

Philosophy 210 & 310: Early Modern Philosophy
Winter 2008 – MWF 9:30-10:50 – Roush Hall Rm. 424
Course Syllabus

Course Overview and Objectives

This is a course in the history of European philosophy from the middle of the 17th Century to the end of the 18th Century, one of the most fertile and important periods of philosophic thought in the history of Western Civilization. The same era that gave rise to modern political, economic, and scientific ideals saw the most important transformation of philosophy since the time of the ancient Greeks in the 5th and 4th Centuries B.C.E. We will focus our attention on five of the most important philosophers of the time:

René Descartes (French, 1596-1650)
 Gottfried Leibniz (German, 1646-1716)
 John Locke (English, 1632-1704)
 George Berkeley (Irish, 1685-1753), and
 David Hume (Scottish, 1711-1776)

As a result of taking this course students will

- Develop an understanding of the central problems of Early Modern philosophy
- Hone their critical reading skills as a result of close analysis and critique of the central texts of Early Modern philosophy
- Hone their abilities as philosophical writers by engaging in a series of writing assignments based on the problems and texts which are at the center of this course
- Learn how to identify, formulate, investigate, and evaluate answers to, philosophical problems.

Instructor Information

Professor Andrew P. Mills
 Office: Towers Hall 323
 Office Phone: 823-1368 (leave voicemail if I'm not there)
 Winter Quarter Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12, and by appointment.
 E-mail: amills@otterbein.edu

Texts

All of the course readings are available on Blackboard, but there is one text to purchase—a text which we'll use to develop our philosophical writing and thinking skills

Hugo Bedau, *Thinking and Writing about Philosophy*. Boston: Bedford and St. Martin's Press, 1996. ISBN 9780312100827

If you are registered for Philosophy 310, there are two additional texts:

- Rebecca Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew who Gave us Modernity*. New York: Schocken Books, 2006.
- Matthew Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic: Leibniz, Spinoza and the Fate of God in the Modern World* New York: W.W. Norton, 2007.

Course Requirements

This is a text-based course, and it is imperative that you do the assigned reading (preferably twice) before coming to class each day. If you don't do the reading, you will not learn the material, and you will find the lectures much more difficult to follow. I have provided a number of study questions to help you focus your reading on the important themes.

The second imperative is that you have an email account, and regular, reliable access to the internet. All of the course materials will be on the Blackboard site, and e-mail is the best and quickest way I know of to communicate with all of you, and for you all to communicate with each other. I will make regular updates to the course website, and you should get in the habit of checking it daily. If you do not have an email account, visit the Information Technology department, and get set up. It is easy to do, and it is free.

Here is a list of the graded work in this class. The details of each assignment are available on the assignment handout itself.

Assignment 1:	230 pts.	Daily Reading Assignments
Assignment 2:	110 pts.	“René and Me” paper
Assignment 3:	75 pts.	Response to Classmate’s “René and Me” paper
Assignment 4:	150 pts.	“Making Room for Freedom” paper
Assignment 5:	110 pts.	“An Empiricist and Me” paper
Assignment 6:	225 pts.	“An Early Modern Problem” paper
Assignment 7:	100 pts.	Reflective Course Portfolio

Philosophy 310 Meetings

Students enrolled in Philosophy 310 will meet an extra hour each week (Thursdays 3-3:50) to discuss the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza.

Participation

Because of the small size of this class and the collaborative nature of our enterprise, participation will be crucially important in this course—more so than in many other courses. I will expect all of you to attend class every day and be active participants in the discussion. Being a participant in class requires more than doing the reading and being in your seat. It requires engaging with me and the rest of the class as we struggle to work through these difficult topics.

Here is how participation will be evaluated. Twice during the course you will be asked to evaluate the participation of yourself and your colleagues. Based on these evaluations points either will be added to or subtracted from your course grade. The details of this are explained on the Participation Handout.

Grades

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

935+	A	800-834	B-	666-699	D+
900-934	A-	766-799	C+	635-665	D
866-899	B+	735-765	C	600-634	D-
835-865	B	700-734	C-	0-599	F

Late Work

Work turned in late without prior approval from me will be penalized 10% for each day it is late. Read that sentence again. If you foresee the impossibility of getting your assignments in on time *you must see me before the relevant due date*, so we can make an arrangement. Do not come to me afterwards with an

excuse for why you missed the assignment. I will, of course, respect doctor's notes, and absences due to college-sponsored activities (such as theater performances and athletic events) but I will deduct 10% per day from late work if you haven't informed me ahead of time of your absence.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

I strongly recommend that you review the College policy on plagiarism and cheating. It can be found in the Campus Life Handbook on pp. 61-2. Plagiarized work, or work which is the product of academic dishonesty, will receive a grade of 0 (zero) and will be reported to the Academic Dean's office. I have caught plagiarists in the past, and I can tell you that it is an unpleasant experience for me as well as for the students involved. Please don't do it. You should review the college policy on academic dishonesty, as well as the discussion of plagiarism in *The Everyday Writer*.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Otterbein College is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities have access to an education. In order to receive appropriate accommodations in my class, you must first be registered with the Office for Disability Services (x1618 or Lmonaghan@otterbein.edu). I strongly encourage you to schedule an individual meeting with me as early in the quarter as possible to discuss your needs and accommodation requests. If necessary, we can work cooperatively with the Disability Services Coordinator to determine optimal accommodations in this course.

