

PHIL 3020: Modern Philosophy

Dr. Trevor Pearce (tpearce6@uncc.edu)

Spring 2022 — T/Th 10:00–11:15am — Denny 205

Description

This class is an overview of European philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, focusing by necessity on three narrow topics: the relationship between mind and matter, debates over philosophic method, and the role of sympathy in ethics. We will start with René Descartes' argument that we are more certain of our own thinking than we are of the physical world. Next, we will read several authors who oppose Descartes' account of soul and body, including Elisabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway, and Anton Wilhelm Amo. We will then examine discussions of method in early modern philosophy, covering new experimental approaches, the role of logical reasoning, and the justification of our most basic concepts. We will finish the course with an investigation of the nature of sympathy, a key idea in eighteenth-century ethics.

Required Texts

Sophie de Grouchy, *Letters on Sympathy*, trans. Bergès (Oxford University Press, 2019). [online access to ebook via [Atkins Library](#)]

All other texts will be PDFs linked from the course website on [Canvas](#).

Evaluation

15%	Attendance and Participation	
25%	Summaries	
30%	Paper 1 (1200 ± 200 words)	Due on February 20
30%	Paper 2 (1200 ± 200 words)	Due on May 10

Your attendance grade (10%) is calculated by dividing attended classes by total classes. **I automatically excuse two absences.** Requests for additional excused absences due to illness, medical emergencies, personal or family emergencies, military orders, or court orders should be made to [Student Assistance and Support Services](#) and not to me directly.

‘Participation’ (5%) means making comments and asking questions that reflect your having read and thought about the text under discussion. **You must bring a copy of the relevant text to each class, or you will not be able to effectively participate.**

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 [Student Assistance and Support Services](#). **The lowest two summary grades will be dropped.**

Topics for Papers 1 & 2 will be circulated by e-mail on **February 10** and **April 28**, respectively. I am happy to provide feedback on introductions or outlines if you allow me enough time. Both papers must be submitted via [Canvas](#) by 11:59pm on the due date. 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. Papers will be graded anonymously when possible.

Class Policies

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 e-mail notice.

All students are required to read and abide by the [Code of Student Academic Integrity](#). Violations of the Code, including plagiarism, will result in disciplinary action as provided in the Code. Definitions and examples of plagiarism are set forth in the Code.

As a condition of taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to SimCheck for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the SimCheck reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. No student papers will be submitted to SimCheck without a student’s written consent and permission. If a student does not provide such written consent and permission, the instructor may: (i) require a short reflection paper on research methodology; (ii) require a draft bibliography prior to submission of the final paper; or (iii) require the cover page and first cited page of each reference source to be photocopied and submitted with the final paper.

I will conduct this class in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I encourage your active

participation in class discussions. Each of us may have strongly differing opinions on the various topics of class discussions. The conflict of ideas is encouraged and welcome. The orderly questioning of the ideas of others, including mine, is similarly welcome. However, I will exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so that ideas and argument can proceed in an orderly fashion. You should expect that if your conduct during class discussions seriously disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further.

All students and the instructor are expected to engage with each other respectfully. Unwelcome conduct directed toward another person based upon that person's actual or perceived race, actual or perceived gender, color, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or veteran status, or for any other reason, may constitute a violation of University Policy 406, the [Code of Student Responsibility](#). Any student suspected of engaging in such conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

UNC Charlotte is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Please be aware that all faculty members are required to relay any information or reports of sexual misconduct they receive. This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must report the information to the university Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, there are several on-campus resources that are not subject to this mandatory reporting requirement, e.g., the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#).

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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](#) to the instructor prior to January 24, 2022.

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the [Office of Disability Services](#) and follow the instructions of that office.

