

PHILOSOPHY 18: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

MATTHEW SILVERSTEIN

SPRING 2009

CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will take a historical approach to the introduction to philosophy. In particular, we will be focusing on five European philosophers who lived and wrote during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: René Descartes, John Locke, Samuel Clarke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. Through their writings, we will trace and study philosophical arguments and debates concerning the possibility and extent of our knowledge of the external world, the nature of the self, the existence of God, the objectivity of morality, and the possibility of free will.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be five writing assignments: three short expository essays (2–3 pages each); one longer, critical essay (6–8 pages); and a final exam. Preparation and active participation also count towards your grade. If it becomes clear during the course of the semester that students are not keeping up with the reading, there will be short pop quizzes at the beginning of each class. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

10%	Short essay 1
10%	Short essay 2
10%	Short essay 3
30%	Long essay
30%	Final exam
10%	Preparation and participation

Active participation is an important part of any philosophy class. Philosophy is a conversational discipline: you are not doing philosophy if you are not participating in the conversation.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Papers. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, you will be penalized for late work. Papers that are submitted late and without an extension will be marked down $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade (from A- to

B+, for example) for every day of lateness. If there are special circumstances (sporting events, family emergencies, dire illness), please contact me *before the paper is due* to arrange an extension.

Rewrites. You will have the opportunity to rewrite all of your short essays as well as your long essay. (You are never required to rewrite an assignment.) Rewrites are due one week after the graded original is returned to you. Your grade for that assignment will be the average of your grades on the original and the rewrite. Papers that are submitted late and without an extension may not be rewritten under any circumstances.

COURSE WEBSITE

The course website can be reached by logging in to the Amherst College website and selecting “Early Modern Philosophy” under the “My Courses” heading on the “My Amherst” tab. The site can also be reached directly at the following URL: <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/0809s/PHIL/PHIL-18-0809s>.

COURSE BOOKS

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*
Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*
Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*
Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

Books are available at Amherst Books (8 Main Street).

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments should be completed by the date under which they are listed.

January 26 - Introductions

January 28 - Descartes: Skepticism and the *Cogito*

Meditations, Meditation 1 (pp. 12–15)

Meditations, Meditation 2 (first six paragraphs only) (pp. 16–18)

Meditations, Objections and Replies (*Cogito ergo sum*) (pp. 68–9)

Principles of Philosophy, Part I, section 7 (handout)

February 2 - Descartes: Self and Substance

Meditations, Meditation 2 (pp. 16–23)

Meditations, Meditation 3 (first twelve paragraphs only) (pp. 24–27)

Meditations, Objections and Replies (The Piece of Wax, Innate Ideas) (pp. 76–79)

Principles of Philosophy, Part I, sections 51–53 (handout)

February 4 - Descartes: The Existence of God

Meditations, Meditation 4 (pp. 37–43)

Meditations, Meditation 5 (pp. 44–49)

Meditations, Objections and Replies (Whether God's Essence ...) (pp. 95–102)

February 9 - Descartes: Rationalism and the Cartesian Circle

Meditations, Meditation 6 (pp. 50–62)

Meditations, Objections and Replies (Clear and Distinct Perception) (pp. 102–106)

February 9 - SHORT ESSAY 1 DUE (midnight)

February 11 - Locke: Empiricism

Essay, Book I, chapters I–II (pp. 4–14)

Essay, Book II, chapter I, sections 1–5, 24 (pp. 33–35, 39)

Essay, Book II, chapter II (pp. 40–41)

Essay, Book II, chapter VI (pp. 44–45)

Essay, Book II, chapter IX, sections 1–4 (pp. 56–57)

Essay, Book II, chapter XII (pp. 66–68)

February 16 - Locke: Primary and Secondary Qualities

Essay, Book II, chapter VIII, sections 1, 7–25 (pp. 47, 48–56)

Essay, Book II, chapter IX, section 8 (p. 58)

