
PHIL 301: MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2020

Coastal Carolina University

Professor: Dr. Parvizian

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Office Location: AOC-2 339

Office Hours: T/TH 8:00-9:00 AM/12:20-1:20 PM (& appointments)

This syllabus is subject to revision if deemed necessary by the professor

Catalog Description: This course is a survey of Western philosophical thought from the early Renaissance through Hume. The chief emphasis is on the 17th and 18th Century, including Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume.

Specific Description: The modern period of the history of philosophy is one of the most important periods in the history of philosophy. It marks the break from the medieval philosophical tradition, and the start of the modern philosophical and scientific worldview. In this course, we will conduct an in-depth study of four key philosophers of this period: *Descartes*, *Spinoza*, *Locke*, and *Leibniz*. What is unique about these philosophers is that they were *system-builders*, that is, they constructed *systems of philosophy*, as opposed to developing specialized views about one branch of philosophy in isolation from other philosophical concerns. We are particularly interested in the systematic connections these philosophers envisioned between metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and ethics. Moreover, we are interested in how these philosophers responded to each other. By the end of the course, we will see how Leibniz, at least in part, constructs his philosophical system in response to Locke, Spinoza, and Descartes.

Some key questions for us include: What is a substance? And what is the nature of finite substances (mind and bodies) and the infinite substance (God)? What is consciousness, perception, and sensation? Do all mental states have content? What is knowledge, and how can one respond to skepticism? What is the role of God in philosophical inquiry? And what are the connections between knowledge of the world, virtue, and happiness?

Course Objectives: This course has three main objectives:

1. To teach students how to provide charitable, coherent, and consistent interpretations.
2. To teach students how to write about history of philosophy.
3. To teach students how to assess philosophical arguments in the history of philosophy.

Student Learning Outcomes: At the completion of this course, students should:

1. Have the skill of logically interpreting, presenting, and arguing about philosophical texts.
2. A broad understanding of epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and ethics in modern philosophy.
3. The ability to charitably dissect and assess a view that they might disagree with.

Prerequisites: Sophomore standing or higher, or permission of the instructor.

Required Materials:

- Descartes: *Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. & trans. Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch
- Spinoza: *A Spinoza Reader*, ed. & trans. Curley
- Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Winkler
- Leibniz: *Philosophical Essays*, ed. & trans. Ariew & Garber
- Various secondary literature (PDFs) posted on Moodle.

Recommended Materials:

- Wilson, *Descartes's Meditations: An Introduction*
- Nadler, *Ethics: An Introduction*
- Newman, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
- Rescher, G.W. *Leibniz's Monadology An Edition for Students*
- Jolley, *Leibniz (The Routledge Philosophers)*
- Edmunds and Warburton, *Philosophy Bites* Podcast (PB)
- Various secondary literature (PDFs) posted on Moodle.

Grade Distribution:

Four Quizzes	20 points
Midterm	20 points
Two Papers (4 pg.)	20 points
Final	30 points
Participation	10 points
Total	100 points

Letter Grade Distribution:

>90	A	70 - 74	C
85 - 89	B+	65 - 69	D+
80 - 84	B	60 - 64	D
75 - 79	C+	50	F

Course Structure and Materials:

Handouts

- **Distribution:** Often there will be a handout to attend the reading in class. These handouts might include additional texts, questions, or exercises. Handouts will not be posted online. You are responsible for acquiring them in class, and keeping them as part of your study materials.
- **Sharing:** Handouts include my own teaching and research ideas that I am sharing with you for the purpose of studying for this class. You are not allowed to repost or share these outside of this class in any format. If anyone ever wants to record a lecture, you need written permission from me a week prior to the lecture date.

Study Guides & Review

- **Study Guides:** You will receive a study guide for the midterm and final exam (not quizzes). These will be distributed in class, and will not be posted online.

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- **Review:** Given that the Midterm and Final Exams are both take-home, and you will have a week to complete them, we will not have review sessions for the exams. However, my office hours will be open for you to come in and ask questions at any point during the exam time. There are no study guides for the quizzes.

Group Work

- We will conduct short group work sessions & writing workshops in class. Being an active participant, contributor, and listener in these group work sessions are important for your participation grade and overall success.

