

PHILOSOPHY 8: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY - SELF AND WORLD

Harvard University
Spring Term 2018: MW(F) 12-1
Emerson Hall 210

TEACHING STAFF

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will read and interpret works of some of the major figures in early modern European philosophy (roughly, the 17th and 18th centuries). This philosophy develops in tandem with the dramatically changing science of the day, often referred to as the “scientific revolution.” The rise of modern science brought about changes in our conception of the nature and structure of the material world; it also demanded a re-conceptualization of ourselves as human beings and of the nature and limits of human knowledge. We will thus explore some lively debates concerning the natures of self, world, and human knowledge.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of the course is not to provide a complete survey of philosophical activity in the early modern period, but rather to focus on selected works appropriate to the above themes. Since this is a course in the history of philosophy, our objective will be twofold. First, as a *philosophy* course our method will involve finding, analyzing, and evaluating the arguments that the philosophers offer in support of their positions. Along the way, we will introduce you to a number of basic philosophical concepts and tools. Second, as a *history* of philosophy course we must recognize that arguments and positions are embedded in historical texts. Consequently, we will have to engage in some textual interpretation to determine (as best we can) just what the philosophers’ positions are and how their arguments

are supposed to provide support for them. Along the way, we will work quite hard on developing your skills in critical reading, clear writing, and cogent argumentation.

REQUIRED TEXTS

*These are texts that will be reading in their entirety (or nearly), and so it is worth buying the text if you are able (if you are not able, please talk with the teaching staff and we will try to work something out). These texts are available at the Coop and also on Amazon.com. **It is important that you have these very translations/editions!***

René Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. & ed. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, & D. Murdoch (Cambridge), abbreviated CSM below. [ISBN-13: 978-0521358125](#)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. T. Beauchamp (Oxford, Clarendon edition), abbreviated B below. [ISBN-13: 978-0198752486](#)

Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge), abbreviated GH below. [ISBN-13: 978-0521535359](#)

OPTIONAL TEXTS FOR REQUIRED READING

These are texts from which we will be reading selections, listed in order of their appearance on the syllabus. The selections are available on the course website as pdf or hyperlink to online copies in Hollis, but if you would like to access more of the text or own a hard copy, we recommend the following editions.

Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, *The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, ed. and trs. Lisa Shapiro (Chicago). [ISBN-13: 978-0226204420](#)

François Poullain de la Barre, *Three Cartesian Feminist Treatises*, tr. Vivien Bosley (Chicago). [ISBN-13: 9780226676548](#)

Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Broadview). [ISBN-13: 978-1551113067](#)

Nicholas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, ed. Thomas Lennon and Paul Olscamp (Cambridge). [ISBN-13: 978-0521589956](#)

Margaret Cavendish, *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. Eileen O'Neill (Cambridge). [ISBN-13: 978-0521776752](#)

Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). [ISBN-13: 978-0374227760](#)

Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, ed. Derek Brookes (Penn State). [ISBN-13: 978-0748613717](#)

Lady Mary Shepherd, *An Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect: Controverting the Doctrine of Mr. Hume Concerning the Nature of that Relation*. (Hardpress). [ISBN-13: 978-1333840839](#)

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

These are texts you might find useful not only for clarifying the texts, but also for illustrating what philosophers do with these texts and what the interpretive controversies are. They are available at the Coop and online at Amazon.com.

Gary Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations* (Routledge, 2003), introductory monograph [ISBN-13: 978-0415111935](#)

Stephen Gaukroger, ed. *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations* (Blackwell, 2006), introductory essays [ISBN-13: 978-1405118743](#)

David Cunniff, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes' Meditations* (Cambridge, 2014), introductory essays [ISBN-13: 978-1107630482](#)

Karen Detlefsen, ed. *Descartes' Meditations: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, 2013), intermediate essays [ISBN-13: 978-1107463172](#)

Peter Millican, ed., *Reading Hume on Human Understanding* (Oxford University Press, 2002), intermediate essays [ISBN-13: 978-0198752103](#)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Lectures. You are expected to attend lectures, which are on Mondays, Wednesday, and a number of Fridays (more or less, every other Friday).

Readings. Weekly reading assignments range from about 30 to 100 pages per week. It is **absolutely essential** that you complete the reading in preparation for lecture. The material is difficult, so you will need to read each selection several times. Your questions about the material and your discussion in section will be critical to everyone's comprehension of it.

Discussion Sections. There will be weekly discussion sections conducted by the teaching fellows. These sections give you the opportunity to raise questions about and discuss the readings with others. They are, for that reason, a vital part of the course. Participation in section is required to pass the course.

