

**PHIL 202: History of Philosophy II**  
**Spring 2017**

MWF 11:00–11:50 in SEW 305

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Office hours: by appointment

**Course Description**

This course covers the history of western philosophy in the modern period, which for our purposes consists of the 17th and 18th centuries. Medieval Europeans would have taken for granted a worldview originating with Aristotle and refined by his successors, Ptolemy, Aquinas, and the Scholastic Philosophers. In the 16th century that worldview came under assault from advances in both theory (e.g. Copernicus) and observation (e.g. Galileo). Philosophy in the 17th and 18th century is largely devoted to constructing a new way of understanding the world and our place in it.

We begin with Descartes and Leibniz, two of the great 17th century continental rationalists. Next we move on 17th and 18th century British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. We conclude with Kant's attempted synthesis of rationalism and empiricism.

**Course Objectives**

The objective of this course is to gain an understanding of developments in 17th and 18th century European philosophy.

**Course Materials**

Required texts:

Title: *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett Classics) 3rd Edition Author: Rene Descartes ISBN: 978-0872201927

Title: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett Classics) 2nd Edition Author: David Hume ISBN: 978-0872202290

Title: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Hackett Classics) 2nd Edition Author: Immanuel Kant ISBN: 978-0872205932

Additional materials will be provided through Canvas.

## Evaluation

Student performance will be evaluated using two in-class exams, ten pop-quizzes, and one term paper.

Exam 1	March 3	20 points
Exam 2	April 21	20 points
Term Paper	Due April 28	30 points
10 pop-quizzes	[they pop]	3 points each

Exams: One week prior to each exam I will provide a list of **three** essay prompts. On exam day you will be asked to respond to **two** of the three essay prompts on the list. Exams will be closed-note and closed-book. Exams are non-cumulative. Responses will be written in blue-books (available in the Campus Store in the Student Center – be sure to bring your own blue-books). On exam day do not put your name on your blue-book until I say to.

Term Paper: I will provide prompts for the term paper. If you would prefer to come up with your own prompt then you are encouraged to do so, but **YOU MUST CLEAR IT WITH ME FIRST**. I'm not trying to crush your creativity here. It's just that picking a good topic for a paper — not too big, not too small, not involving some confusion — is an art in itself and I'd hate for you to get off on the wrong foot. The term paper should be around 2000 words (6-7 pages).

All papers must be submitted through Canvas. All papers will be graded blind, meaning that I will not know whose paper I am grading. For that reason, **PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME OR OTHER IDENTIFIER ON YOUR PAPER**. Why is this important? It helps to avoid implicit bias and ensure fair grading.

Late papers will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day past the due date.

Pop-quizzes: The quizzes will be quick and typically pretty easy, provided that you are present in class, have done the reading, and are paying attention to the lecture. They will typically be a surprise, but I might tell you that one is coming up. I might even tell you what the questions will be. In order to take a quiz and receive any credit for it, you must be present when it is administered (or have a document excuse). No make-up quizzes will be offered unless you have a documented excuse!

Quizzes are graded coarsely: only full letter grades are possible (no +'s or -'s).

Grading: All exams, quizzes, and papers will be assigned letter-grades. Canvas will convert letter-grades to numerical scores equivalent to the top of the ranges below (so A- becomes 94, B becomes 87, etc). Final grades are determined by the weighted average of exam, paper, and quiz grades

## Grading Scale:

Grade	Range
A+	97 – 100
A	94 – <97
A-	90 – <94
B+	87 – <90
B	84 – <87
B-	80 – <84
C+	77 – <80
C	74 – <77
C-	70 – <74
D+	67 – <70
D	64 – <67
D-	60 – <64
F	<60

**IMPORTANT:** In order to pass this course you must: be present to take both exams (or have a documented excuse for your absence) AND be present to take at least 6 quizzes (or have a documented excuse for your absence) AND receive a D or higher on the term paper .

## Helpful Resources

Jim Pryor (NYU) has a helpful guide for reading philosophy and another for writing philosophy. They can be found at:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

and

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Tyler Burge (UCLA) offers the following words of wisdom concerning the study of philosophy:

Whatever the reader's background and interests [...] I offer this council, firmly and insistently: patience. Patience is a primary virtue in philosophy. Genuine understanding is a rare and valuable commodity, not to be obtained on the cheap. One cannot reap philosophy's rewards breathlessly, or by looking for the intellectual equivalents of sound bites. Very large claims are at issue here, claims that bear on understanding some of the matters most important to being human. Understanding requires investing time, close reading, and reflection.

## Participation

You are encouraged to ask questions and to discuss the readings. The best way to learn philosophy is by doing philosophy, and part of doing philosophy is talking about philosophy. Come to class ready to talk and don't rely on others to carry the weight. Try answers on for size. Very often progress is made by first putting a bad answer on the table and then getting an idea of what is wrong with it and how it could be improved upon. Offering a "bad" answer doesn't make you bad at philosophy or mean you are being dumb or dense. Some of the most important works in philosophy were merely conversation starters, and some of the best and smartest philosophers have offered really "bad" answers to certain questions.

Here are some examples of fantastic questions that I've been asked:

"I don't understand what you just said. Would you please explain it again?"

