

# Essay and Presentation Questions

## SS149 Early Modern Western Philosophy

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Essay length: max 1,500 words, inclusive of footnotes, exclusive of bibliography

### Part 1: 17<sup>th</sup> century

1. Critically evaluate Descartes's 'wax argument' in the Second Meditation.
2. Critically evaluate Descartes's argument against one of the objections in the *Meditations*.
3. Critically evaluate Spinoza's argument against final causes, along with Leibniz's response to that argument.
4. Critically evaluate Cavendish's argument for the impossibility of transfer of motion.
5. Critically evaluate Cavendish's argument for panpsychism.
6. Critically evaluate Malebranche's argument for occasionalism.
7. Critically evaluate Locke's argument against the claim that the idea of God is innate.
8. Critically evaluate Locke's argument for the possibility of thinking matter, along with Astell's response to that argument.

### Part 2: 18<sup>th</sup> century

1. Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument about occasional causes, compared with Malebranche's occasionalism.
2. Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument against one of the twelve objections in the *Principles*.
3. Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument about embodiment in the *Three Dialogues*.
4. Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument for mechanical causes as distinguished from metaphysical ones in *De motu*.
5. Critically evaluate Hume's argument about the uniformity of nature in his problem of induction (*Enquiry*, §4).
6. Critically evaluate Hume's argument that there is no idea of power or necessary connection (*Enquiry*, §7), along with Shepherd's response to that argument.
7. Critically evaluate Shepherd's argument for a necessary connection in the *Essay*, along with Hume's sceptical response to that argument.
8. Critically evaluate Reid's 'same shop' argument for trust in the senses.

### Part 3: a 5-minute presentation (followed by Q&A in open discussion)

1. Critically evaluate an early modern philosopher's argument in premiss-conclusion form. [N.B Chose your favourite philosopher to the extent to which Parts 1 and 2 cover but the argument and text must be different to those in your essay. Otherwise, penalised.]