

Philosophy 2220: Modern Philosophy
Spring 2019
Course Syllabus

This course is a survey of Western philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries. This period is marked by the development of a wide range of positions on the major issues in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. The philosophy of this period has shaped contemporary philosophy and continues to exert a profound influence on many aspects of culture. Readings are taken from works by influential philosophers of the period. We will focus on five issues: the metaphysics of the physical world, the nature of mind, freedom of the will, political obligation and the structure of government, and the rationality of morality.

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Office hours: Mondays 3:30PM – 4:30PM and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:
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Class time: Monday/Wednesdays/Fridays 11:15AM – 12:05PM
Classroom: Goldwin Smith 142
Course website: Blackboard

Required work: A total of 100 points is possible:

- (1) Two short papers (7 pages/15 points each), due in class on:
Friday, February 15
Monday, April 22
- (2) Two exams, a midterm and a final (25 points each)
Midterm: Friday, March 15, in class
Final: TBA
- (3) Reading questions: each week, by Thursday at noon, e-mail a question you have about the readings for that week to your TA (15 points)
- (4) Attendance and participation (5 points)

Texts: The readings will be available online via Blackboard. Also consult earlymoderntexts.com

Reference text: The most important of these is the on-line *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (plato.stanford.edu). It features many helpful articles on 17th and 18th century philosophy, as well as links to other resources.

Topics and Main Readings:

A. Metaphysics and Epistemology

René Descartes (1596–1650):

Jan. 23: Introduction.

Jan. 25–28: The epistemological project of the *Meditations*; Meditations 1 and 2.

Jan 30 – Feb. 4: Arguments for the existence of God; Meditations 3 and 5.

Feb 6. The real distinction between me and my body; Meditation 6 (p. 28); Correspondence with Princess Elisabeth.

Feb. 8–11: Rationalism and science: theory of causation, matter, and real qualities; Descartes, from *The Principles of Philosophy*, Part 2, paragraphs 1–36 and 64, and Part 4, paragraphs 187–207,

Anne Conway (1631–1679):

Feb. 13: *Principles*, Chapters 7 and 8.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1667):

Feb. 15: Monism; *Ethics*, Part I, Appendix.

Feb. 18: Rejection of free will; *Ethics*, Part II, Propositions 48 and 49, and Concluding Note (at the end of Part II); *Ethics*, Part III, note to Proposition 2.

Feb. 20: *Treatise on Theology and Politics*, Chapters 6 (Miracles) and 7 (Interpretation of Scripture).

John Locke (1632–1704):

Feb. 22 – March 1: Empiricism and ideas; *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, i–iii.
Matter and solidity; *Essay* II, iv.
Primary and secondary qualities; *Essay* II, viii and xxxi; *Essay* IV, iii.

George Berkeley (1685–1753):

March 4–8: Idealism and the arguments against matter; *Principles* 1–24.

Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, especially the First Dialogue.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716):

Mar. 11–13: Matter, monadology, and idealism: *New System* and *Monadology*.

March 15: Midterm Exam

David Hume (1711–1776):

Mar. 18: Philosophy of psychology; *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections II, III.

Mar. 20: Causation and induction; *Enquiry* IV, V, VII.

Mar. 22: Personal Identity; *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part IV, Section VI.

Compatibilism about free will; *Enquiry* VIII.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804):

Mar. 25–27: Transcendental idealism; *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the Second edition, Bvii–xlii; Introduction to the Second Edition, B1–27.

Mar. 29: Transcendental freedom, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A530–558.

Spring Break: April 1–5

B. Morality, Rationality, and the State

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679):

April 8–12. Human nature, the state of nature, and the social contract, *Leviathan*, Chapters 6, 13–21, 28–30.

John Locke (1632–1704):

April 15–17. The state of nature, property, and democracy; *Second Treatise of Government*, Sections I–X.

David Hume (1711–1776):

April 19–22: Ethics and practical rationality; *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book II, Part III, Section III, “Of the influencing motives of will;” *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part I; Sections I and II, “Virtue and vice in general.”

April 24–26: Justice and government; *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part II; Sections I, II, and VII.

James Madison (1751–1836):

April 29: On republican government and the structure of government, *Federalist Papers* #10, #51.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804):

May 1–3: Ethics and practical rationality; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section II.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797):

May 6: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

NOTE: The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.