

PHILOSOPHY 8: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY - SELF AND WORLD

Harvard University

Spring Term 2020: MW(F) 10:30-11:45

Emerson Hall 305

TEACHING STAFF

Course Head

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Teaching Fellows: TBD

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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 either in their entirety (Descartes and Hume) or at least a significant chunk (Kant and Shepherd), and so it is worth buying the text if you are able (if you are not able, please talk with the teaching staff to explore other options). These texts are available through the Coop (link [here](#)) 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, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. & ed. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge), abbreviated GW below. ISBN-13: 978-052165729
Mary Shepherd, *Selected Writings*, ed. D. Boyle (Imprint Academic). ISBN-13: 978-1845409890

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 as 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, which can be purchased through the Coop link above.

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
Margaret Cavendish, *Essential Writings*, ed. David Cunniff (Oxford). ISBN: 978-0190664060
Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Deep Origins of Consciousness* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). ISBN-13: 978-0374227760

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 through 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 31****

Writing. You will write **4 short assignments, 1 essay** (1250 words), and a **re-write of the essay** (1250 words). The point of each short assignment is to hone a particular philosophical skill or writing skill. The essay puts those skills to practice in the writing of a short philosophy paper. You will receive comments and advice, but no actual grade, on the essay. 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 re-write will be graded. The tentative due dates for the short assignments are **February 14, February 28, March 12, and April 29**. The tentative due dates for the essay and re-write are **April 3 and April 17**. They are due in the dropbox for your section on the website by **9:00 p.m.** on the due date.

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 Chandler Hatch. 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 8**. 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: Short assignments (10% each); essay (0%); essay re-write (25%); final exam (25%); section participation (10%). Note, again, that you will not be graded on first version of the 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. You may not re-write the re-write!*

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 not be tolerated. 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 27 (M): Introduction, A Changing World View

DESCARTES

January 29 (W): 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).

Strongly Encouraged Reading:

Rachel Aviv, "[What does it mean to die?](#)" *The New Yorker* January 29, 2018.

Robert D. Truog, "[The 50-Year Legacy of the Harvard Report on Brain Death](#)" *Viewpoint* 320(4) (2018).

Robert D. Truog, "[Defining Death--Making Sense of the Case of Jahi McMath](#)" *Viewpoint* 319(18) (2018)

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, ch. 1.

***** WE WILL SECTION FOR THE COURSE ONLINE ON FRIDAY, JAN 31*****

February 3 (M): 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”).

February 5 (W): 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 10 (M): 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 12 (W): 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 14 (FRIDAY): Proof for the Existence of God

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 3 & 4, Objections & Replies for M3 & M4 (CSM pp. 86-105, 131-135); *Principles* Part I.17-27 and Part II.21 (CSM pp. 165-169 and 199).

Optional Commentary: Hatfield, chs. 5 & 7; Schechtman articles on the website; 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”).

****SHORT ASSIGNMENT 1 IS DUE FRIDAY FEBRUARY 14****

February 17: NO CLASS (President’s Day)

February 19 (W): Essence and Existence of Body

Required Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 5 (CSM pp. 105-110); *Discourse on Method* Parts 5-6 (CSM pp. 40-56); *Principles of Philosophy* Part I sections 53 & 68-69, Part II all selections, Part IV sections 199-207 (CSM pp. 189-199, 207-212). Also extra selections from *Principles* Part 2 on Canvas.

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 21 (FRIDAY): 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 24 (M): 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).

February 26 (W): 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."

**** SHORT ASSIGNMENT 2 IS DUE FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28****

March 2 (M): Elisabeth of Bohemia and Anne Conway on Mind-Body Interaction

Required Reading: Correspondence with Princess Elisabeth (on website); Anne Conway, *The Principles of the most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, VII.1 (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)

March 4 (W): NO CLASS**March 6 (F): 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."

March 9 (M): Cavendish's Materialism – Self-Moving, Animate, Sentient, Knowing

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 11 (W): Cavendish's Theory of Mind - Material, Composite, 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; extra selections on website. Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds*, ch. 4.

**** SHORT ASSIGNMENT 3 IS DUE THURSDAY MARCH 12****

March 16 & 18: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

HUME

March 23 (M): Hume's Science of the Mind

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

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

March 25 (W) & 30 (M): Hume on the Problem of Induction

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

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

April 1 (W) & 3 (FRIDAY): 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").

**** ESSAY IS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 3****

April 6 (M): Hume on Liberty and Necessity

Required Reading: *Enquiry* 8.

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

April 8 (W): Hume on Skepticism and Naturalism

Required Reading: *Enquiry* 12.

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

REACTIONS TO HUME

April 13 (M): Kant's Project

Required Reading: *Critique of Pure Reason* Preface to A & B editions (GW pp. 99-124); *Prolegomena* Preface.

Optional Commentary: Gardner, chs. 1-3.

April 15 (W): Synthetic A Priori Propositions

Required Reading: *Critique of Pure Reason* Introduction to B edition (GW pp. 136-152); *Prolegomena* Preface (see Additional Readings box on Syllabus page of website).

Optional Commentary: Gardner, chs. 1-3.

****RE-WRITE OF ESSAY IS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 17****

April 17 (FRIDAY) and 20 (M): Transcendental Aesthetic, Sensible Conditions on Experience

Required Reading: *Critique* Transcendental Aesthetic as in the B edition, §§1-3, 6-8 (GW pp. 172-178; 180-192); *Prolegomena*, “The Main Transcendental Question: First Part” §§6-13 (GH 32-38).

Optional Commentary: Gardner, chs. 4-5.

April 22 (W): Transcendental Logic, Conceptual Conditions on Experience

Required Reading: *Critique* Introduction to the Idea of a Transcendental Logic (GW pp. 193-200), Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding (GW pp. 204-218).

Optional Commentary: Gardner, ch. 6

April 24 (FRIDAY): The Removal of Hume’s Doubt & Foundations for Natural Science

Required Reading: *Prolegomena* §§27-30 (see Additional Readings box on Syllabus page of website); *Critique* Principles of a Transcendental Deduction in General & Transition to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories (GW pp. 219-226), The B Deduction (GW pp. 245-266)

Optional Commentary: Michael Friedman, “Causal Laws and the Foundations of Natural Science.”

April 27 (M) and 29 (W): Shepherd on Causation – Saving Reason and Realism

Required Reading: *Selected Writings*, Chapter 1 (Boyle pp. 29-91).

Recommended Commentary: Martha Brandt Bolton, “Lady Mary Shepherd and David Hume on Cause and Effect.”

****SHORT ASSIGNMENT 4 IS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 29****