****SECTIONING WILL BE DONE ONLINE ON FRIDAY JANUARY 26****

Writing. You will write **two 3-page essays, two re-writes of the 3-page essays, and two 1-page writing exercises** (with no re-writes). The first 3-page essay will receive comments and advice, but no actual grade (we will, however, tell you what the grade *would have been*); the idea is to give you an honest assessment of your baseline writing and advice on how to improve it without penalizing you for not knowing yet how to write a philosophy paper. (It takes practice.) The 3-page essays are designed to help you focus your reading and develop your critical reasoning skills by reconstructing and evaluating arguments. The point of re-writing is to *improve* your writing and critical reasoning skills by responding to feedback. The tentative due dates for the 3-page essays and re-rewrites are **WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY**

7, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23, FRIDAY MARCH 30, and FRIDAY APRIL 13. Essays are due in the dropbox for your section on the website by **9:00 p.m.** on the due date.

You will also write **two 1-page writing exercises**. The point of the 1-page writing exercises is to hone a particular philosophical and writing skill. Don't be fooled: writing a good single page of prose can be even harder than writing a good 3-page essay! You will want to give yourself plenty of time to work on these. The tentative due dates for the 1-page writing exercises are **FRIDAY MARCH 2** and **FRIDAY APRIL 20**.

All 6 writing assignments must be handed in to pass the course.

****ASSIGNMENT POLICIES****

We will grant no extension without a documented excuse from a doctor or dean. Late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for every 24 hours that they are late. No exceptions.

****HELP WITH YOUR WRITING****

The Philosophy Department has a Departmental Writing Fellow. This year the DWF is Javier Caride. He is available to help with your paper writing throughout the term. For details see [this webpage](#).

Final Exam. There will be an **essay format final exam** for the course during exam week, on **May 12, 2018 at 9 a.m.** We will hand out study questions prior to the exam, and the exam will consist of a subset of those questions.

Grades. Grades will be calculated as follows: Essay 1 (0%); Essay 1 re-write (15%); Essay 2 (10%); Essay 2 re-write (20%); 1-page writing exercises (10% each); final exam (20%); section participation (15%). Note, again, that you will not be graded on the first 3-page essay (which is why it receives 0%), but *it is required and the harder you try on that the better your grade on the re-write is likely to be.*

Conduct. Students and instructors alike must contribute to an environment that is conducive the learning. This involves, among other things, respectful behavior in class like showing up on time, refraining from talk that does not contribute to the class, etc. Academic dishonesty (including *inappropriate* collaboration and plagiarism) will be dealt with sternly. Please see the course policies on the website for more discussion of these issues. If you have any questions at all about what constitutes inappropriate collaboration or plagiarism *ask*.

COURSE POLICIES

Please see the course website for a list of policies (and *reasons* for those policies) concerning the use of personal electronic devices (including laptops, tablets, and phones) in lecture, taking the course Pass/Fail, switching sections, missing sections, extensions and late papers, rewrites, and drafts.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to doing philosophy, and so we encourage you to talk about the course material with other students and do your own research in the library and online. On the other hand, *the work on your essays and your exam must be entirely your own*. If books, articles, websites, or discussions have helped you with your paper, cite them in proper footnote and bibliography form. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses that undermine the trust on which the scholarly endeavor rests. They will be dealt with sternly.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with me (AS) by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in my inability to respond in a timely manner.

COURSE CALENDAR

January 22: Introduction, A Changing World View

DESCARTES

January 24: Science and Technology - the Human Machine

Required Reading: *Discourse on Method* all except Part 4 (CSM pp. 20-35 and 40-56); *The World* chs. 6-7 and *Treatise on Man* (selections on website).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 1.

***** WE WILL SECTION FOR THE COURSE ONLINE ON FRIDAY JANUARY 26*****

January 29: The *Meditations* – What’s the Project?

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Synopsis, Meditation 1, Objections & Replies selections for M1 (CSM pp. 73-79, 123-126).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, chs. 2-3; Gaukroger, ch. 2 (Larmore, “Descartes and Skepticism”).

January 31: The Method of Doubt

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Synopsis, Meditation 1, Objections & Replies selections for M1 (CSM pp. 73-79, 123-126).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 3; Gaukroger, ch. 2 (Larmore, “Descartes and Skepticism”).

February 2 (FRIDAY): The Cogito & Sum Res Cogitans

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 2, Objections & Replies for M2 (CSM pp. 80-86, 126-131); *Principles of Philosophy* Part I.7-12 (CSM pp. 161-64).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 4; Gaukroger, ch. 3 (Curley, "The *Cogito* and the Foundations of Knowledge"); Cunning, ch. 4 (Alanen, "The Second Meditation and the nature of the human mind").