February 18 - Locke: Substance, Mind, and Cause

Essay, Book II, chapter XXI, section I (p. 93)

Essay, Book II, chapter XXII, section II (p. 117)

Essay, Book II, chapter XXIII (pp. 117–129)

Essay, Book II, chapter XXV (pp. 129–132)

Essay, Book II, chapter XXVI, section I (p. 132)

February 23 - Locke: Knowledge and Perception

Essay, Book IV, chapter I, sections 1–2 (p. 224)

Essay, Book IV, chapter II, sections 1–7, 14–15 (pp. 228–231, 233–234)

Essay, Book IV, chapter III, sections 1–6 (pp. 235–239)

Essay, Book IV, chapter IV, sections 1–8 (pp. 250–253)

Essay, Book IV, chapter IX (p. 274)

Essay, Book IV, chapter X, sections 1–7, 19 (pp. 275–278, 283–284)

Essay, Book IV, chapter XI (pp. 284–292)

Essay, Book IV, chapter XV (pp. 302–305)

February 25 - Clarke: Moral Realism and Moral Rationalism

A Discourse of Natural Religion (handout) (pp. 191–212)

February 27 - SHORT ESSAY 2 DUE (5:00 PM)

March 2 - Clarke: Morality and God

A Discourse of Natural Religion (handout) (pp. 212–225)

- March 4 - Hume: The Priority of Impressions
Treatise, Book I, part I, sections 1–6 (pp. 1–16)
Treatise, Book I, part II, sections 1–3 (pp. 23–31)
- March 9 - Hume: Causation and Induction
Treatise, Book I, part III, sections 1–6, 12, 14 (pp. 50–65, 89–97, 105–116)
- March 11 - Hume: Natural Belief
Treatise, Book I, part III, sections 7–10, 12–13 (pp. 65–85, 89–104)
- March 23 - Hume: Bodies and External Existence
Treatise, Book I, part II, section 6 (pp. 48–49)
Treatise, Book I, part IV, section 1–2 (pp. 121–144)
- March 25 - Hume: Skepticism
Treatise, Book I, part IV, section 7 (pp. 171–178)
- March 30 - Hume: Reason and Passions; Virtue and Vice
Treatise, Book II, part I, section 1 (pp. 181–182)
Treatise, Book II, part III, sections 1–3 (pp. 257–268)
Treatise, Book III, part I, sections 1–2 (pp. 293–306)
- March 27 - SHORT ESSAY 3 DUE (5:00 PM)
- April 1 - Kant: Foundations
Prolegomena, sections 1–5 (pp. 15–31)
- April 6 - Kant: The Possibility of Mathematics
Prolegomena, sections 6–13 (end before note 1) (pp. 32–38)
- April 8 - Kant: Critical Idealism
Prolegomena, section 13, notes I–III (pp. 38–45)
- April 13 - Kant: The Possibility of Metaphysics
Prolegomena, sections 14–18, 20–23 (pp. 46–50, 52–58)
- April 15 - Kant: Substance and Cause
Prolegomena, sections 27–33, 35–36 (pp. 62–67, 68–72)
- April 20 - Kant: Self and God
Prolegomena, sections 40–49, 55, 57, 59 (pp. 79–89, 99–100, 102–108, III–III2)
- April 22 - Kant: The Good Will and Moral Worth
Groundwork, Preface and Section I (first half) (pp. 1–12)
- April 24 - LONG ESSAY DUE (5:00 PM)
- April 27 - Kant: Moral Worth and the Moral Law
Groundwork, Section I (second half) (pp. 12–18)

April 29 - Kant: The Categorical Imperatives

Groundwork, Section II (pp. 19–51)

May 4 - Kant: Freedom

Groundwork, Section III (first half) (pp. 52–59)

May 6 - Kant: Conclusion

Groundwork, Section III (second half) (pp. 59–66)