

PHIL 202: Renaissance and Modern Philosophy

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Office Seney 115E

Office Hours Mon & Wed: 9am-12pm

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 and the human self 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 relationships with each other. In this class we will read an assortment of authors from this period. Some of these authors suggest revolutionary philosophical insights that continue to shape our intellectual frameworks. Yet many also challenge us to consider the limits of the human mind and the importance of the human heart and justice. Key themes for our course are theories of knowledge, the self, and social and political life.

Required texts

Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* [1509], 9780300097344

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* [1748], 9780199549900

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* [1641], 9780192806963

Immanuel Kant, *Basic Writings*, [1724-1804], 9780375757334

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* [1670], 9780199540365

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and Women* [1790 & 1792], 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%	Short argument papers (6)	15%
In-class writing quizzes	5%	Research project	20%
Discussion facilitation	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			

Exams

You will have two exams, a midterm and a final. Both tests will primarily involve short answer and essay questions.

Your final will be in our classroom on December 14th, 9am

Attendance & participation:

Everyone is expected to participate in the discussion every single class. However, you are also expected 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. There is a detailed participation rubric posted on Blackboard that you need to consult in order to know exactly how you will be graded.

You are **allowed 2 unexcused absences**. You will lose 5 points off your **overall course 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.

Discussion facilitation:

You will form **groups of two** during the first week of class. **Your group will be responsible for facilitating our discussion three 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 Blackboard homepage. There is also a document with instructions and a rubric for this assignment on Blackboard. **If you forget your facilitation day and come to class unprepared, you will receive a zero for that facilitation day.**

Research project:

You will write and develop a research paper throughout the semester that will be **roughly seven or eight pages long**. This paper will mainly focus on developing **1) your ability to research and synthesize secondary literature and 2) your ability to create and assess your own philosophical questions**. You will first work to develop a philosophical question that interests you, which should be inspired by your reading the assigned texts and our classroom discussions. You will then work with me to develop and articulate your question as a guide for your research project. Once you have a fine-tuned guiding question, you will then do research on this question as it relates to Renaissance and Modern Philosophy. You will finally write a paper gathering your findings, and you will present these ideas to the class on the last day 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 Blackboard.

Argument papers:

You will write **six one-page 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. You must submit one of these assignments for each philosopher we read, and 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. That is, if you want to write an argument in response to Descartes' third meditation, you must submit your paper at the beginning of class on September 23rd. You are responsible for deciding when you will write your papers. **If you forget to write a paper for one of the authors we are reading, you will receive a zero for that paper.** For more details and guidance, see the document about this assignment on Blackboard. Your lowest grade will be dropped.

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. YOU must contact me via email and setup a date/time that is within one week of your absence. If you don't take the quiz within a week of your absence, you will receive a zero. If you are not in class when the quiz begins, you will receive a zero. Your lowest score will be dropped.**

Additional Information & Classroom Policies

Classroom equity

I never give one student special accommodations (disabilities aside). Hence, whenever you want to ask me for something, first ask 'Is this something that he would/could reasonably do for everyone in the class?' If the answer is 'no,' then my answer will be no.

Submitting assignments

All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class the day they are due. If you are not in class, you cannot submit the assignment and receive credit, unless you have a doctor's note or you are on an official Emory trip (e.g., athletics). Along these lines, **I will not accept assignments that are e-mailed to me (unless you are asked to e-mail them)**. Any assignment that is not turned in by you (in person) at the beginning of class is late and will be penalized. For daily assignments and argument papers, late work is not accepted.

Electronics

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

Academic dishonesty

Cheating/plagiarism is not tolerated. Any form of cheating or plagiarism (no matter 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, or visit someone in the writing center!

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

Week	Topic	Required Reading
1 August		26 th – Syllabus, Introduction
2 August/September	Erasmus	31 st – pgs. 1-27 2 nd – pgs. 28- 56
3 September	Erasmus	7 th – Labor day, no class 9 th - pgs. 57- 85
4 September	Erasmus Erasmus	14 th – pgs. 85-113 16 th – pgs. 114-138
5 September	Descartes	21 st – Meditations 1 & 2 23 rd - Meditations 3 & 4
6 September	Descartes Writing and Research	28 th – Meditations 5 & 6 30 th – Research Paper Discussion
7 October	Pascal	5 th – pgs. 12-34 7 th – pgs. 34-52
8 October	Pascal	12 th – fall break, no class 14 th – pgs. 64-73; 149-158
9 October	Test Hume	19 th – Midterm Exam 21 st – pgs. 12-40

Week	Topic	Required Reading
10 October	Hume	26 th – pgs. 41-57 28 th – pgs. 58-75 ;109-120
11 November	Kant	2 nd – pgs. 24-41 4 th – pgs. 42 – 53
12 November	Kant	9 th – pgs. 54-64 11 th – pgs. 65-78
13 November	Kant	16 th – pgs. 119-132 18 th – pgs. 135-141 [Dinner in ATL]
14 November	Wollstonecraft	23 rd – pgs. 65-84 25 th – thanksgiving, no class
15 November/December	Wollstonecraft	30 th – Ch. 6 & 9 2 nd – Ch. 13 7 th – Report on Research Projects