February 5: Ideas, Causes, and Reality

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 3 ¶¶ 1-15, Objection & Replies for M3 [on objective reality] (CSM pp. 86-92, 132-133)

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 5; Gaukroger, chs. 4 & 6 (Rozemond, "The Nature of the Mind" and Nadler, "The Doctrine of Ideas"); Detlefsen, ch. 5 (Schmaltz, "Causation and causal axioms").

February 7: Proof for the Existence of God

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 3, Objections & Replies for M3 [on the idea of God] (CSM pp. 86-98, 131-132); *Principles* Part I.17-27 and Par II.21 (CSM pp. 165-169 and 199).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, chs. 5 & 7; Gaukroger, ch. 7 (Nolan and Nelson, "Proofs for the Existence of God"); Cunning, ch. 6 (Nolan, "The Third Meditation: causal arguments for God's existence").

****ESSAY 1 IS DUE WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 7****

February 12: Essence and Existence of Body

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 4 & Meditation 5 (CSM pp. 98-110); *Discourse on Method* Parts 5-6 (CSM pp. 40-56); *Principles of Philosophy* Part I sections 53 & 68-69, Part 2 all selections, Part 4 sections 199-207 (CSM pp. 189-199, 207-212). **USE THE RED CSM and have them read Pr II.4-36 and 64**

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 9; Gaukroger, ch. 10 (Clarke, "Descartes' Proof of the Existence of Matter"); Detlefsen, ch. 6 (Carriero, "Sensation and knowledge of body in Descartes' *Meditations*").

February 14: Mind-Body Dualism

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 6, Objections & Replies for M6 (CSM pp. 110-122, 143-150); *Principles of Philosophy* Part I.47-74 (CSM 175-187).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 8; Gaukroger, ch. 11 (Cottingham, "The Mind-Body Relation").

REACTIONS TO DESCARTES

February 16 (FRIDAY): Descartes Wrap Up

February 19: NO CLASS (President's Day)

NEXT TIME PUT ELIZABETH AFTER POUILLAIN AND ASTELL!!! USE COMMENT OF ASTELL'S ON MYSTERY OF INTERACTION AND UNION AS A PROMPT/SEGUE

February 21: Elisabeth of Bohemia on Mind-Body Interaction

Required Reading: Correspondence with Princess Elisabeth (on website).

Optional Commentary: Lisa Shapiro, "Princess Elizabeth and Descartes: The union of soul and body and the practice of philosophy" (see Canvas Assignments page)

February 23 (FRI): Poullain de la Barre on Sex Equality and Women's Education

Required Reading: *On the Equality of the Two Sexes*, Preface (pp. 49-51), I (pp. 52-61), II (p. 73 (¶ 1-3), pp. 79-85, and pp. 95-111); *On the Education of Ladies*, Preface (pp. 140-142) and Conversation 5 (pp. 236-251).

****RE-WRITE OF ESSAY 1 IS DUE FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23****

February 26: Astell on Sex Equality and Women's Education

Required Reading: Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* I, pp. 9-17, 51-62, 69-83, and 102-109; *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* II, pp. 119-122, 127-131, 133-140, 144-153, 176-179, 189-193, 199-205, and 231-236.

Optional Commentary: Karen Detlefsen, "Cartesianism and its Feminist Promise and Limits: The Case of Mary Astell."

February 28: Malebranche on Causation and Natural Laws

Required Reading: *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion* VII (JS, pp. 104-126); *Search After Truth*, Book VI, part ii, ch. 3 (LO, pp. 446-452); *Elucidation* 15 (LO, pp. 657-685; just skim 572-685).

Optional Commentary: Steven Nadler, "Malebranche on Causation"; Steven Nadler, "Descartes and Occasional Causation."

****EXERCISE 1 IS DUE FRIDAY MARCH 2****

March 5: Cavendish's Materialism – Self-Moving, Animate, Sentient, and Knowing
add preface to reader of Observations pp. 11-14;

Required Reading: Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* - Prefaces; Section I, letters 1, 4, 13, 23, 30, and 42; Section II, letters 5-7, 10-12, and 25; Section III, letters 1, 3, 18, and 24; Section IV, letters 1 and 29. *NB: These readings are all available in pdf form on the website. For the Cavendish, you might also consider reading them online through EEBO (Early English Books Online),*

where you can read images of the 1664 edition of the text (together with its antiquated English spellings).

