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PHIL 203-01, Early Modern Philosophy, Spring 2005

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SPRING 2005

PHIL 203: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Pat Shade
402 Clough
Hours: WF 11:00-12:00, TR 10-10:50 & by appt.
Unofficial Office Hours: I'm usually in my office MW 3-4

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

General Description:

Modern Philosophy arose amidst the excitement of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution (yet some would argue that it still had one foot firmly rooted in Medieval thought). It can be characterized by two distinctive features:

- (1) it tends to be “*revolutionary*,” rejecting the work of predecessors and the authority of tradition, and
- (2) its dominant concerns are *the foundations of knowledge* (both theoretical and practical) and *the power(s) of reason*.

Our goal will be to *understand*, and to formulate critical *assessments* of, the dominant themes of modern philosophy. Topics considered will include: possible foundations of knowledge, the relation of reason to what is “non-rational” (passions, feelings, inclinations, instincts), the nature of reality, what it means to be human, and God’s existence.

Main Course Issue:

Two main questions will guide our exploration of our three philosophers. They are: *What can reason accomplish (especially on its own)?* and *What things threaten or impede reason?* Additional questions include: What is reason’s nature? What are its powers? What are its means? What are its ends? What are its products? What are its limits? What other powers besides reason do humans have? Which powers should have priority?

As we address these questions, we will consider how reason can help us make progress in the following three areas:

- knowledge:
 - epistemology – especially finding the foundations of knowledge;
 - metaphysics – especially proving the existence of mind, soul, and God
 - natural science – especially giving an account for causation.
- action:
 - moral action – especially articulating standards of moral behavior;
 - practical action – especially in solving problems of everyday living in the material world.
- religious belief and living:
 - faith in the divine;
 - knowledge of the divine;
 - developing a proper relationship with the divine.

Some Additional Goals:

- Understand and assess the extent to which modern philosophy is *revolutionary* and “begins anew;”
- Understand the centrality of concerns about knowledge and what is meant by “*philosophy-as-epistemology*;”

- Understand *the primacy of reason* and the mental capacities operative in theoretical and practical matters;
- Formulate your own assessment of *the nature, power, and limits of reason* in solving problems (including those which reason itself generates);
- Formulate your own assessment of the extent to which *human nature and the world is rational*.

II. COURSE OUTLINE:

A. Thematic Introduction & Some Background History

B. Descartes' Rationalism:

- A. The Cartesian Revolution: The Subjectivist Turn and Dualism: *Meditations on First Philosophy* and selections from *Discourse on Method*
- B. *Passions of the Soul*

C. Hume's Empiricism and Skepticism:

- A. Hume's Revolution: The Primacy of Impressions and "Custom:" selections from *Enquiries*
- B. Morals: selections from *Enquiries*

D. Kant's Critical Philosophy:

- A. Kantian Morality (Part 1): Freedom and Self-Determination: *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- B. Kant's "Copernican" Revolution: The Necessary Conditions of the Possibility of Experience: selections from the *Critique of Pure Reason*
- C. Kantian Morality (Part 2): Faith and Reason: selections from the *Critique of Practical Reason*

III. REQUIRED BOOKS:

- **Descartes:** *Descartes: Selected Writings*, ed. John Cottingham.
- **David Hume:** *Enquiries*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge.
- **Immanuel Kant:** *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Lewis White Beck.
- **Immanuel Kant:** *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Norman Kemp Smith

There will also be some shorter readings distributed in class.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participation	= 20%
2 Exams (@20%)	= 40%
2 Papers (@20%)	= 40%

A. PARTICIPATION: Philosophical thinking requires active engagement in learning and testing key ideas and methodologies. The following are designed to promote this. Your overall participation grade will be the average of items 1 and 2, with serious consideration also given to item 3.

[1] **Discussion Participation:** *Qualitative* participation is vital to your learning and is expected throughout the semester. First, you should carefully prepare for class; this means actively reading (see "Reading Philosophy" handout) and reflect on the day's assignment (by noting key definitions and arguments and by formulating questions) *prior* to class. This will prepare you to listen with understanding and to actively participate in class discussion. Discussion participation involves (i) contributing your own views, questions, and reactions to the readings and class discussion, and (ii) carefully listening to, questioning, and responding to the views of others. Aim to participate regularly, but avoid dominating class discussion.

