke and Hume

October 14: John Locke “The Epistle to the Reader” and Book I, Chapters I and II from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, pgs. 1-14

October 16: Locke, Book II, Chapters I, II, V, VI, VII, X, and XII, pgs. 33-41, 44-46, 60-63, and 66-68

October 21: Locke, Book II, Chapter XXVII, pgs. 133-150

October 23: Locke, Book II, Chapters I and II, pgs. 176-180 and Book VI Chapters, I, II, and V, pgs. 224-234 and 254-257

October 28: Susan Brison, “Outliving Oneself” (pdf provided)

October 30: *Class Cancelled*

November 1: **Locke Essay Due on eLearning by 5pm**

November 4: David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections I-III, pgs. 1-15

November 6: Hume, Sections IV and V, pgs. 15-37

November 11: Hume, Section XII, pgs. 102-114

November 13: Julian Baggini, "[Hume the humane](#)" Essay on *Aeon* (link provided)

November 17: **Hume Creative Assignment due by 5pm on eLearning or in-person (TBD)**

Transcendental Idealism: Introduction to Kant

November 18: Immanuel Kant, "Preface" to the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (pdf provided)

November 20: Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (pdf provided)

November 25: *No Class, Fall Break*

November 27: *No Class, Thanksgiving Break*

December 2: **In-Class Peer Review of Final Paper Drafts**

December 4: **Mini Presentations of Final Papers**

December 9th at 5pm, Final Papers due via eLearning