One Last Thing about Reading and Writing Philosophy

You will notice that there is a fair bit of writing in this class. One cannot learn philosophy via multiple choice exams, but one must learn it by writing. If you can write well, you can think well. You should have, or have at your ready disposal, a good dictionary and a writer's aide, such as *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White. You will find these to be invaluable tools not only for this class, but for any class in which you are required to write essays. As you can tell from the above elaboration of the grades, 'grammar counts'. If your writing is sloppy, your reader cannot figure out what it is you are trying to say, and, as a result, you will likely get a low grade. In the age of computers and spell-checkers, there is no excuse for misspellings, but do not rely on spell-checkers alone. Proof-read your papers. You might find it helpful, when proof-reading, to read your paper aloud; often times one's ear can catch awkward prose better than one's eye can. When it comes to the peculiarities of reading philosophy, I cannot stress enough that almost every reading selection needs to be read more than once. And *not* with a highlighter pen. Take notes with a pen or pencil. Don't simply underline. This will be of almost no help to you. If you don't understand what you are reading, write down what obstacle you are confronting. Be an *active reader*. Talk back to the text. Ask it (and me!) questions. If there is a word you don't know, look it up in a dictionary. You will become better at reading philosophy once you start writing philosophy, so start writing as soon as you can.

Reading Schedule

Note: All Readings on Blackboard Course Page unless otherwise noted.

Week I		DUE
Jan 7	Introduction to the Course: The Philosophical Problems of Early Modern Philosophy	
9	Descartes Read: <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> : Dedication, Preface, and Meditation I	
11	Descartes Read: <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> : Meditation II	

Week II		
14	Descartes Read: <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> : Meditation III	
16	Descartes Read: <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> : Meditation VI (paragraphs 1-10)	
18	Descartes Read: <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> : Meditation VI (finish)	
Week III		
21	No School Today—Martin Luther King, Jr Day	
Tuesday 22		Assgn. 2
23	No Class Meeting Today	
25	No Class Meeting Today	Assgn. 3
Week IV		
28	Occasionalism and Pre-Established Harmony Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malebranche <i>The Search After Truth</i> Book VI, Part Two, Chapter 3 • Leibniz, <i>A New System of Nature</i> (selections) 	
30	Occasionalism and Pre-Established Harmony Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bayle, from ‘Rorarius’ in his <i>Historical and Critical Dictionary</i> • Leibniz, ‘Clarification of the Difficulties which Mr. Bayle Has Found in the New System of the Union of Soul and Body’ 	
Feb 1	Leibniz on Free Will Read: Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , 1-15	
Week V		
4	Leibniz on Free Will Read: Leibniz & Arnauld, selections from their correspondence	
6	No reading today—discuss Assignment 4	Assgn. 4
8	Locke Read: <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> Book I	
Week VI		
11	Locke Read: <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> Book II, i-vi	
13	Locke Read: <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> Book II, viii	
15	Locke Read: <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> Book II, xxiii	
Week VII		

18	Locke Read: <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> Book II, xxvii	
20	Berkeley Read: <i>Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous</i> , Preface & First Dialogue, 1-118	
22	No Class Meeting Today	
Week VIII		
25	Berkeley Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous</i>, First Dialogue, finish • <i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i>, Part I, 1-24 	
27	Berkeley Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous</i>, Second Dialogue • <i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i>, 25-33 	
29	Berkeley Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous</i>, Third Dialogue • <i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i>, 137-145 	
Week IX		
Mar 3	No reading today—discuss Assignment 5	Assgn. 5
5	Hume Read: <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , II-III	
7	Hume Read: <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , IV	
Week X		
10	Hume Read: <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , V	
12	Hume Read: <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , VII	
14	Hume Read: <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , VIII	
Exam Week		
Monday 17	5 p.m.	Assgn. 6
Tuesday 18	10:00 a.m.	Assgn. 7

310 Meetings

Reading Schedule

For 10 January: Read Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic*, Chs. 1-5

For 17 January: Read Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic*, Chs. 6-10

For 31 January: Read Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic*, Chs. 11-14

For 7 February: Read Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic*, Chs 15-18

For 14 February: Read Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza*, Chs I-III

For 28 February: Read Goldstein, *Betraying Spinoza*, Chs IV-VI

6 & 13 March meeting topics to be determined.

Focus of the 310 meetings

As you are doing the reading, please focus on two issues.

First, try to discern the problems that the people in these books are confronted by and the ways in which they attempt to solve them. You should, of course, focus your attention on the problems that Spinoza is confronting, but you should also think about the problems that Leibniz is confronting, as well as those confronted by the other people in the books. Come to the meetings with some thoughts about the problems the people are dealing with and how, if at all, they attempt to solve them.

Second, think about what these books tell you about what it means to be a philosopher. What do we learn about what philosophers do, what motivates people to do philosophy, what different approaches to philosophy philosophers take? What do we learn about the challenges and benefits of being a philosopher? Think about to what extent the pictures painted of philosophy in these books squares with your view of what it means to be a philosopher, and with your views about how philosophy gets done. To what extent do you, as a philosopher, face the same issues that these philosophers face?