

Philosophy 3020: Modern Philosophy

UNC Charlotte, Spring 2018

Section 001, M/W 9:30-10:45am, Denny 216

Instructor: Prof. Trevor Pearce Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00pm, or by appt
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Description

This class is an overview of European philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, focusing on debates about knowledge and reality. We will start with Descartes' famous *Meditations* of 1641, in which he argues that we are more certain of our own thinking and of the existence of God than we are of the physical world. Next, we will read several authors who oppose Descartes' dualist account of mind and body: Elisabeth of Bohemia, who questions how the two can interact; Cavendish, who argues that nature is wholly material; Conway, who claims that spirit and body are one; and Leibniz, who says that their mutual relationship is arranged in advance by God. We will then examine the role and importance of *method* in early modern philosophy: Where does knowledge come from? What is the best way to obtain it? Finally, we will read books by three eighteenth-century philosophers—Berkeley, Hume, and Kant—who built on and challenged the views of their seventeenth-century predecessors. These thinkers focused on the problem of skepticism, seeking in various ways to overcome it.

Required Texts

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Cottingham, rev. ed. (Cambridge UP, 1996)
[ISBN #9780521558181]

George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Hackett, 1979)
[ISBN #9780915144617]

David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, rev. ed. (Hackett, 1993)
[ISBN #9780872202290]

Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Ellington, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 2002)
[ISBN #9780872205932]

All other texts are available on the course website at <https://canvas.uncc.edu/>.

Evaluation

5%	Participation	
10%	Attendance	
10%	Comparison (500 ± 100 words)	Due January 26
20%	Summaries	Every class beginning January 22
25%	Paper 1 (1200 ± 200 words)	Due February 23
30%	Paper 2 (1200 ± 200 words)	Due May 6

Your attendance grade is calculated by dividing attended classes by total classes. I automatically excuse two absences. Requests for additional excused absences due to medical emergencies, family emergencies, military orders, or court orders should be made to the Dean of Students Office (http://unccdsso.uncc.edu/academic_accommodations), and not to me directly.

'Participation' means making comments and asking questions that reflect your having read and thought about the text under discussion. I will call on individual students following the small-group discussion or the summary write-up. **You must bring a copy of the relevant text to each class**, or you will not be able to effectively participate.

For the comparison, your assignment is to compare and contrast the first two "Dwelling Places" of Teresa's *Interior Castle* with the first of Descartes's *Meditations*. How are the projects of Teresa and Descartes similar? How are they different? You should take as given that they are similar in some respects and different in others—**your task is to give textual evidence to support the specific similarities or differences that you have chosen to highlight.**

For the summaries, at the beginning of each class you will spend five minutes writing a paragraph that includes (a) the main claim or thesis of the reading for that day and (b) the arguments or evidence the author gives to support this claim or thesis. You may use books and notes. **I will collect and grade these summaries throughout the semester**, though not every class. If you arrive late, you must still hand in your summary at the same time as everyone else. Late summaries will not be accepted. Summaries submitted via e-mail will not be accepted. **Absence from class is not a valid excuse for not turning in a summary** unless you receive accommodation from the Dean of Students office (see link above). The lowest summary grade will be dropped.

Topics for Papers 1 & 2 will be circulated by e-mail on **February 14 and April 25**, respectively. I am happy to provide feedback on introductions or outlines if you allow me enough time. **Both papers must be submitted by 7pm on the due date at the Canvas site.** Papers that are too long or too short will be penalized a minimum of half a grade point. Late papers will be penalized half a grade point per day.

The use of cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class except in emergencies. Students are permitted to use computers during class for note-taking and other class-related work only.

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by written or e-mail notice.

University Policies

All students are required to read and abide by the Code of Student Academic Integrity. Violations of the Code of Student Academic Integrity, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code. The Code is available from the Dean of Students Office or at <http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/up-407>.