Online Assessments

- **Format:** The quizzes, midterm, and final exam will all be administered online through Moodle, you will not take them in class. These assessments will consist of a variety of short and long answer questions.
- **Accessibility:** The quizzes will be available from 9 AM to 9 PM on the day they are due. You can take them at any point during that day, but once you start it, you will have a set time to complete it (30 min). The midterm and final exam are also take home, but you will have a week to complete them, they will not be administered in class. All of these assessments are open notes, however, please see the plagiarism policy below. I very easily detect when someone is copying material from the internet or another student (don't forget that I am a modern scholar!). Everything needs to be in your own words, and it is unacceptable to copy material straight from the handouts. If something does not seem right, I will always report it, and then it is up to the college to decide what to do.

Extra Credit

- *There will be two, and only two, extra credit opportunities. There are no other extra credit opportunities, and I will not entertain curating specific extra credit assignments for students. Students can elect to do both extra credit assessments.*
- **Extra Credit Option 1:** This will be a 10 point extra credit quiz, which will be all short answer questions. I will administer this at some point toward the end of the semester. I highly suggest that you come talk to me first about what you got wrong on the quizzes and midterm (thus far) so you are as prepared as possible before taking this quiz.
- **Extra Credit Option 2:** This will be a 5 point extra credit paper (2 pages), turned in on Moodle. Details for the prompt will be determined toward the end of the semester.

Feedback & Grade Calculations

- **Feedback:** All of your grades will be posted on Moodle. You should expect to receive your grade for the Quizzes, Midterm, Papers, and Final Exam within about a week to a week and a half of turning them in. Once the grades are in, I will review the right answers in class.
- **Grade Calculations:** Please do not email me about calculating your grade. The course is on a 100 point scale. All you need to do is add up your points to see where you stand, and to determine how many more points you need to receive the grade you want. The

only kinds of emails that I want to receive from students in this context are disputes about a grade, or whether a grade was recorded. **No calculation requests.**

Guest Lectures

- There will be several guest lectures in person or via Skype from other historians of modern philosophy. Students must come prepared with a written question to ask the scholar, which will also be collected. This is a *required* part of your participation grade.

Course Policies:

Missed or Late Work

- There are no make-ups for quizzes or exams unless there is a legitimate excuse (e.g. a sickness with a doctor's note). The paper will be docked one point per day that it is late. You can turn in the paper up to three days late. *Do not email me your papers, I will not accept any work via email.*

Email Communication

- The best way to get in touch with me is via email (sparvizia@coastal.edu). I do not answer emails in the evening, but you can expect to receive a response within a day from my receiving your email (excluding weekends). Also, I will often contact the class with updates—make sure that you check your CCU email regularly. You are responsible for knowing any changes to the syllabus, due dates, etc. that I send out via email. Finally, please write professional emails.

Laptops and Cellphones

- Laptops are permitted only for taking notes. Cellphones must be tucked away.

Plagiarism

- Plagiarism will be treated with zero tolerance—if caught, you will be reported to the academic integrity officer, and if the case is serious you will fail (receiving an Fx). Plagiarism is copying another person's work, handing in work that is identical to someone else's or copying text from a source that is not cited (e.g. online papers). Everything you say must be in your own words. If in doubt, just ask me or consult the Student Code of Conduct.

Participation

- You are expected to attend all classes, to come prepared by having done the reading and ready to discuss and ask questions critically, but respectfully. Miss more than 25 % of the classes without a valid excuse and you are susceptible to failing the course.

Disability Accommodation

- If you have a disability, please provide the necessary documentation from Student Disability Services. You are required to let me know at the beginning of the course, or as soon as the disability is identified—i.e. before exams and other work has been turned in—so as to enable me to make appropriate accommodations for you. To register with the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services, visit the office in Laurel Hall, call 349-2503, or visit their website.

