

Philosophy 555: Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume
Fall Semester 2008
Monday 6-9, 241 Sparks Building

Instructor

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Overview of the Course

The beginning of the seventeenth century witnesses a profound transformation in the way that Europeans understand the world and human knowledge. The Copernican Revolution (d. 1543) and the work of Kepler (d. 1630) and Galileo (d. 1642) set the stage for the Scientific Revolution. Luther (d. 1546) and Calvin (d. 1564) inaugurated the Protestant Revolution within European Christianity. And Cromwell (d. 1658), along with restive nobles and a rising mercantile bourgeoisie in many countries, called the European monarchy into question as well as the feudalism on which it rested. This metaphysical revolution was oddly abstract and concrete at the same time.

Descartes' first two *Meditations* change Western philosophy forever by offering consciousness itself (apart from any of the objects of consciousness) as a philosophical topic. There is an almost obsessive tendency in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to approach philosophically things that cannot be grasped with the senses: consciousness itself, space and time, force and causal connection, the infinite (including of course God) and infinitesimal. Sense perception is subordinated to an aetherialized reason.

At the same time, there is a resurrection of materialism, abetted by anti-religious sentiment, the re-editing of classical Epicurean texts in Greek and Latin, and the growing conviction that terrestrial phenomena can be explained by sub-microscopic material structures and that the heavens are no different in principle from the earth. Sense perception is thus given precedence over a reason that is only a kind of summation of material states. Leibniz reads both Descartes and Locke, Locke fails to respond to the young Leibniz but Berkeley reads Leibniz and Malebranche, Hume responds to Descartes, Berkeley, and Locke, and Kant (whom we shall not read in this course) tries to circumvent and encompass them all. Despite the Kantian synthesis, we are left with an unresolved tug of war between the abstract and the concrete, evident in both logical positivism and phenomenology.

We will also be studying methods of scholarship: how texts are edited and translated, how traditions of scholarship are created and revised, and how we ourselves can make good use of the print and electronic resources offered by the libraries at University Park. Work on the final paper will begin early in the semester. Students will share information about their bibliographical searches and the development of their topics, give 60 minute presentations of their papers at the end of the semester, and meet with the instructor for guidance. We will meet with the Philosophy Librarian Daniel Mack. Papers that involve some work with primary sources are encouraged, as well as papers that involve a "grandfather" set of secondary sources. Most students will use at least one primary or secondary source in a foreign language.

Books

René Descartes, *Meditations, Objections and Replies*. R. Ariew and D. Cress, eds. (Hackett, 2006)

G. W. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*. R. Ariew and D. Garber, eds. (Hackett, 1991)

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. K. P. Winkler, ed. (Hackett, 1996)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. P. Millican, ed. (Oxford UP, 2007)

Class Attendance

A student should attend every class for which the course is scheduled, and should be held responsible for all work covered in the courses taken. The instructor will provide, within reason, opportunity to make up work for students who miss class for illness, a death in the family, musical and athletic travel, and field trips for other classes.

Instruction Assessments and Evaluations

The instructor will distribute assessment questionnaires at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the semester, to monitor instruction apropos both students and instructor, since everyone in the classroom a responsibility for its success. Midsemester evaluations of first and second semester students and provisional students will be filled out by the instructor during the sixth week of the semester. End of semester course evaluations (SRTEs) will be filled out by students in the last week of the semester.

Policies

Non-Discrimination Statement: The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA. 16802; Tel. (814) 863 0471.

Academic Integrity: Definition and expectations: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at the Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. To protect the rights and maintain the trust of honest students and support appropriate behavior, faculty and administrators should regularly communicate high standards of integrity and reinforce them by taking reasonable steps to anticipate and deter acts of dishonesty in all assignments. At the beginning of each course, the instructor must provide students with a statement clarifying the application of University and College academic integrity policies to that course.

Schedule of Readings:

- Aug. 25 Introduction to 17th and early 18th c. European philosophy.
Descartes=*Meditations*, I and II. We will read and discuss them in class.
- Labor Day
- Sept. 8 Descartes, *Meditations*, III and IV. Fourth Objections and Replies (Arnauld).
- Sept. 15 Descartes, *Meditations*, V and VI. Third Set of Objections with Replies (Hobbes).
- Sept. 22 Fifth Objections and Replies, with Appendix (Gassendi).
- Sept. 29 Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*.
- Oct. 6 Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*. First pass at paper topics, to distinguish “ballparks” from “topics,” as well as some discussion of bibliography.
- Oct. 13 Leibniz, “On the Ultimate Origination of Things,” *Monadology*. ERI
- Oct. 20 Leibniz, “Preface to the *New Essays*.” Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I and Book II through sec. xvii. ERII
- Oct. 27 Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book III, through sec. vi, and Book IV, through sec. vi. ERIII
- Nov. 3 Meeting with Daniel Mack, Philosophy Librarian, to discuss specific problems relating to bibliography and development of topics. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, sec. xviii-xxxiii.
- Nov. 10 Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. I-VII.
- Nov. 17 Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. VIII-XI.
- Thanksgiving Holiday
- Dec. 1 Student presentations.
- Dec. 8 Student presentations.

Final paper is due in my office by the end of December 17. Your grade is determined by your bibliographical search, your 3 essay reviews and topic drafts (30%); your seminar presentation (20%); and your final 20 page research paper (50%). I encourage you to think of this paper as the draft of an article, and will be glad to help anyone revise a paper to be sent out for publication.

What is an Essay Review?

To write an essay review, choose an article from a significant journal pertinent to the study of early modern philosophy (see below). Read the article and then write a one or two page review of it, with three paragraphs:

Par. 1. Give a summary of the argument of the essay.

Par. 2. Locate the essay in the scholarly conversation: the footnotes are your guideline. You may want to take a look at some of the collections of essays or monographs the footnotes point to, in order to see a bigger picture.

Par. 3. Evaluate the essay in terms of its faithfulness to the texts, its responsiveness to scholarly context, its consistency, its use of textual evidence, its fidelity to certain philosophical ideas, and so forth. This is your chance to be critical, as long as you give good grounds for your criticism.

One of the essays you use for your final paper should be in a foreign language; if this is a problem for you, come in and talk to me.

Studia Cartesiana

Studia Leibnitiana

Also, Acts, Internazionaler Leibniz-Kongress I - VIII

Journal of the History of Ideas

Journal of the History of Philosophy

British Journal for the History of Philosophy

Studies in History and Philosophy of Science

Midwest Studies in Philosophy

Southern Journal of Philosophy

History of Philosophy Quarterly

Revista di Storia della Filosofia

Studi Filosofici

Revista di Filosofia

Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofia

Revue Internationale de Philosophie

Revue d'Histoire des Sciences

Archives de Philosophie

Internationale Zeitschrift fuer Philosophie

Mind

Monist

Journal of Philosophy

Philosophical Quarterly

Philosophical Review