When determining your discussion participation grade, I will look at the *quality* and *pattern* of your participation over the course of the semester. The *quality* of your work is gauged in terms of its (i) **clarity**, (ii) **insight**, and (iii) **sophistication**. In assessing the *pattern* of your work, I will look at (i) **consistency**, (ii) **effort**, and (iii) **improvement** and **progress** (or regress) you have made in critically discussing materials throughout the semester.

Minimal participation, low attendance, inattention, and disruptive or dominating class-room behavior will result in a low participation grade. If you are concerned about your participation performance, please don't hesitate to talk with me.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for all material covered and assignments distributed or collected. Since I consider attendance a factor of participation, I don't distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. (If you're not present, you can't contribute.) If you miss more than 2 classes (which is the equivalent of a week), your prep/participation grade will drop 1/3 letter grade per missed day. *Also*, you are expected to contact me so we can discuss your attendance.

[2] Student Prompt and Follow-up Assessment:

(a) The Prompt: Each of you will prepare a prompt for class discussion **once** during the semester. Your assignment is to prepare a prompt that presents a *key argument or idea* and *responds* to it (either by exploring its significance or by raising an objection or substantial question). The goal of the prompt is to give each of you an opportunity to participate in class discussion in a focused and sustained manner. More details are presented in the document "Student Prompts."

(b) Follow-up Assessment of your Prompt: Hopefully you will learn much when presenting and discussing your prompt that will deepen your understanding of the issue and perhaps also of your interests and philosophical strengths. Hence, after prompting, write an assessment of your prompt in which you

- (i) Summarize class discussion of your prompt, noting the main questions and objections made in response to your prompt. Indicate clearly how you did (or now would) respond to these.
- (ii) Explore how your view has changed (or deepened) as a result of discussion and further study. More details are presented in the document "Student Prompts."

[3] Periodic Homework, Quizzes, In-class Writing, or Group Work: To gauge your **preparation** and understanding of material, I will occasionally give *homework* and *quizzes*, most of which will be designed to (i) test your understanding of the reading, or (ii) help you crystallize your thinking on a relevant class issue. In addition, there may be some *in-class writing* or *group work*. The chief criteria used in evaluating this work will be **clarity** and **accuracy**. I will comment on this work but typically *not* assign a numerical grade; instead I will assign a + (excellent work), √ (good work), – (problematic work), or 0 (no work) to indicate the quality of your work. These exercises are an important part of your ongoing work. Use them to test your understanding and recognize them as a valuable source of feedback from me. At the end of the semester, I will consider the profile of your work in this area. If your final course grade is borderline, and if you did good work on these exercises, your efforts here can push your grade up (e.g., from an 89% to a 90%).

Missed work in this category can be made up *only* when you have discussed the matter with me *prior* to the beginning of the class you miss. Each student is allowed *one* make-up, but make-up material must be completed *by the beginning of the next class meeting*.

If you are concerned about your performance in any of these areas, please don't hesitate to talk with me.

B. Exams: There will be 2 exams (a midterm and a final) consisting of short-answer and essay questions. The final will have a cumulative essay question.

C. Papers: There will be 2 papers (approximately 5 pages each). The first is tentatively due **February 15** (with likely topics including: the theory/practice split, arguments for the existence of God, reason's success in finding certainty, our true human nature). The second is tentatively due **April 21** on a topic of your own construction. More details will be provided later.

• **Grading Criteria:** To be distributed separately.

V. MISCELLANEOUS:

• **Successful Classroom:** Respect towards all members of the class and to course content is the key. I work hard to generate a setting in which we can be honest and critical, but my efforts are futile without your individual contributions. Impediments to a successful classroom include tardiness, disruptive talking, lethargy, excessive absences, and leaving the classroom before the end of the hour. We are biological creatures, but since we also have a certain mastery over our bodies, please take care of your biological needs before class.

• **Grading Scale:** See "Grading Criteria for Written Work" handout for specifics.

A	94 and up	B+	87-89	C+	77-79
A-	90-93	B	84-86	C	74-76
		B-	80-83	C-	70-73 etc.

