

# Early Modern Philosophy

PHIL 203  
Spring 2008

Kennedy 207, MWF 11:00-11:50

Professor Terjesen  
terjesena@rhodes.edu

Office Hours: MW 3-4\* & by appt.  
Clough 402B, 843-3577

## Course Description:

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries were an important period in the history of Western philosophy – partly because those centuries were important stages in the creation of the “Modern” world. It is during this period that philosophers took new approaches to philosophy, offer new answers to questions about the nature of god and humanity, and ask questions about the nature of knowledge. In many ways we are still dealing with the fallout of this fertile intellectual period.

During the course of the semester, our reading will lead us to discuss such questions as: How can I be sure that I know that there is an external world? How do the “mind” and “body” interact? Is the mind something distinct from the body? Is science a reliable source of knowledge? What is the nature of God? Are there laws that govern the universe and things in it (like us)? Do I have free will? What is the relationship between reason and emotion? Should our moral judgments be based on reason or emotion?

The course will focus on three pivotal thinkers (Rene Descartes, David Hume and Immanuel Kant) and will engage in a close reading of their bodies of work. However, the course will also be structured to give the student an appreciation of the historical context of these thinkers [especially as they interact with the Scientific Revolution and Reformation] as well as some exposure to other important thinkers of this period, including Thomas Hobbes, Benedict Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Locke, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid.

## Course Texts:

Margaret Atherton (ed.). *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*. Hackett, 1994. [WP]

René Descartes. *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*. Edited Roger Ariew. Hackett, 2000. [D]

David Hume. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Second Edition*. Edited by Richard Popkin. Hackett, 1998. [NR]

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton. Oxford, 2000. [T]

Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge, 1998. [PR]

\_\_\_\_\_. *Ethical Philosophy, Second Edition*. Translated by James Ellington. Hackett, 1994. [EP]

Michael Matthews (ed.). *The Scientific Background to Modern Philosophy*. Hackett, 1989. [SB]

\*Roger Scruton. *A Short History of Modern Philosophy*. Routledge, 2002. [SH]

Matthew Stewart. *The Courtier and the Heretic: Leibniz, Spinoza and the Fate of God in the Modern World*. W.W. Norton, 2006. [CH]

Supplementary Required Readings Available Online

\*Recommended if you would like a commentary to accompany the texts or something that goes beyond the Early Modern period.

## Course Website:

This course will use Moodle to provide students with information and supplementary readings where applicable. You should have been enrolled in the Moodle site for this course as you were enrolled with Banner. To access Moodle, go to the Rhodes login [the button on the main Rhodes site] and click on Moodle. Your id and password will be the same as you use to log on to a Rhodes computer. Moodle can be accessed from off-campus.

## Course Evaluation:

Papers	40%
Midterm	10%
Final Exam	20%
Reading Questions	10%
2 Tutorials	10%
Participation	10%

Each of the requirements must be satisfied in order to pass the course.

**PAPERS.** There will be three 5-6 page papers assigned for this course. (See the **Make Up and Lateness Policy** for details on the significance of the “deadlines.”) You are required to write all three – but as long as you submit three papers, only two papers will be used to determine the paper grade. The exact details will be addressed in a separate document.

**EXAMS.** A short answer midterm and cumulative final exam will be administered during the dates noted on the Course Schedule.

**READING QUESTIONS.** For each reading, short answer questions will be posted that are intended to model the kinds of questions that will appear on the exam. Questions must be handed in at the beginning of class. Each correctly answered question will be worth two points and the total number of points accumulated during the semester will be your grade for this assignment. [Grades will be based on a scale of 100, but you will be able to submit more than 50 questions (though not a whole lot more). And any point values above 100 will be factored into your final grade.] Further details will be available in a separate document.

**TUTORIALS.** Twice during the semester I will meet with students in groups of three (modeled after the English system of tutorials) to discuss a contemporary article in Modern Philosophy. In both instances you will write a summary beforehand and then revise it after a one-hour meeting outside of class (making up some of our lost time). Sign-up sheets and details will appear after drop/add.

**PARTICIPATION.** Philosophy is not *just* about mastering what some people said several centuries ago. It is also about taking an active role in trying to understand the problems that these people were trying to answer, how that compares to the problems we face today and judging the strength of the responses to these problems. Consequently, philosophy cannot happen in a passive manner. This part of your course grade will measure the quantity and (much more importantly) quality of your participation inside and outside of class (including on Blackboard).

## Grading:

Student work will be assessed according to the grading regulations listed in the Rhodes College *Catalogue*:

- A – Excellent
- B – Good
- C – Satisfactory
- D – Passing
- F – Failure

P – To earn a passing grade, students must pass [get at least a D-] in each element of the course evaluation.

