

History of Modern Philosophy

Fall 2008

Professor Kaufman

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Office hours: TuTh 1-1:50, Th 3:30-4:15, and by appointment

Course Description

Some pretty important stuff happened in the 17th and 18th centuries. In this class we will discuss some of the more interesting important stuff that happened in philosophy (and natural science, which was still part of philosophy) during that time. It is impossible to do justice to all of the great philosophers of the period; so I have selected some that I hope will interest you. The course, however, will focus mostly on Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, and Hume. Unlike most courses on modern philosophy, emphasis will be placed on issues in metaphysics rather than epistemology, although issues in epistemology will come up. Among the issues we will address are the following: the nature of substance and whether there are substances of various kinds, unity and identity, essences and species, causation, the existence and nature of God, the origin of our ideas, knowledge and certainty, possibility and necessity, freedom, and perhaps some others. Our goal is to understand and critically evaluate each philosopher's work on their own terms.

Required Texts

René Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge Univ. Press)

Nicolas Malebranche, *Philosophical Selections* (Hackett)

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (any *unabridged* version is fine)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (same here)

Requirements

(1) Bi-weekly short papers.

Roughly 2 pages (typed, double-spaced) on an assigned topic.

Due 9/4, 9/18, 10/2, 10/16, 10/30, 11/13, 12/4. **Worth 50% of your final grade.**

(2) 1 longer paper

Roughly 7 pages in which you demonstrate rigorous analysis and argumentation concerning an extremely focused topic. Due the week before Thanksgiving break.

Worth 30% of your final grade.

(3) Cumulative Final Exam (as scheduled by the University).

Worth 20% of your final grade.

Schedule

(The readings listed below a particular date are to be *completed by that date*.)

* = electronic

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| August | |
| 26 No reading. | 28 Descartes 73-79, 123-126, 160-161 (1-6) |

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| September | |
| 2 Descartes 80-86, 126-131, 161-163 (7-11) | 4 Descartes 86-98, 131-133, 164 (13), 165-167 (16-22) Short paper due |
| 9 Descartes 98-105, 133-135, 167-175 (23-47) | 11 Descartes 105-110, 135-143, 164-165 (14-15) |
| 16 Descartes 110-122, 143-150, 175-189 (48-76) | 18 Descartes 175-189 (48-76) cont'd, 189-199 (1-23,64) Short paper due |
| 23 Spinoza* Selection from <i>Ethics</i> | 25 Leibniz* Correspondence with Arnauld* |
| 30 Leibniz* Cont'd | |

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| October | |
| | 2 Malebranche 92-127 Short paper due |
| 7 Malebranche 222-238 | 9 Yom Kippur. NO CLASS |
| 14 Malebranche 243-253, 260-268 | 16 Locke Book II, Chapters 1-7 Short paper due |
| 21 Locke (and Boyle*) Book II, Chapters 8-12 | 23 Locke Book II, Chapter 21 |
| 28 Locke Book II, Chapters 22-26, Berkeley selection* | 30 Locke Book II, Chapter 27 & Hobbes <i>De Corpore</i> * Short paper due |

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| November | |
| 4 Locke II.27 cont'd | 6 Locke Book III, Chapters 1-3, 6 |
| 11 Berkeley* | 13 Berkeley* |

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| | Short paper due |
| 18 Hume's <i>Enquiry</i> Sections 1 & 2 | 20 Hume's <i>Enquiry</i> Sections 3 & 4 |
| 25 NO CLASS | 27 NO CLASS |

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| December | |
| 2 Hume's <i>Enquiry</i> Sections 5 & 7 | 4 Hume 5 & 7 cont'd Short paper due |
| 9 Selection from Hume's <i>Treatise</i> on (personal) identity* | 11 Hume's <i>Enquiry</i> Section 12 |

Course Policies

(1) Be respectful to the other students in the class. Rudeness, such as eye-rolling, audible scoffing, interrupting, etc. will not be tolerated.

(2) Be respectful to me. I will attempt to be as respectful as possible to each student. I expect the same. Here are some examples of things I will not tolerate (if I notice them): sleeping in class, cell phone ringing, text-messaging, reading stuff not related to the course, talking while I am talking.

The reason why I will not tolerate these things, aside from the obvious, is simple: each of them is an unnecessary distraction. Teaching this stuff and addressing your questions/objections requires concentration. If your cell phone rings, you are preventing me from doing my job effectively, and no one should have to tolerate that. If you are *persistently* disruptive, I will seek your permanent dismissal from the course.

(3) If you are having a problem with me, please take it up with me first. You'll find that I am remarkably receptive to listening to your problems and trying to do something about them.

(4) I have no attendance policy. YOU NEVER HAVE TO COME TO CLASS. However, I am under absolutely no obligation to give you any information about the classes you missed.

(5) Late papers will not be accepted unless I have given permission prior to the date in question or you have a really good excuse accompanied by documentation.

(6) Don't cheat or plagiarize. PLEASE! What is plagiarism? According to CU, it is: "The attempt to represent the work of another as the product of one's own thought, whether the work is published or unpublished, or simply the work of a fellow student. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting oral or written materials without citation on an exam, term paper, homework, or other written materials or oral presentations for an academic requirement; submitting a paper which was purchased from a term paper service as your own work; submitting anyone else's paper as your own work." I will seek the most severe penalty for cheaters and/or plagiarists.