

PHIL 302: Modern Philosophy
Fall 2018

MWF 2:00–2:50 in MCA 103

Instructor: Brian Miller

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Office hours: Monday 3:00–5:00 in HUM 229

Course Description

In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle developed sophisticated accounts of matter, causation, scientific methods, and a wide range of other subjects. This Aristotelian worldview dominated scientific thought throughout Medieval Europe. By the seventeenth century this Aristotelian scientific worldview was attacked as unmotivated, incoherent, and inconsistent with observation. This left the small matter of constructing a scientific new worldview to replace the old one. We begin this course with Aristotle before moving on to the challenges posed by Copernicus's theory and Galileo's telescope. Our focus then shifts to the efforts of Descartes, Hobbes, and Locke to construct a new scientific understanding of their world.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to gain an understanding of critical scientific and philosophical developments of the seventeenth century.

Course Materials

There are no required texts – all readings will be provided through Canvas.

Evaluation

Student performance will be evaluated using two essays.

First Essay (2000-ish words): due October 18 by 11:59pm – 40 points

Second Essay (2500-ish words): due December 6 by 11:59pm – 60 points

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.

Grading: Essays 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 paper grades.

Grading Scale:

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

IMPORTANT: In order to pass this course you must receive a D or higher on each essay.

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>

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 — I have never been asked a stupid question.]

Attendance Policy

Your regular attendance is expected.

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).

Multiple submission The resubmission any of your own work 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. However, be cautious with sources you find online, as many of them are worthless.

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 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. 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.
3. 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. The course schedule (below) will definitely 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 all primary readings for the date listed. Secondary readings are optional.

Date	Topic	Primary Reading	Secondary Reading
8/26	Introduction, Syllabus	none	none
8/28	Aristotle's Metaphysics	Aristotle - Physics 1.1, 1.5-9	SEP - Form vs. Matter
8/30	Aristotle's Metaphysics	Aristotle - Physics 2	Pasnau - Metaphysical Themes (section 3.1)
9/2	Labor Day	none	none
9/4	Aristotle's Metaphysics	Aristotle- Physics 2, cont'd	SEP - Aristotle on Causation
9/6	Aristotle's Scientific Method	Aristotle - Posterior Analytics 1.1-1.14	Losee - Aristotle's Philosophy of Science
9/9	Aristotle's Scientific Method	Aristotle - Posterior Analytics 1.31-34, 2.1-4, 2.19	Smith - Logic (29-33, 47-51)
9/11	catch up day		
9/13	Ancient Astronomy	Aristotle - Heavenly Spheres; Ptolemy - Earth	DeWitt - Worldviews (81-98)
9/16	Copernicus	Copernicus - Motion of the Earth	DeWitt - Worldviews (99-134)
9/18	Galileo	Galileo - Dialogue 190-213	DeWitt - Worldviews (148-174)
9/20	Galileo	Galileo - Dialogue (211-13) (again), SEP - Simplicity §3,4	
9/23	Galileo	Galileo - Dialogue (213-33)	DeWitt - Worldviews (148-174)
9/25	Galileo	Galileo - Dialogue (233-50)	DeWitt - Worldviews (148-174)
9/27	Atoms and Corpuscles	Lucretius - Explanatory Power of Atomism; Boyle - The 'Corpuscular' Hypothesis	Diogenes - Atoms; Epicurus - Letter;
9/30	Skepticism	Descartes - Letter, Preface, Synopsis, Meditation 1	Larmore - Descartes and Skepticism
10/2	Skepticism, Cogito	Descartes - Meditation 2	Curley - Cogito and the Foundations of Knowledge
10/4	Minds, Bodies, Wax	Descartes - Meditation 2 (cont'd)	Pasnau - Metaphysical Themes (§8.2)

Date	Topic	Primary Reading	Secondary Reading
10/7	Clear and distinct ideas, causal argument	Descartes, Meditation 3	Nadler - The Doctrine of Ideas
10/9	Causal Argument	Descartes - Meditation 3	Nolan, Nelson - Proofs for the Existence of God (104-12)
10/11	Problem of Error	Descartes - Meditation 4	SEP - The Problem of Evil (§1, 4, 7.2)
10/14	Midterm Recess - no class	none	none
10/16	Problem of Error	Descartes - Meditation 4	SEP - The Problem of Evil (§1, 4, 7.2)
10/18	Ontological Argument Essay 1 due!!!	Descartes - Meditation 5	Nolan, Nelson - Proofs for the Existence of God (112-end)
10/21	Cartesian Circle	Hatfield - The Cartesian Circle	Frankfurt - Descartes and the Consistency of Reason
10/23	Cartesian Circle	Hatfield - The Cartesian Circle continued	Frankfurt - Descartes and the Consistency of Reason
10/25	No Class		
10/28	Mind/ Body Distinction	Descartes - Meditation 6	none
10/30	Mind/ Body Distinction	Descartes - Meditation 6	none
11/1	The existence of matter	Clarke - Descartes's Proof of the Existence of Matter	Descartes - Meditation 6
11/4	The existence of matter	Sorell - <i>Scientia</i> and the Sciences in Descartes	Descartes - Meditation 6
11/6	Minds and bodies	Princess Elizabeth, Descartes - Letters (selection); Treatise on Light ch. 2	Cottingham - The Mind-Body Relation
11/8	Minds and bodies	Garber - Understanding Interaction	Descartes - Meditation 6

Date	Topic	Primary Reading	Secondary Reading
11/11	Hobbes	Leviathan (selection)	
11/13	Hobbes	Leviathan (selection)	
11/15	Hobbes	Leviathan (selection)	
11/18	Locke: empiricism	Locke - Essay (316-28)	Rickless - Locke's Polemic against Nativism
11/20	Locke: empiricism	Locke - Essay (316-28)	Rickless - Locke's Polemic against Nativism
11/22	Locke: primary/ secondary quali- ties	Locke - Essay (332-7)	Jacovides - Locke's Primary and Secondary Qualities
11/25	Locke: substance	Locke - Essay (359-67)	McCann - Locke on Substance
11/27	Locke: substance	Locke - Essay (359-67)	McCann - Locke on Substance
11/29	Thanksgiving Holiday	none	none
12/2	Locke's corpuscu- lar problems	TBA	
12/4	Locke's corpuscu- lar problems	TBA	
12/6	Locke's corpuscu- lar problems Es- say 2 due!!!	TBA	