

# Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy

Winter 2008  
University of Michigan

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## Course Description

In this course, we will investigate how early modern philosophers addressed a cluster of issues concerning unity, individuation, identity over time, and material constitution. An underlying theme of the course will be how our philosophers engaged certain traditional problems in metaphysics while rejected most of the traditional ‘tools’ – i.e. spooky scholastic things – for answering the problems. Emphasis will be placed on close and careful reading of the texts and rigorous historical and philosophical analysis of those texts. In some cases, I have paired primary sources with some recent secondary literature.

## Texts

I have ordered several books for the course.

- (1) Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford UP.  
I have ordered the ‘Nidditch edition’ (i.e. the best), but any *unabridged* edition will do.
- (2) Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*. Hackett.
- (3) Descartes, *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 vols. Cambridge UP.
- (4) Boyle, *Selected Philosophical Writings of Robert Boyle*. Hackett.

Other readings will be made available electronically. (indicate below by \*)

## Requirements

*For undergraduates:*

- (1) Term paper (10-15 pages)
- (2) Occasional short writing assignments (1-2 pages)
- (3) Participation in discussion.

*For graduate students*

- (1) Term paper with annotated bibliography.
- (2) Occasional short writing assignments (1-2 pages).
- (3) Participation in discussion.

(4) Seminar presentation. Consider these *serious* 5-pages papers in which you address some issue from that week's reading. Please email the other seminar participants the day before to tell them what you'll be focusing on.

**Schedule** (tentative)

**January 3: Quick introduction**

**January 8 & 10: Scholastic Views**

Peter King, "The Problem of Individuation in the Middle Ages"\*

Bob Pasnau, "Form, Substance, and Mechanism"\*

Some of my translations of late medieval/scholastic authors\*

**January 15 & 17: Descartes: Introduction to his metaphysics and ontology**

CSM I 193-247

Vere Chappell, "Descartes' Ontology"\*

**January 22 & 24: Descartes: Material substance and the unity and persistence of individual bodies**

CSM I 210-216, 223-240

CSM II 9-11, 16-36, 50-62, 113-120, 159

CSMK 154-155, 193-194, 201-204, 360-367

Matt Stuart, "Descartes' Extended Substances." In *New Essays on the Rationalists*\*

Dan Kaufman, "Cartesian Substances, Individual Bodies, and Corruptibility \*

Dan Kaufman, "Annihilation, Separability, and the Real Distinctions Between Cartesian Corporeal Substances"\*

**January 29 & 31: Descartes: the unity of human beings (or how to be *one* without being *one substance*)**

CSM I 193-197, 208-217, 141, 223-224, 279-280, 294-300, 339-340

CSM II 16-23, 50-62, 85-86, 95-96, 113-120, 154-162, 297-300

CSMK 200-201, 205-209, 217-220, 226-229, 241-244, 254-255, 279-281, 357- 358, selection from Letter to Father Dinet (C)

Paul Hoffman, 1999. "Cartesian Composites." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37: 251-270.\*

Dan Kaufman, "Descartes on Composites, Incomplete Substances, and Kinds of Unity." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*\*

## **February 5 & 7: Leibniz (middle period)**

Ariew & Garber pp. 35-68, 77-90, 103-105, 138-145;

Bob Sleigh, selection from *Leibniz & Arnauld*\*  
Dan Garber, "Leibniz and...: the middle years"\*  
Paul Lodge, Leibniz's Notion of an Aggregate"\*  
Maybe something from Cover & Hawthorne?\*

## **February 12 & 14: 17th-Century Atomist Views: Charleton, Boyle**

Selections from Charleton's *Physiologia*\*  
Boyle's *On the Origin of Forms & Qualities*, TBA\*  
Maybe Chad Vance's paper?\*

## **February 19 & 21: Spinoza's Monism and Individuals**

*Ethics* part 1,

Selections from *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy*... and his letters.

Michael Della Rocca, "Spinoza's Argument for Monism"\*  
Charlie Huenemann, "Spinoza and Prime Matter"\*

## **March 4: Hobbes' Anti-Realism**

Hobbes, *On Body* 2.7-8, 2.11  
Chapters 5 & 12 of 'Anti-White'

## **March 6: Malebranche's view and Digby's Neo-Aristotelianism**

Malebranche, *Search after Truth* 6.2.9  
Digby, *On body* (selections)

## **March 11 & 13: Locke on Individuation**

Locke, *Essay* 2.27, 3.1-3, 3.6

Dan Kaufman, "Locke on Individuation and the Corpuscular Basis of Kinds." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2007)\*  
Chris Conn, "1999. "Two Arguments for Lockean Four-Dimensionalism." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7: 429-45.\*

## **March 18 & 20: Locke and his Critics on Personal Identity**

Locke 2.27, and Selections from correspondence with Stillingfleet  
Selection from Beconsall\*  
Selection from Sergeant\*

Selection from Reid\*

Kenneth Winkler, "Locke on Personal Identity"\*

**March 25 & 27: A prominent puzzle case: the resurrection of the same body**

Selections from Locke and Stillingfleet correspondence\*

Boyle, "Some Physico-Theological Considerations about the Possibility of the Resurrection"

Humphrey Hody, *The Resurrection of the (Same) Body Asserted* p. 184-197\*

Kenelm Digby, *Observations upon Religio Medici*. (1643)\*

Thomas Beconsall, *The Doctrine of a General Resurrection: Wherein the Identity of the Rising Body is asserted against the Socinians and Scepticks* p. 7-end\*

Dan Kaufman, "The Resurrection of the Same Body and the Ontological Status of Organisms: What Locke Should Have (and Could Have) Told Stillingfleet." *Contemporary Perspectives on Early Modern Philosophy*\*

**April 1 & 3: Actual vs. Potential parts**

Selections from Tom Holden's *The Architecture of Matter*\*  
Digby?

**April 8, 10, 15**

Seminar Presentations