

PHIL 202: Renaissance and Modern Philosophy

Instructor Prof. Joshua Mousie

Office Thursdays (mostly online): 9:30am-12:00pm

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Fridays (in office): 2:30-5:00pm

Office Seney 115E

[All by appointment; signup in Canvas]

Course description

Early Modern Europe is a dynamic period in the West's intellectual tradition. In the period from 1400-1800, many classical and religious understandings of nature, the human self, and politics came under fire. This led to tumultuous debates (still with us) about the role that the church, government, and scientific knowledge should play in our individual lives and our social and political relationships. In this class, we will read an assortment of authors from various traditions: the Italian and French Renaissance, humanism, republicanism, the enlightenment, and Early Modern feminism. We will consider the influence and relevance of these traditions in our contemporary world, and we will also consider critiques of these traditions. Key themes for our course are the following: the relation between knowledge and power; the relation between, and comparative value of, art and science; the meaning of freedom, equality, and enlightenment; the private/public distinction; the life of solitude v. action/public life; and the meaning and value of virtuous action.

Required texts

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*, 9780812974232

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 9780199538966

Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays: A Selection*, 9780140446029

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and Women*, 9780199555468

Goals

1. To develop an understanding and appreciation of important writings, concepts, and theoretical frameworks in Renaissance and Modern philosophy. [Knowledge]
2. To discover and develop your knowledge (and the knowledge of others) through research and writing projects. [Research and Scholarship]
3. To develop your leadership abilities by being responsible for guiding and facilitating discussion. [Academic Leadership]
4. To develop your ability to construct and articulate your philosophical views, on your own and by listening and being receptive to the critiques and suggestions of your peers. [Communication and Team Learning]

Requirements

Attendance & participation	10%	Group Discussion Facilitation	15%
In-class writing quizzes	10%	Small Assignments for Research Project	5%
Short argument papers (4)	15%	Final Research Project	15%
		Exams (2, 15% each)	30%

Grading Scale

94-100	A	77-79	C+
90-93	A-	74-76	C
87-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-86	B	67-69	D+
80-83	B-	60-66	D
			< 60 F

Attendance & participation:

Great discussions happen when everyone has a chance to participate in our conversations. Accordingly, we will try to actively involve everyone in our conversations and create a classroom culture that welcomes everyone. I expect you to be prepared and engaged with the text; I also ask you to participate in a respectful, relevant, and charitable manner. This means that you should not talk too much or be overly argumentative/aggressive; you should not bring up topics that are irrelevant or trivial; also, you should give the ideas of the author we are discussing, and the ideas of your peers, the most fair and generous interpretation, instead of being overly critical.

You are allowed 2 unexcused absences (one prior to midterm and one after midterm). You will lose two letter grades (-20pts) off your participation grade for each additional unexcused absence. Excused absences are when you miss class and have a note from health services, when you are absent due to your participation in an official Oxford event (e.g. athletics), or when I receive an email from a dean excusing your absence. If you are more than 10 minutes late, or if you leave for an unexcused reason during class, you will be given an unexcused absence. If you miss six or more classes unexcused, you will receive an "F" in the course. You will receive a participation grade at midterm and one at the end of the semester. Your grade will be an average of these two grades.

There is a detailed participation rubric posted on Canvas that you need to consult in order to know exactly how you will be graded.

In-class writing quizzes:

Many of our classes will begin with reading quizzes. These quizzes will test how closely you read the assigned reading. The quizzes will be short writing assignments that respond to a prompt that I provide. There are no makeup quizzes, unless you have an excused absence. For excused absences, you have one week to take a makeup quiz, and you are responsible for scheduling the makeup quiz with me. The only other time you will receive a zero on a quiz is if you are not in class when the quiz begins. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Argument papers:

You will write four 2-page argument papers during the semester. These papers will focus on your ability to write a clear and concise argument in response to an argument presented in one of the assigned readings. Your argument can be supportive, critical, or a nuanced argument. You will submit two prior to midterm and two between midterm and the last day of class. You will turn these papers in at the beginning of class on the day we are discussing the assigned reading that you are addressing in your paper. If you want to write an argument in response to the Fedeles reading, for example, then you will submit your paper at the beginning of class on September 26th. You are responsible for deciding when you will write your papers. If you forget to write a paper, you will receive a zero for that paper.

You are allowed to revise one of your first two papers. After I return your paper, you will have two weeks to revise it. Also, in order to revise and resubmit a paper, you need to meet with me (during my office hours) to 1) discuss mistakes made on your first draft and 2) make a plan for improvement. When submitting your revision, you will turn in three things: your original paper, your revised paper, and a paragraph explaining what improvements you made in the revision. For more instructions, sample papers, and a grading rubric, see related documents in Canvas under "Files."

