

**HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
***Philosophy 2202F: Early Modern Philosophy***  
**2018-2019**

Fall Term, 2018

Prerequisites: none

Tuesdays, 11:30-1:30, W6

Thursdays, 11:30-12:30, W6

Instructor: Dr. Steve Bland

Office: A304

Office hours: Thursdays, 12:30-2:30pm

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The Early Modern period (ca. 1600-1800) was one of the most fruitful and exciting eras in the history of philosophy and science. New methods of inquiry and theories of the universe and the mind marked a radical shift away from Medieval philosophy and towards a novel philosophical landscape of ideas. This course will provide an introductory survey of the philosophical theories of some of the most well known and influential thinkers of the Early Modern age, including: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. In reading and discussing some of the classic primary works of these philosophers, we will become engaged in the following topics: scepticism, the nature of reality and the mind, the existence of god, free will, and personal identity. More generally, this course will focus on the crucially important rationalism-empiricism debate, which concerned not only the source of knowledge, but the proper method of answering philosophical questions. In other words, we will canvass Early Modern philosophical theories in an effort to answer the question: *how should philosophy be done?*

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Clearly formulate and explain the central philosophical theories discussed in this course.
2. Reformulate complex arguments found within primary sources.
3. Defend a plausible position on the question of the origins of philosophical knowledge.

### **CLASS METHODS**

This course consists of two lectures per week. Although much of the lecture will be delivered by the instructor, students will be expected to attend class **having done all of the readings and prepared to contribute to class discussions**. There will be regular in-class group assignments that require you to engage primary sources in an effort to better understand their contents.

You are welcome to use a laptop to take notes in lecture, though you should be aware that students who do so tend to do worse on average than students who take notes with pen and paper. However, if you are caught using your laptop for any other purpose, you will be asked to leave class and forfeit the grade of any assignment you miss. When you use your laptop for social or entertainment purposes, you distract others, and do yourself a disservice. It is **NOT ACCEPTABLE** behavior and it **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED** in my classroom.

Please do not take your phone out at any point during class. If you are caught looking at your phone during lecture, you will be asked to leave class and receive a grade of 0 on any assignment you miss. If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate you checking your phone during class, please inform me BEFORE the beginning of class.

## **TEXT**

*Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. Second Edition. Edited by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins. Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis. 2009

This book is available at the *Western Bookstore*.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

10% Class Participation

The bulk of this grade will be determined on the basis of attendance, but a perfect attendance record, by itself, will not earn a perfect participation grade. In addition, you will be expected to make informed contributions to the class by way of asking questions, interpreting texts, and offering arguments. **Any student with an attendance record of less than 70% will receive a grade of 0% for participation.**

10% Forum Posts (due at the end of every week)

You are responsible for posting at least one question or comment in the Forum section of OWL **by the end of every week**. These posts should engage the material covered in class. They can be questions about something that is unclear to you, objections to any of the views discussed, suggestions about how to extend a theory, comments about where to find other relevant information on the topics under consideration, or responses to something that someone else has said. Forum posts will be evaluated on the basis of their relevance, insight, and capacity to generate discussion. **You will not receive credit for forum posts about lectures you did not attend.**

20% Argument Reconstructions (due in class)

In groups of 2-3, you will be required to clarify and explain arguments found within the primary sources. These assignments must be completed and submitted **in class**, so you need to **bring your copy of the text to class for every lecture**.

20% Dialogue (due October 4<sup>th</sup>)

In the *Objections and Replies to Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes responds to objections from various renowned philosophers, including Antoine Arnauld and Thomas Hobbes. In this assignment, you will be asked to reproduce one of the objections, and Descartes' reply, in dialogue form. In other words, you will create a fictionalized conversation between Descartes and his critic that clearly captures the arguments in the objection and the reply in plain language.

30% Rationalism/Empiricism Argument Summary (due on November 8<sup>th</sup>)

This assignment requires you to clearly summarize the arguments and counter-arguments for and against both rationalism and empiricism.

LATE PENALTY: 3% per day in the first week after the due date. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.

10% Rationalism-empiricism debate (last week)

The last two classes of the semester will be dedicated to the rationalism-empiricism debate. You will be split into two teams, one arguing for rationalism, and the other arguing for empiricism. Team members will be evaluated on the basis of their team's performance, and their peers' evaluations of their contribution to the team effort. **If you miss either class, you will receive a grade of 0.**

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Lecture	Readings
1	Introduction (no readings)
2	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> , Preface, 1-2
3	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> , 3-6
4	Hobbes, Arnault, and Descartes, <i>Third and Fourth Sets of Objections</i>
5	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part 1
6	Leibniz, <i>Discourse</i> , §§1-13
7	Leibniz, <i>Discourse</i> , §§14-37
8	Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book I
9	Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book II, Ch. 1, §§1-9, 20, 23-25, Ch. 2, Ch. 7, Ch. 8, §§8-26, Ch. 12, Ch. 27
10	Locke, <i>Essay</i> , Book IV, Ch. 10, §§1-7, Ch. 11
11	Leibniz, <i>New Essays</i>
12	Berkeley, <i>Principles</i> , Preface
13	Berkeley, <i>Principles</i> , Part I
14	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , §§2-5
15	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , §12; <i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part 5, §6
16	The rationalism-empiricism debate



The Appendix to Course Outlines is posted on the OWL course site.