WEEK	COURSE SCHEDULE — *subject to change
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1.16 Methodology in the History of Philosophy – <i>Req. 2ry</i>: Melamed–Charitable Interpretations and the Political Domestication of Spinoza – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Nelson–The Rationalist Impulse – <i>Rec. Podcasts</i>: Barry Stroud on Skepticism (PB) & Adrian Moore on Philosophy and its History (PB)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1.21 Descartes–<i>Meditation I</i> – 1.23 Descartes–<i>Meditation II</i> – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Larmore–Descartes and Skepticism & Curley–The <i>Cogito</i> and the Foundations of Knowledge – <i>Rec. Podcast</i>: A.C. Grayling on Descartes’ <i>Cogito</i> (PB)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1.28 Descartes–<i>Meditation III</i> – 1.30 Descartes–<i>Meditation IV</i> – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Carriero–The Cartesian Circle and the Foundations of Knowledge & Della Rocca–Judgment and Will
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2.4 Descartes–<i>Meditation V</i> – 2.6 Descartes–<i>Meditation VI</i> – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Alanen–Omnipotence, Modality, and Conceivability – <i>Req. 2ry</i>: Gottlieb & Parvizian–Cartesian Imperativism * 2/6 Joint Lecture with Professor Gottlieb (Texas Tech)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2.11 Descartes–<i>The Passions of the Soul I-III</i> (selection) – 2.13 Brassfield–Never Let the Passions Be Your Guide * 2.13 Skype Lecture–Professor Brassfield (Frostburg State Uni.) * 2.14 Descartes Quiz (#1)
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2.18 Spinoza–<i>The Ethics I. Of God</i> – 2.20 Spinoza–<i>The Ethics I. Of God</i> – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Garrett–Spinoza’s Necessitarianism * 2.21 Paper #1 Due
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2.25 Spinoza–<i>The Ethics II. Of The Mind</i> – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Nadler–Spinoza and Consciousness * Skype Lecture–Robbie Matyasi (Ph.D. Student at Uni. of Toronto) – 2.27 Class Cancelled
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3.3 Spinoza–<i>The Ethics V. Of The Mind</i> – 3.5 Spinoza–<i>The Ethics V. Of The Mind</i> – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Marshall–Spinoza on Destroying Passions with Reason – <i>Rec. Podcast</i>: Susan James on Spinoza on the Passions (PB) * Spinoza Quiz (#2)
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Spring Break * 3.16 Midterm Due
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3.17 Locke–<i>Essay</i>–Book I <i>Of innate notions</i>: i–iv – 3.19 Locke–<i>Essay</i>–Book II <i>Of ideas</i>: i–ii; xii; xxvi–xxxii – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: De Rosa–The Question-Begging Status of the Anti-Nativist Arguments
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3.24 Locke–<i>Essay</i>–Book III <i>Of words</i>: i–v – 3.26 Locke–<i>Essay</i>–Book III <i>Of words</i>: vi–xi – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Ott–<i>Locke’s Philosophy of Language</i> (selection) * Skype Lecture–Professor Hanck (Uni. Illinois-Chicago)
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3.31 Locke–<i>Essay</i>–Book IV <i>Of knowledge and opinion</i>: i–v – 4.2 Locke–<i>Essay</i>–Book IV <i>Of knowledge and opinion</i>: ix–xi – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Dicker–<i>Locke on Knowledge and Reality</i> (selection) * 4/3 Locke Quiz (#3)
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4.7 Leibniz–<i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> 1-7 – 4.9 Leibniz–<i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> 8-15 – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Mercer & Sleigh–<i>Metaphysics: The Early Period to the Discourse on Metaphysics</i>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4.14 Leibniz–<i>Principles of Nature and Grace</i> 1-18 – 4.16 Leibniz–<i>Monadology</i> 1-9 – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Mercer–<i>Leibniz’s Metaphysics</i> (selection)
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4.21 Leibniz–<i>Monadology</i> 10-30 – 4.23 Leibniz–<i>Preface to the New Essays</i> (selection) – <i>Req. 2ry</i>: Whipple–Leibniz on Fundamental Ontology – <i>Rec. 2ry</i>: Jolley–<i>Leibniz and Locke</i> (selection) * 4/23 Skype Lecture–Professor Whipple (Uni. Illinois-Chicago)
16-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4.28 Open Day + Paper # 2 Due * 4.29 Leibniz Quiz (#4) * 5.8 Final Exam Due