

PHIL 202: Renaissance and Modern Philosophy

Instructor Joshua Mousie

Office Mondays 12-2pm; Thursdays, 1-3pm

Hours [No appointments; stop by anytime during office hours]

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Office Pierce Hall 232

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 contentious 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: theories of nature/cosmology; the relation between knowledge and power; the meaning of freedom, what it means to be an enlightenment individual or society; the private/public distinction; and the meaning and value of virtuous action.

Required texts

Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 9780226500362

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, 9780199555420

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 9780192806963

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	5%	Small Research Assignments	5%
Group Facilitations	10%	Final Research Project	25%
In-class writing quizzes	15%	Exams (2 @ 20% each)	40%

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 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. There is a detailed participation rubric on our Canvas page under "Files."

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.

- Policies:
1. There are no makeup quizzes, unless you have an excused absence. For excused absences, you have one week to take a makeup quiz. You will need to come by my office hours to take your makeup quiz. After a week, you will receive a zero.
 2. All quizzes will happen at the very beginning of class, and I will give everyone exactly five minutes to write their quiz.
 3. If you are late to class, you will not be able to have extended time to finish your quiz. Also, if you leave class early without an excuse, you will receive a zero on your quiz (if there is a quiz that day).
 4. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Discussion facilitation:

I will assign groups during the first week of class, and 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.

Small research assignments

There will be three small research assignments that you will complete prior to finishing your final paper. These assignments are due throughout the semester. See the research project document in Canvas for due dates and details.

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 (roughly 8 pages). You will also give a short presentation on your project during the last week of class. 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."

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 May 4th @ 9am

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.

Electronics

Cell phones should be turned off and stored when class starts

On days when the reading is a pdf, you can have a laptop or e-reader in class.

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 Accessibility Services (OAS):

The Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) Contact Information:

105 W. Moore Street: Murdy Hall, Room 134

oas_oxford@emory.edu

Telephone: (770) 784.4690

If you have testing accommodations, you are responsible for providing me with documentation, and you are responsible for scheduling your exam with the OAS office. If you do not provide documentation or schedule the exam in time (available time slots fill up quickly!), you will be required to take your exam with the rest of the class during the regular class time without your accommodations. I do not schedule exams outside of our regular class exam times. The OAS office is our campus resource for out-of-class testing.

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

Week	Topic	Required Reading
1		17 th – Syllabus, Introduction
January		
	I. Renaissance Philosophy	
2	i. Italian Humanism	22 nd – Leonardo da Vinci (pdf)
January		24 th – Pico (pdf)
3		29 th – Machiavelli, pp. 3-14
January		31 st – Machiavelli, pp. 15-30
4		5 th – Machiavelli, pp. 31-39; 44-52
February		7 th – Machiavelli, pp. 73-77; 95-96; 105-113
5		12 th – Machiavelli, pp. 114-119; 123-125
February		14 th – Fedele (pdf)
6	ii. French Humanism	19 th – Montaigne (pdf)
February	II. Early Modern Philosophy	
	i. Rationalism	21 st – Descartes, Meditations 1 and 2
7		26 th – Descartes Meditation 3
February	Exam	28 th – Midterm Exam

Week	Topic	Required Reading
8 March		5 th – Descartes, Meditations 4 and 5 7 th – Descartes, Meditation 6
9 March		12 th – Spring Break 14 th – Spring Break
10 March	ii. Empiricism	19 th – Locke (pdf), BK. II, Ch. 1 21 st – Locke (pdf), BK. II, Ch. 9; BK. IV, Ch. 11
11 March	iii. Thinkers of the Enlightenment	26 th – Rousseau, pp. 14-37 28 th – No class – Mousie out of town
12 April		2 nd – Rousseau, pp. 37-60 4 th – Rousseau, pp. 60- 85
13 April		9 th – Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (pdf) [Class and dinner in ATL with Dr. Huseyinzadegan] 11 th – Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (pdf)
14 April		16 th – Wollstonecraft, 84-104 18 th – Wollstonecraft, 191-97; 210-31
15 April		23 rd – Wollstonecraft pp. 241-65 25 th - Project Presentations 30 th – Project Presentations