

Instructor: Colin McLearn
Course: PHIL 232
Time: T/R 9:30-10:45 a.m.
Location: CBA 118
Office: 1003 Oldfather Hall

mclear@unl.edu
<http://colinmclear.net>
Department of Philosophy
Office Hours: T/R
11am-12pm

History of Modern Philosophy

Course Overview

This course offers an introductory survey of some of key figures in modern (17th—18th century) Western philosophy. These may include: Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. We'll focus primarily on issues in epistemology (the nature of ideas, skepticism, belief, knowledge, science) and metaphysics (matter, causation, God, natural laws, personal identity).

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students should be able to (i) find the argument of a text and restate it clearly in their own words; (ii) explain viewpoints clearly that are not their own; (iii) think critically about the philosophical ideas discussed in this course; (iv) write papers using theses, organization, arguments, evidence, and language suitable to analytical writing in general and the discipline of philosophy in particular.

Required Materials

- Readings will be posted on the course website or found at:
 - <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com>
- **Students are expected to bring all relevant materials to class.**

Course Requirements

- **Preparation:** You are expected to attend every class meeting fully prepared to discuss each assigned reading, to submit written work punctually, and to offer thoughtful and constructive responses to the remarks of your instructor and your classmates. Make sure that you bring the relevant readings with

you to every class. I further expect you to treat both the texts at hand and your classmates' ideas with openness and respect.

- **Attendance:** Attendance is required. Absences will not be excused except in documented cases. 1/2 a letter grade will be deducted from your final course grade for every absence after your fifth.
- **Website:** We will use a course website for all materials. The site is available at: <http://colinmclear.net/modernphilosophy>. Upcoming assignments and readings will be posted there. Please let me know if you have any problems. Technical glitches, computer malfunctions and crashing hard drives are not excuses for failing to complete work in this class.
- **Format for Papers:** Please submit work either as a rich text or Microsoft Word file. All work must be typed. I will not accept any handwritten work aside from that we do in class. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. Your name, my name, the date and assignment should appear in the top left hand corner of the first page. Your last name and page number must appear in the top right hand corner on each subsequent page. Please staple or paperclip hard copies of papers and drafts. You are responsible for the presentation of your papers.
- **Late Work:** Late papers and assignments will standardly be marked down by **1/3 of a letter grade for each day the work is late** (for example, from A- to B+, from B+ to B, and so on).

Evaluation

Two Exams: 40%

- The exams will involve a combination of short answer and short essay questions.
 - Mid-Term: 20%
 - Final: 20%

Written Essay: 20%

- **Critical Analysis:** Explain and critically assess a philosophical argument. Topics will be provided. Approximately 3-6 pages.

Quizzes: 20%

- There will be weekly quizzes with no more than one given in any particular week. I will drop your lowest three quiz grades.

Five Reading Responses: 10%

- Explain and discuss issues raised by the reading. Give a brief summary of the main points of the reading followed by any questions or issues that struck you. Reading responses should be a minimum of 200 words and maximum of 600 words in length and are due Wednesday of the relevant week by 4 pm. You may choose which assignments you wish to respond to. **However, at least two responses must be submitted by the time of the mid-term exam** All responses should be emailed to [me](#). The subject line must read: "Modern Philosophy Reading Response" along with the date.

Participation Grade: 10%

- The participation grade takes into account your attendance in class as well as the quantity and quality of your participation.

Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with UNL's Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code, available [online](http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code) at <http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code>. **In this course, the normal penalty for any violation of the code is an "F" for the semester.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – It just isn't worth it.
- **University Policies:** This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.
- **ADA:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska—Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation series, students must be registered with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

- **Misc.:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

Further Resources

- **Jargon:** It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "[Philosophical Terms and Methods](#)."
- **Writing a Philosophy paper:** Papers should adhere to some consistent practice of footnoting and citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.). I don't really mind which one you use as long as you are consistent. On writing a philosophy paper, there is no better on-line guide than [Jim Pryor's](#). Please consult it. Hacker's [A Writer's Reference](#) is also extremely helpful. Useful online references may be found at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).
- **Help with writing:** The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check [the Writing Center website](#) at <http://www.unl.edu/writing> for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments.
- **Reference:** The [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu) (<http://plato.stanford.edu>) offers excellent background resources for all the major figures and topics that we will discuss in class.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR:

Tuesday	Thursday
<div>Jan 14th</div> <p>Introduction: Method in the Medieval Sciences</p>	<p>16th Descartes's Method: Discourse, I-II; Meditations, Preface & Synopsis</p>
<p>21st Foundationalism and Skepticism: Meditations I</p>	<p>23rd Descartes's Way Out?: Meditations II</p>
<p>28th Ideas, Truth, & Error Med 3; Med 4, and Third O&R (EMT 50-52))</p>	<p>30th Hobbes's Objections (3rd Objections and D's replies)</p>
<div>Feb 4th</div> <p>God: Meditation 5, plus Caterus, First Objections and Descartes's Replies (EMT 10-16)</p>	<p>6th The Cartesian Circle: James van Cleve, "Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle", especially sect V (pp. 66-74)</p>
<p>11th The Real Distinction: Meditation 6</p>	<p>13th The World Regained: Meditation 6</p>
<p>18th Innate Ideas: Locke (<i>EHU</i>: Bk I)</p>	<p>20th Innate Ideas: Leibniz (<i>New Essays</i>)</p>
<p>25th Innate Ideas: The Molyneux Problem Exam Review</p>	<p>27th Mid-Term Exam</p>
<div>Mar 4th</div> <p>The corpuscularian hypothesis Galileo & Locke on primary/secondary qualities</p>	<p>6th Locke on Scientia and Human Knowledge (vs. Scientia in Aristotle and Descartes)</p>
<p>11th Matter: Extension vs Solidity (Descartes vs. Locke)</p>	<p>13th Matter: (In)Divisibility (Leibniz on the continuum)</p>

Tuesday	Thursday
18th God & Idealism: Leibniz's Monadology	20th God & Idealism: Leibniz on Free Will
25th No Class — Spring Break!	27th No Class — Spring Break!
Apr 1st Matter: Incoherence Berkeley against Matter-relativity & substratum arguments	3rd God & Idealism: Berkeley (God & Ideas)
8th Hume: Impressions & Ideas	10th Hume: Causation
15th Hume: Personal Identity	17th No Class
22nd Kant: Transcendental Idealism & the Synthetic a priori Paper due Friday at 4 p.m.	24th Kant: Against Hume's Account of the Mind (B-edition Transcendental Deduction)
29th Kant: Knowledge & Faith	May 1st Last Class — Exam Review
6th Exam Week — No Class	8th Final Exam: 10–noon.