



## Early Modern Philosophy

PHIL 2202F | Section 550 | Fall of 2021 | in person

Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh [jmarsh26@uwo.ca](mailto:jmarsh26@uwo.ca)

Every attempt will be made to respond to your e-mail within 24 business hours (M-F)

Mondays, 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM. Meeting place: HC-V207

Office hour: TBA. Office: O'Neil Ridley (OR) 30.

### *Description*

Perhaps no era has produced more geniuses and polymaths, or has more profoundly shaped the world, than the 17th and 18th centuries. In this course, we will critically examine selections from six philosophical works of this period:

- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641),
- Gottfried Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686),
- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690),
- George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710),
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748),
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

Along the way, we will explore some influential critiques of these works by Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Lady Anne Conway and Thomas Reid. Also, for some portions of these writings, students will receive guidance from contemporary commentators, e.g., Namita Nimbalkar. Please note: no background in Early Modern Philosophy is expected or presupposed.

Prerequisite(s): None

Anti-requisite(s): None

Course Weight: 0.50. Breadth: CATEGORY B i Subject Code: PHILOSOP

### *Methods*

Teaching methods include lectures, dialogue, videos, informal polls, crowdsourcing, work sessions and tutorials.

### *Text*

Ariew, R. & Watkins, E. (eds). *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (2019). Third Edition. Hackett Publishing Company.

### *Technical Requirements*



Internet connection



Laptop or desktop

(for accessing assignment instructions and submitting assignments via OWL etc.)



Working microphone



Working webcam

(for podcast recordings. facial presentation is optional, but encouraged, during recordings)

## *Aims*

By the end of the semester, every committed student will

1. be acquainted with some of the major metaphysical and epistemological controversies of the 17th and 18th centuries (**KNOWLEDGE**); these include
  - controversies re: the nature and existence of God, what sort of thing the human mind is, how it persists in (and relates to) a physical world and, indeed, whether there is a physical world
  - controversies re: the nature and possibility of human knowledge, the rationality of belief in miracle reports, decisions under uncertainty, the theme of "enlightenment" and the intellectual significance the so-called principles of "Common Sense"
2. have presented and defended their own thoughts on these controversies (**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**);
3. have cultivated intellectual virtues pertaining to argumentation, dialogue, interpretation, research and clear writing (to help with outcomes 1-3) (**SKILLS**).



## *Evaluative Requirements*

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>	<u>Corresponding Aims</u>
• 1. Forbidden Books Podcast	20%	October 1	2&3 (above)
• 2. Research Paper	30%	Nov 15	1-3
• 3. Exam	30%	December Exam Period (TBA)	1
• 4. Active and Informed Participation	20 %	Weekly	1-3

1. **Podcast:** In recognition of Banned Books Week (Sep 26-Oct 2), you will work in small groups (approx. 4 students, including a moderator) to critically discuss one feature of an early modern text that was banned, i.e. listed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (e.g., Descartes' *Meditations*). To ensure that all students are available, each video or audio podcast (approx. 15 minutes) will be recorded towards the end of our 9/27 class meeting window. Advanced planning, prior to the brief podcast recording, is recommended. To encourage this, I will provide group numbers and instructions ahead of time. Note: if you are uncomfortable with facial presentation, you may mute your webcam. Also see the red note below.

2. **Paper:** Instructions will be made available during our workshop on how to write a philosophy paper.

3. **Participation:** A successful participation grade encompasses more, though no less, than reliable class attendance. It also requires joining the conversation. Whether this occurs during ordinary lectures, tutorials or workshops (*during which I may distribute exercises, with submission instructions, unannounced*) doing this well requires knowing and thoughtfully engaging the assigned readings and following the College's student conduct requirements.

- **Note:** if global COVID-19-related circumstances prevent you from attending campus at the beginning of term (say if you are not permitted to travel), please note this in OWL's DropBox, during the first week of class, by simply writing "**Opt-Out Request** for In-Class Participation" in the subject title. I would be pleased to fully accommodate you for missing assignments 1 and/or 2, upon request. In such cases, the value of these assignments will be transferred to 3 and 4 respectfully. (There is a possibility that other students, in the same circumstances, will be able to record a podcast with you online, in which case you'd only be required to opt-out of 1.) Should circumstances improve, and you are able to make it to class,

please notify me of this immediately so we can make appropriate adjustments (which may involve transferring some values back to 1 and/or 2). **As I do not currently expect to record class lectures for privacy reasons (if only one student were to object, then we could not record), please be sure to attend my weekly office hour.** I'd be pleased to go over any material that you have missed one-on-one or in a small group setting. **Importantly, any materials that are provided by me, to make up for your missed classes, must not, as a College policy, be shared with anyone else, including other classmates.**

4. **Exam:** To take place during the December examination period (date: TBA). The College, not your instructor, will post an exam schedule. Please monitor for this. Anything we cover in class, at any point, is admissible and hence a proper object of study, unless I explicitly say otherwise in writing (via OWL). I expect that the exam will contain some combination of short answers and longer answers, but more details will be provided during our final meeting (review session).

### ***Grading Information and Explanation of Grades:***

Each assignment will be accompanied with clear instructions. Students will be evaluated in accordance with how well they follow them. What follows is a university wide grade explanation:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

### Course Map

#### **Unit 1. Preparing for Descartes**

September 13

- "A Changing World: Scientific Advancement and Religious Reform"
- "What is Enlightenment?"

#### **Unit 2: Descartes' Philosophical Revolution**

September 20

- "Doubt, Dreams & Madmen"

September 27

- "Doubt & Demons" / "Reid's Critique of Early Modern Scepticism"
- **Students will work on their Banned Books podcasts directly after our 9/27 meeting and submit those by 10/1.**

#### **Unit 3. Gods vs. Giants (vs. Sceptics)**

October 4

- "Leibniz: This is the Best Possible World"
- "Voltaire: "No, it's Not!"

October 11

- Thanksgiving Monday. No class meeting.

October 18

- "Hobbes: Everything is Material"
- "Berkeley: Nothing is Material (+ Johnson's Stone-Kicking Objection)"

October 25

- “Locke on Minds and Personal Identity”

Nov 1

Reading Week. No class meeting.

Nov 8

- “Hume’s Copy Principle”

Nov 15

- “Hume on Testimony and Miracles”
- **Research paper due on 11/15**

Nov 22

- “Pascal: Deciding Under Uncertainty”

#### **Unit 4. Princess Elisabeth’s Letter**

Nov 29

- “The Mind-Body Problem.”
- “Potential or actual replies by Descartes, Conway, Leibniz, Malebranche, Hobbes, Spinoza, Berkeley & Hume”

Dec 6

#### **Unit 5. Mary Wollstonecraft**

- “Human Equality, Education and Parenting”
- **Brief exam review: Q&A.**

**Note:** The above course map is tentative, and may be adjusted through the term.



### **Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022**

#### **Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

#### **Pandemic Contingency**

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

#### **Student Code of Conduct**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of

all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

### **Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/attendance.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf).

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf). The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf).

### **Turnitin.com**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

### **Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)**

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional.

Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

### **Academic Consideration for Missed Work**

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions

specified in the Senate policy at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf) are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

### **Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence**

#### **(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

#### **(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca).**

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca) for any further questions or information.

### **Support Services**

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at [huronsss@uwo.ca](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca). An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>  
Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>  
Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>  
Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicssupport.uwo.ca/>  
Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>  
Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

### **Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western**

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: [huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca)  
Community Safety Office: [safety@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:safety@huron.uwo.ca)  
Chaplaincy: [gthorne@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:gthorne@huron.uwo.ca)

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.