## Course Schedule (with Reading Schedule)

- 1/9 The Scholastic Tradition  
(Posthumous) Reading: Aristotle, *Physics* II, 1-3 [SB pp. 7-15]
- 1/11 **NO CLASS – Teaching Workshop**
- 1/14 The Scientific Revolution  
Reading: Nicolaus Copernicus, *Dedication of the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* [SB pp. 40-44]  
Francis Bacon, *The New Organon* [SB pp. 47-52]  
Galileo Galilei, *Dialogues Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* [SB pp. 61-71]
- 1/16 Descartes and the New Science  
Reading: René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* Parts II, IV [SB pp. 92-94]  
René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Part IV [SB pp. 105-108]  
René Descartes *To Mersenne* [D pp. 43-5]  
René Descartes *To Plempius for Fromondus* [D pp. 84-86]
- 1/18 The Cartesian Method  
Reading: René Descartes, *Meditations* Letter of Dedication, Preface and I and II [D pp. 97-102 and 104-113]  
Thomas Hobbes, *Third Set of Objections* Against Meditation II [D pp. 167-170]
- 1/21 **NO CLASSES – MLK, Jr. Day**
- 1/23 Descartes on God  
Reading: René Descartes, *Meditations* III [D pp. 113-122]  
Antoine Arnauld, *Fourth Set of Objections* [D pp. 177-182]
- 1/25 Rationalism in Descartes  
Reading: René Descartes, *Meditations* IV [D pp. 122-127]  
René Descartes, *To Mersenne* [D pp. 207-209]  
René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, 43-50 and 54 [D pp. 242-245]
- 1/28 Cartesian Dualism  
Reading: René Descartes, *Meditations* VI [D pp. 132-141]  
Princess Elisabeth-Descartes Correspondence [WP pp. 11-21]
- 1/30 Descartes' Moral Psychology  
Reading: Princess Elisabeth-Descartes Correspondence [Moodle – not same as 1/28]  
Descartes, *Passions of the Soul* 27-37, 40, 47-50 [D pp. 306-315]
- 2/1 Life in the Middle of the Seventeenth Century  
Reading: CH Chaps 1-3  
Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* [Moodle]
- 2/4 Spinoza's NeoStoicism and Political Theory  
Reading: CH Chap 4 and 6

- 2/6 Spinoza and Malebranche on God and the Universe  
Reading: CH Chap 10  
Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* [Moodle]
- 2/8 The Cambridge Platonists  
Reading: CH Chap 5  
Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* XXX, XXXIII, XXXVII, and XLII  
[WP pp. 24-29, 31-32, 36-38 and 44-45]  
Anne Conway, *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* Chap IX  
[WP pp. 66-76]
- 2/11 Leibniz's Early Metaphysics  
Reading: CH Chaps 7-9  
Robert Boyle, *The Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular...* [SB pp. 111-123]
- 2/13 Leibniz on Substance  
Reading: CH Chaps 11-13
- 2/15 Leibniz's Later Metaphysics  
Reading: CH Chap 14  
Lady Damaris Cudworth Masham, *Correspondence with Leibniz* [pp. 80-95]  
David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts X and XI [NR pp. 58-76]  
[The Hume reading is strongly suggested but not required]
- FIRST PAPER DEADLINE**
- 2/18 The Newtonian Revolution  
Reading: Sir Isaac Newton, *Principia* [SB pp. 137-153]  
CH Chap 15 and 16  
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz-Samuel Clarke Correspondence [Moodle]
- 2/20 Locke and the Rise of Empiricism  
Reading: John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Books I and II [Moodle]  
Catherine Trotter Cockburn, *A Defense of Mr. Locke's Essay* [WP pp. 128-146]
- 2/22 Berkeley's Idealism  
Reading: Bishop George Berkeley, *Principles* [Moodle]  
Lady Mary Shepherd, *Essays on the Perception of An External Universe* [WP pp. 149-159]
- 2/25 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- 2/27 Hume on Ideas  
Reading: T Book I, Part I  
*Dialogues*, Part I [NR pp. 3-12]
- 2/29 Hume on Knowledge  
Reading: T Book I, Part III, Sections 1-6  
*Dialogues*, Part II [NR pp. 13-22]
- 3/3 **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**
- 3/5 **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**
- 3/7 **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**
- 3/10 Hume on Belief  
Reading: T Book I, Part III, Sections 7-10  
"Of Miracles" [NR pp. 107-125]
- 3/12 Hume on Causation  
Reading: T Book I, Part III, Section 14  
*Dialogues*, Parts III and IV [NR pp. 23-33]  
Lady Mary Shepherd, *An Essay on the Relation of Cause and Effect* [Moodle]
- 3/14 Hume's Skepticism  
Reading: T Book I, Part IV, Sections 1, 3 and 4

