

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

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<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 twelve quizzes with no more than one given in any particular week. I will drop your lowest two 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.