Optional Commentary: Karen Detlefsen, "Reason and Freedom: Margaret Cavendish on the Order and Disorder of Nature."

March 7: Cavendish's Theory of Mind - Material, Composite, and Everywhere

Required Reading: Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* - Prefaces; Section I, letters 1, 4-11, 14, 18, 22, 24-25, and 35-37; Section II, letters 7, 10, and 13-22; Section III, letters 18 and 21; Section IV, letters 6 and 30. Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds*, ch. 4.

March 12 & 14: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

HUME

March 19: Hume's Science of the Mind

Required Reading: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* §§1-3.

Optional Commentary: Millican, ch. 3 (Bennett, "Empiricism about Meanings").

March 21 & 23 (FRIDAY): Hume on the Problem of Induction

Required Reading: *Enquiry* 4-6 & 9.

Optional Commentary: Millican, ch. 4 (Millican, "Hume's Sceptical Doubts concerning Induction").

March 26 & 28: Hume on Causation

Required Reading: *Enquiry* 7.

Optional Commentary: Millican, ch. 7 (Craig, "The Idea of Necessary Connexion") and ch. 9 (Blackburn, "Hume on Thick Connexions").

March 30 (FRIDAY): Hume on Liberty and Necessity

Required Reading: *Enquiry* 8.

Optional Commentary: Millican, ch. 10 (Botterill, "Hume on Liberty and Necessity").

****ESSAY 2 IS DUE FRIDAY MARCH 30****

April 2: Hume on Skepticism and Naturalism

Required Reading: *Enquiry* 12.

Optional Commentary: Millican, ch. 14 (Norton, "Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy").

April 4: Reid's "Common Sense" Response to Humean Skepticism

Required Reading: *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, Chapter 1 (pp. 11-24), Chapter 2 (pp. 25-45), Chapter 5 (pp. 54-76), and Chapter 6, sections 20-21 (pp. 167-178). Selections are on the website.
Optional Commentary: James van Cleve, "Reid's Theory of Perception."

April 9: Reid on Freedom and Necessity

Required Reading: *Essays on the Active Powers*, Essay 1, Chapters 1 and 5-7 (pp. 7-13 and 27-45) and Essay 4, Chapters 1-2, 4, 6-8 (pp. 196-206, 213-221, and 228-243). Selections are on the website.
Optional Commentary: William Rowe, "Reid's Theory of Freedom and Responsibility."

April 11: Kant's Project

Required Reading: *Prolegomena* Preface (GH pp. 5-14), *Critique of Pure Reason* Preface to the Second edition (GH pp. 139-153).

April 13 (FRIDAY): Kant on the Possibility of Metaphysics as Synthetic A Priori Propositions

Required Reading: *Prolegomena*, Preamble §§1-3 (GH pp. 15-23) and *General Questions* §§4-5 (GH pp. 24-31).

****RE-WRITE ESSAY 2 IS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 13****

April 16: Kant on Space as an A Priori Form of Intuition

Required Reading: *Prolegomena*, First Part §§6-13 and Notes (GH pp. 32-45); *Critique of Pure Reason*: selections from *Transcendental Doctrine of Elements* (GH pp. 156-160).

April 18: Kant's Removal of Hume's Doubt: Foundations of Natural Science

Required Reading: *Prolegomena*, Second Part §§14-39 (GH 46-78)
Optional Commentary: Michael Friedman, "Causal Laws and the Foundations of Natural Science."

April 20 (FRIDAY): Kant on Metaphysics and Transcendental Idealism

Required Reading: *Prolegomena*, Third Part (GH pp. 79-115) and *Solution* (GH pp. 116-122).

****EXERCISE 2 IS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 20 ****

April 23: Shepherd on Cause and Effect – Saving Reason and Realism

Required Reading: *An Essay upon the Relation of Cause and Effect*, Advertisement to the Reader (pp. v-vii), Chapter 2.2 (pp. 33-63), Chapter 2.3 (pp. 63-68), and Chapter 3.1 (pp. 99-114).

Recommended Commentary: Martha Brandt Bolton, "Causality and Causal Induction: The Necessitarian Theory of Lady Mary Shepherd."

April 25: Shepherd on the External World – Saving Reason and Realism

Required Reading: *An Essay on the Perception of an External Universe*, Preface (pp. xi-xvi), Chapter 0 (pp. 1-12), Chapter 1.1 (pp. 3-18 only), Chapter 1.2.5 & 7 (pp. 29-35 & 37-38), Chapter 4.4 (pp. 115-122), Chapter 5 (pp. 123-132), and Essay 7 (pp. 314-324)

May 12: FINAL EXAM 9 a.m.