"You just claimed that X, but I don't see why I should believe X. What can you say to convince me?"

"You just drew conclusion Y from premise X, but I don't see how X supports Y. What can you say to convince me?"

"I've lost the forest for the trees. Can you zoom out and tell me how this small point that we've been discussing fits in to the larger issues?"

And here is a list of every stupid question I've ever been asked:

[blank — there are no stupid questions]

## Attendance Policy

Your regular attendance is expected. This expectation is reflected in your grade through the quizzes: skip a class in which we have a quiz and you'll receive a 0 on that quiz.

## Rice Honor Code

Rice takes its honor code very seriously. All work completed in this course is subject to the Rice Honor Code pledge, which reads:

On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment.

So what's authorized?

*Citation* Cite anything you'd like, but be sure to cite any sources that you've consulted; plagiarism is a heinous crime and will not be tolerated.

*Extent of collaboration* I encourage you to discuss relevant materials with anyone you'd like, and in particular I'd encourage you to discuss them with myself and with your colleagues in the course. I

encourage you to solicit feedback on your written work and on your presentations from anyone you'd like. Philosophy is a collaborative enterprise, and it's really fun to talk about. But write your own essays and be sure to document any ideas that appear in your written work that aren't yours (i.e. cite appropriately). Collaboration on quizzes is prohibited. Placing quizzes in a test bank for future students to consult (or anything of that sort) is prohibited.

*Multiple submission* The resubmission any of your own work by that has been used in identical or similar form in fulfillment of any academic requirement at this or another institution is prohibited.

*Notes* Sharing class notes with other students in the class is generous, and I encourage it.

*Sources* All types of sources are permitted in your research. Cite appropriately.

If you're unclear about any of this, please talk to me about it.

## **Plagiarism Policy**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Council, and the Honor Council is not forgiving. For information regarding what constitutes plagiarism, see: [honor.rice.edu](http://honor.rice.edu) or talk to me.

## **Students with Disabilities**

1. Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.
2. Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will also need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.
3. If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with the Disability Support Services Office in the Allen Center.
4. Just as university policy requires me to accommodate all documented disabilities, it prohibits me from accommodating any undocumented disabilities. It also prohibits me from retroactively imposing accommodations. For example, if your disability is first documented halfway through the semester I will not be able to make grade changes or other accommodations for any work completed earlier in the semester. To avoid these issues please be sure to document your disability with Disability Support Services as early as possible.

## **Syllabus Subject to Change!**

This syllabus is subject to change. Reasonable notice will be given. Any changes will be announced in class and/ or posted to Canvas.

## **Phones and The Laptops**

You are welcome to use your laptop, tablet or phone to take notes or to consult the day's readings. If you must do other things with your devices — text, email, check Facebook — then please sit in back so that you don't distract the more serious students. If your device usage is disruptive then you will be asked to put that device away or to leave. This policy is subject to change if the presence of devices in class leads to problems.

## **Course Schedule:**

The following schedule will be revised as we go along. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via Canvas. Please complete the readings for the date listed.

### **Week 1:** Introduction and background; begin Descartes

#### **1/9/17** Introduction

- No reading

#### **1/11/17** Aristotle and Late Medieval Philosophy

- SEP – Form vs. Matter (selection)
- Dewitt – Worldviews ch. 9, 12, 18

#### **1/13/17** Skeptical Arguments

- First Meditation, Letter of Dedication, Preface to the Reader, Synopsis of the following Six Meditations

### **Week 2:** Descartes

#### **1/16/17** MLK Holiday - no class

#### **1/18/17** The Cogito

- Second Meditation

#### **1/20/17** First proof of God's existence

- Third Meditation

**Week 3: Descartes**

**1/23/17** The Problem of Error

- Fourth Meditation

**1/25/17** Ontological Argument

- Fifth Meditation

**1/27/17** The Real Distinction between Mind and Body

- Sixth Meditation

**Week 4: Descartes**

**1/30/17** [catch-up]

**2/1/17** [catch-up]

**2/3/17** [catch-up]

**Week 5: Descartes**

**2/6/17** Cartesian Science

- Descartes – Treatise on Light (selection)

**2/8/17** Class Cancelled

**2/10/17** **Spring Recess – no class**

**Week 6: Descartes**

**2/13/17** Mind/ Body problem

- Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elizabeth

**2/15/17** Mind/ Body problem

- Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elizabeth

**2/17/17** Cartesian Circle

- SEP – Descartes's Epistemology section 6

**Week 7: Leibniz**

**2/20/17** \*\*\*

- Discourse on Metaphysics §1–13

**2/22/17** \*\*\*

- Discourse on Metaphysics §1–13

**2/24/17** \*\*\*

- Discourse on Metaphysics §1–13

**Week 8: Leibniz**

**2/27/17** Monads

- Monadology

**3/1/17** Monads

- Monadology

**3/3/17 First Exam!**

**Week 9: Locke**

**Spring Break 3/13 – 3/17**

**Week 10: Berkeley**

**Week 11: Hume**

**Week 12: Hume**

**Week 13: Kant**

**Week 14: Kant**

**Second Exam 4/21**

**Term paper due April 28**