• **Computer Component:** You are responsible for any notes, assignments, etc. that I send out via e-mail. In addition, you will be expected to check documents left on the Academic Volume. I will announce new documents that need to be read; if you are absent, you are responsible for reading these. If you're unfamiliar with computer use, please check with the computer staff. They'll be happy to help you.

• **Academic Volume Resources:** Our class has a folder on the Academic Server (Philosophy → Shade → Public → PHIL 202). Included are: (1) readings that are handed out, (2) study questions (for some of the readings), (3) as well as biographies and timelines, (4) a list of additional books and websites for the course. Please consult this folder, and let me know if you have problems accessing it or finding materials.

• **Honor Code:** The Honor Code stipulates that all the work you submit is to be your own. You are encouraged to discuss topics and assignments with your colleagues, but the work you hand in must be your own, i.e., it must be formulated and written in your own words and style reflecting your own thoughtful treatment.

• I'll be glad to help in any way I can, so don't hesitate to darken my doorway.

This syllabus is subject to revision (but don't worry; I'll discuss any changes with the class before I make them).

CALENDAR

S= Supplemental Reading (usually available on Academic Server)

Tuesday	Thursday
1/18 RENE DESCARTES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skim General Introduction & Chronology (pp. vii-xii) • Descartes Bio (S) • Synopsis of the <i>Meditations</i> (pp. 73-75) • Meditation I (pp. 76-79) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) also pp. 112-114 (¶ 12-14) of Meditation VI in regard to the dubious nature of the senses (ii) also <i>Discourse on Method</i> Part III- beginning of IV (pp. 31-36). The rest of Part IV is also recommended. 	1/13 Reason, Will ... and Schopenhauer 1/20 Meditation II (pp. 80-86); Objections and Replies to the Second Meditation (pp. 126-131)
1/25 Meditation III (pp. 86-98)	1/27 Meditation III (continued)
2/1 Meditation IV (pp. 98-105); Objections and Replies to the Fourth Meditation (pp. 133-135)	2/3 Meditation IV, V (pp. 105-110); Objections and Replies to the Fifth Meditation (pp. 139-143)
2/8 Meditation VI (pp. 110-122); Objections and Replies to the Sixth Meditation (pp. 143-147)	2/10 Meditation VI (cont.)
2/15 Passions of the Soul (pp. 218-238) *** PAPER 1 Due***	2/17 DAVID HUME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume Biography (S) • <i>Enquiry</i>, Sections i-iii (pp. 5-24) Of the different species of philosophy; Of the Origin of Ideas; Of the Association of Ideas
2/22 <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections iv-v (pp. 25-55); Sceptical Doubts concerning the operations of the Understanding; Sceptical Solutions	2/24 <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections vi-vii (pp. 56-79) Of Probability; Of the Idea of Necessary Connection
3/1 <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections viii (pp. 80-103) Of Liberty and Necessity [Also <i>recommended</i> : Sections xii (pp. 149-165) Of the academical or sceptical Philosophy]	3/3 Midterm
3/8 SPRING BREAK	3/10 SPRING BREAK
3/15 <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections i-ii (pp. 169-182) and Appendix i (285-294) Of the General Principles of Morals; Of Benevolence; Concerning Moral Sentiment	3/17 <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections iii (183-204) and Appendix iii (303-311) Of Justice; Some farther Considerations
3/22 <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections v (212-232) and Appendix ii (295-302) Why Utility Pleases; Of self-love	3/24 EASTER
3/29 <i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> , Sections ix (268-284) Conclusion	3/31 IMMANUEL KANT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant Biography (S) • The Canon of Pure Reason, pp. 204-209 • Duty & Morality: Preface and Section I of the <i>Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
4/5 Freedom & Morality: Section II of <i>Foundations</i> . Also subsections “The Conception of Freedom is the Key ...” and “Freedom Must be Presupposed ...” in Section III	4/7 • Wrapping up Kant’s Morals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Critical Philosophy: The Copernican Revolution
4/12 The Possibility of Experience: Space and Time	4/14 The Possibility of Experience: The Categories
4/19 Responses to Skepticism on Causation and the External World	4/21 Reason Gone Awry: The Dialectic ***PAPER 2 Due***
4/26 Faith and Reason: Selections from the Second Critique (Supplement)	4/28 Faith and Reason: Selections from the Second Critique (Supplement) Review