- Dialogues*, Parts VI-III [NR pp. 39-53]
- 3/17 Personal Identity  
Reading: T Book I, Part IV, Section 6 and Appendix  
“Of the Immortality of the Soul” [NR pp. 91-97]
- 3/19 Hume on the Passions  
Reading: T Book II, Part I, Sections 1-5 and Part II, Sections 1 and 2
- 3/21 **NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK**
- 3/24 Hume on the Will  
Reading: T Book II, Part III, Sections 1-6  
**SECOND PAPER DEADLINE**
- 3/26 Hume on Morality  
Reading: T Book III, Part I  
“Of Suicide” [NR pp. 97-105]
- 3/28 Hume on Virtue  
Reading: T Book III, Part II, Section 1 and Part III, Section 1
- 3/31 The Common Sense School  
Reading: Thomas Reid, *Inquiry* [Moodle]
- 4/2 Kant’s Transcendental Philosophy  
Reading: Introduction <B> and Transcendental Aesthetic <B>, Sect I [PR 136-152 and 172-178]
- 4/4 Kant on Time  
Reading: Transcendental Aesthetic <B>, Sect 2 [PR 178-192]
- 4/7 Kant on the Understanding  
Reading: Transcendental Analytic, Book I, Chap. 1, Sect. 3, and Chap. 2, Sect. 1 [PR 210-226]
- 4/9 Kant on God  
Reading: Transcendental Dialectic, Book I and Fourth Antinomy [PR 394-408 and 490-495]
- 4/11 Kant on Causation  
Reading: Second Analogy and Third Antinomy [PR 304-316 and 484-489]
- 4/14 Kant on the World  
Reading: Refutation of Idealism; Phenomena/Noumena; Fourth Paralogism and the Antinomy of Pure Reason, Sect. 6 [PR 326-333, 354-365, 425-431, and 511-514]
- 4/16 Kant on Morality  
Reading: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* Preface, Sect. 1 [EP pp. 1-17]  
“On a Supposed Right to Lie” [EP 162-166]
- 4/18 Kant on Categorical Imperative  
Reading: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* Sect. 2 [EP pp. 19-37]  
**THIRD PAPER DEADLINE**
- 4/21 Kant on Duty and Virtue  
Reading: *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* [EP 112-127 and 135-141]
- 4/23 Kant on the Will  
Reading: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* Sect. 2 and 3 [EP 44-50]  
Resolution of the Cosmological Idea...[PR 532-546]
- 4/25 **NO CLASS – URCAS**
- 5/2 **FINAL EXAM – 5:30 PM**

**Disabilities Accommodation Policy (from the College Catalogue, p. 43):**

Rhodes is committed to ensuring that educational programs are accessible to all qualified students in accordance with the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and expanded by Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To guard against discrimination on the basis of disability, reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids are determined on a case-by-case basis for students who have a demonstrated need for these services. **It is the student’s**

**responsibility to initiate any request for accommodation due to a qualifying disability. Once students are enrolled, the Coordinator of Student Disability Services is the point of contact for students with physical, psychological, learning and attentional disabilities. The Coordinator of Student Disability Services confers with students on an individual basis, then together with the Disability Support Committee, determines appropriate accommodations and identifies needed resources.**

### **Make-up and Lateness Policy:**

Please note that I have put “deadlines” as opposed to “due dates” in the schedule. [Regardless of what changes there may be in material covered over the term, these dates will not change.] Each deadline ends at the end of that day and comes with a grace period that extends to the end of the day of the next class meeting – to allow for the things that sometimes happen. Some of you may be tempted to read the end of the grace period as the *real* due date, but bear the following things in mind: 1) I will not read drafts/outlines or discuss the content of paper assignment after the deadline; 2) No paper will be accepted after the end of the grace period, unless the student was incapacitated by illness that began before the deadline and lasted through the grace period; and 3) If the final draft of a paper is not able to be printed, you will be able to submit it after the grace period as long as you submit a printed draft with notes by the end of the grace period. ***Please note: In order to avail yourself of the grace period you must attend class the day of the deadline and during the grace period.***

If a legitimate excuse [medical or school-sanctioned] prevents you from taking an exam, you may make it up as long as you contact me within a reasonable period of time. Similarly, reading questions for a class that you missed because of a legitimate excuse maybe handed in the next class you attend (but not after).

### **Attendance Policy:**

Philosophy is as much a group-activity as it is a solitary one. Consequently, being in class is an important part of the learning process as we talk about various philosophical issues. You are expected to attend every class. Missing more than two classes will lower your participation/presentation grade by 1/3 (a + or -) per extra missed class [“excused” or “unexcused”].

### **Honor Code**

The Honor Code states that all work submitted must be your own. You are encouraged to discuss the assignments (including the reading questions) with other students in the class or myself, but only in order to help your understanding. All work you submit must be the product of your own effort and you should never dictate to someone else the “best answer.”