Discussion facilitation:

You will form groups of ____ during the first week of class. Your group will be responsible for facilitating our discussion four times. The dates are first come, first serve, but you can't facilitate back-to-back classes. There is a link to the signup website on our Canvas homepage. There is also a document with instructions and a grading rubric on Canvas. We will discuss the details of this assignment and my expectations at the beginning of the second day of class (August 29th).

Research project:

You will develop a research project throughout the semester that will focus on exploring your own academic interests as they relate to Renaissance and Early-Modern philosophy. This project will mainly focus on 1) developing your ability to research and synthesize secondary literature and 2) creating and assessing your own philosophical ideas. You will first work to develop a philosophical question/topic that interests you, which must relate to the assigned readings and be relevant to our contemporary world. You will then research secondary scholarship on specific debates in Renaissance or Early-Modern philosophy that address your question. Finally, you will gather your findings and present them in written form (8-10 page paper). We will discuss assignment details throughout the semester and you can find many specifics for this project in the assignment guide posted in Canvas under "Files." During the semester you will complete small assignments that will aid the development of your research project. These assignments and due dates are also detailed in the research project guide in Canvas.

Exams

You will have two exams, a midterm and a final. Both tests will primarily involve short answer and essay questions, and they will test you on 1) your understanding of the philosophers' texts discussed during class, 2) any key concept/terminology we discuss, and 3) your ability to compare and contrast the views of different philosophers we discuss. Essay questions on the final exam are cumulative. There will be no review sessions or study guides. You are responsible for taking notes on all important ideas and concepts discussed during class.

Your final will be in our classroom on December 9th @ 2pm

Additional Information & Classroom Policies

Unexcused Absence

An absence is excused only if you are 1) involved in an official Oxford event (sports, for example), 2) have a note from health services, or 3) have a note/e-mail from a dean excusing you from class.

Turning in Assignments

I will not accept assignments that are e-mailed to me. Any assignment that is not turned in by you at the beginning of class is late and will be penalized. If you leave class after turning in an assignment, you will receive a zero on the assignment. For daily assignments, late work is not accepted. For *all* assignments: each day late = one letter grade off (-10pts).

Electronics

You are not allowed to have laptops or cell phones out during class.

On days when the reading is a pdf, you either need to print the article or have an e-reader (no laptops or phones).

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating/plagiarism is not tolerated. Any form of cheating or plagiarism (regardless the assignment) will forfeit any possible credit for that assignment, and following school policy you will be reported to the Honor Council. (Please consult the Academic Honor Code in the Student Handbook.) If you have *any* questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, don't hesitate to contact me.

Disability Accommodations

Any student who thinks s/he may need an accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services (ADSR): adsroxford@emory.edu ; 770.784.4690. Unless you have official documentation from the ADSR office, I cannot grant accommodations.

Course Schedule: All dates and readings are subject to change.

Week	Topic	Required Reading
1 August		24 th – Syllabus, Introduction: The Legacy of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Scholastic Philosophy
I. Renaissance Philosophy		
2 August		29 th – Petrarch (pdf) 31 st – Pico (pdf)
3 September		5 th – Labor Day, no class 7 th – Ficino (pdf)
4 September		12 th – Machiavelli, pp.103-131 14 th – Machiavelli, pp. 132-164
5 September		19 th – Machiavelli, pp. 165-198 21 st – Machiavelli, pp. 199-228
6 September		26 th – Cassandra Fedele (pdf) 28 th – Montaigne – pp. 17-37; pp. 96-109
7 October		3 rd – Montaigne – pp. 364-395 5 th – Montaigne – pp. 395-426

Week	Topic	Required Reading
8 October	Test	10 th – Fall Break, no class 12 th – Midterm Exam
II: Early Modern Philosophy		
9 October		17 th – Galileo (pdf) and Arendt on Galileo (pdf) 19 th – Descartes (pdf)
10 October		24 th – Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia & Descartes (pdf) 26 th – Rousseau (pdf)
11 November		31 st – Rousseau pp. 43-62 2 nd – Rousseau pp. 63-86
12 November		7 th – Rousseau pp. 116-141 9 th – Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (pdf) [Class in Atlanta with Dr. Huseyinzadegan and dinner afterwards in Atlanta]
13 November		14 th – Kant, “Cosmopolitanism” (pdf) 16 th – Wollstonecraft, pp. 65-83
14 November		21 st – Wollstonecraft, pp. 84-104 23 rd – Thanksgiving, no class
15 November/December		28 th – Wollstonecraft pp. 191-97; 210-31 30 th – Wollstonecraft pp. 241-65 5 th – Class at Mousie’s house: snacks and discussion about everyone’s research projects Final Exam: December 9th @2pm