As a condition of taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review through VeriCite for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the UNC Charlotte VeriCite library solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

Students who miss classes, examinations or other assignments because of a religious practice or belief must provide reasonable notice of the dates of religious observances on which they will be absent by submitting a Request for Religious Accommodation Form (<http://goo.gl/I1Ncv0>) to the instructor prior to January 22, 2018.

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services (<http://ds.uncc.edu/>) and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Reading Schedule

PART 1: MIND & MATTER

Jan. 8 – **[NO CLASS]**

Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle*, First & Second Dwelling Places [1577]

Jan. 10 – **[NO CLASS]**

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 3-15 & 63-67 [1641]

Jan. 17 – **SNOW DAY**

Jan. 22 – **Meditation & Doubt**

[Discussion of the *Interior Castle* and the *Meditations*]

Jan. 24 – **Mind**

Descartes, pp. 16-23 & 68-77

Jan. 29 – **God**

Descartes, pp. 24-36 & 78-89

Jan. 31 – **Truth**

Descartes, pp. 37-43 & 90-94

Feb. 5 – **Ideas**

Descartes, pp. 44-49 & 95-106

Feb. 7 – **Mind & Body**

Descartes, pp. 50-62

Elisabeth & Descartes, [Soul & Body], pp. 61-73 of *The Correspondence of Princess Elisabeth...* [1643]

Feb. 12 – **Matter**

Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters*, excerpts (Preface; Part 1, Chapters 1, 35-37, 42; Part 2, Chapters 2-4, 18, 21-22, 29; Part 3, Chapter 16; Part 4, Chapters 3, 27, 32) [1664]

Feb. 14 – **Spirit**

Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, Chapters 7-8 [1670s]

Feb. 19 – **Soul & Body**

Leibniz, “New System of the Nature of Substances” pp. 10-20 of *Leibniz’s ‘New System’* [1695]

Leibniz & Damaris Masham, [Correspondence], pp. 203-225 of *Leibniz’s ‘New System’* [1704]

PART 2: METHOD

Feb. 21 – **New Tools**

Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, Book 1, Aphorisms 1-68 [1620]

Feb. 26 – **Experiment**

Robert Boyle, *Certain Physiological Essays*, Proemial Essay [1661]

Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, excerpts (Preface; Part 1, Chapters 2-3, 25, 32, 34; Part II, Chapters 1-2, 4) [1666]

Feb. 28 – **Hypotheses**

Isaac Newton, *The Principia*, Rules for the Study of Natural Philosophy & General Scholium [1713]

Émilie du Châtelet, *Foundations of Physics*, Chapter 4 [1740]

Mar. 12 – **Method**

Antoine Arnauld & Pierre Nicole, *Logic*, Part 4, Chapters 1-3 & 11 [1662]

Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 1, Definitions & Axioms & Propositions 1-15 [1677]

Mar. 14 – **Improvement**

Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Part 2, Chapter 3, Sections 1-4 [1697]

PART 3: SCEPTICISM

Mar. 19 – **Ideas**

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2, Chapters 1-9 [1690]

Mar. 21 – **Scepticism**

George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Dialogue 1 [1713]

Mar. 26 – **God**
Berkeley, Dialogue 2

Mar. 28 – **Objections & Replies**
Berkeley, Dialogue 3

Apr. 2 – **Sceptical Doubts**
Hume, Sections 4-5

Apr. 4 – **Liberty & Necessity**
Hume, Section 8

Apr. 9 – **Miracles**
Hume, Section 10

Apr. 11 – **Design & Providence**
Hume, Section 11

Apr. 16 – **Sceptical Philosophy**
Hume, Section 12

Apr. 18 – **Mathematics**
Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Preface, Preamble, & First Part [1783]

Apr. 23 – **Natural Science**
Kant, Second Part

Apr. 25 – **Metaphysics**
Kant, Third Part

Apr. 30 – **Bounds of Reason**
Kant, Conclusion, Solution, and Appendix