Reading Schedule

Mind and Matter

- Jan 11** No reading
- Jan 13** René Descartes, “First Meditation” and “Second Meditation,” *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Ian Johnston (online, 2012) [1641].
- Jan 18** René Descartes, “Third Meditation,” *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Ian Johnston (online, 2012) [1641].
- Jan 20** René Descartes, “Sixth Meditation,” *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Ian Johnston (online, 2012) [1641].
- Jan 25** Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes, “The Correspondence” (May–July 1643), pp. 61–73 of *The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, edited and translated by Lisa Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- Jan 27** Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* (London: 1664), excerpts (Preface; Section 1, Letters 1, 35–37, 42; Section 2, Letters 2–4, 18, 21–22, 29; Section 4, Letter 32).
- Feb 1** Anne Conway, “Chapter VII” and “Chapter VIII,” pp. 41–62 of *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, edited and translated by Alison Coudert and Taylor Corse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1690]).
- Feb 3** Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “New System of the Nature of Substances,” pp. 10–20 of *Leibniz’s ‘New System’ and Associated Contemporary Texts*, edited and translated by R. S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997 [1695]).
- Feb 8** Anton Wilhelm Amo, “On the Impassivity of the Human Mind,” pp. 154–189 of *Anton Wilhelm Amo’s Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body*, edited and translated by Stephen Menn and Justin E. H. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020 [1734]).

Method: Part 1

- Feb 10** Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, edited and translated by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1620]),

Book 1, Aphorisms 1–68.

- Feb 15** Robert Boyle, “Proemial Essay,” pp. 1–40 of *Certain Physiological Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: 1669 [1661]).
- Feb 17** Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* (London: 1666), excerpts (Preface; “Observations” 2–3, 25, 32, 34; “Further Observations” 1–2, 4).
- Feb 22** René Descartes, “[In a Geometrical Fashion],” pp. 110–120 of *Objections and Replies*, trans. John Cottingham, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 [1641]).
- Antoine Arnauld & Pierre Nicole, “On Method” (Chapters 1–3), pp. 227–240 of *Logic or The Art of Thinking*, edited and translated by Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1662]).
- Feb 24** John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: 1690), excerpts (Epistle to the Reader [excerpt]; Book 1, Chapter 1; Book 2, Chapter 1, §§1–11 and §§20–25; Book 2, Chapter 23, §§1–6).
- Mar 1** Mary Astell, “Concerning the Improvement of the Understanding,” Part 2, Chapter 3, Sections 1–3 of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (London: 1697).
- Mar 3** Mary Astell, “A Natural Logic Proposed,” Part 2, Chapter 3, Section 4 of *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (London: 1697).

Method: Part 2

- Mar 15** Isaac Newton, “Rules for the Study of Natural Philosophy” and “General Scholium,” pp. 107–114 of *Philosophical Writings*, rev. ed., edited by Andrew Janiak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 [1713/1726]).
- Mar 17** Émilie du Châtelet, “Of Hypotheses,” pp. 147–155 of *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, edited and translated by Judith P. Zinsser and Isabelle Bour (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009 [1740]).
- Mar 22** Émilie du Châtelet, “Of the Principles of Our Knowledge,” pp. 124–138 of *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, edited and translated by J. P. Zinsser and I. Bour (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009 [1740]).
- Mar 24** David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888 [1739]), excerpts (Introduction; Book 1, Part

3, Section 6; Book 1, Part 3, Section 8, §§8–14).

Mar 29 Immanuel Kant, “Logical Table of Judgments” and “Transcendental Table of Concepts” (§21), pp. 96–97 of *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*, translated by Gary Hatfield, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 [1783]).

Immanuel Kant, “Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding,” First Section (§§13–14), pp. 219–226 of *Critique of Pure Reason*, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1781/87]).

Mar 31 Immanuel Kant, “Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding,” Second Section, excerpt (§§15–21), pp. 245–254 of *Critique of Pure Reason*, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1787]).

Apr 5 Thomas Reid, “Of First Principles in General,” Essay 6, Chapter 4 of *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: 1785).

Sympathy

Apr 7 Adam Smith, “Of the Sense of Propriety,” Part 1, Section 1 of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, edited by Dugald Stewart (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853 [1759]).

Apr 12 Adam Smith, “Of the Effects of Prosperity and Adversity upon the Judgment of Mankind,” Part 1, Section 3 of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, edited by Dugald Stewart (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853 [1759]).

Apr 14 Adam Smith, “Of the Foundation of Our Judgments Concerning Our Own Sentiments and Conduct,” Part 3, Chapters 1–2 of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, edited by Dugald Stewart (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853 [1759]).

Apr 19 Adam Smith, “Of the Influence and Authority of Conscience,” Part 3, Chapter 3 of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, edited by Dugald Stewart (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853 [1759]).

Apr 21 Sophie de Grouchy, “Letter I” and “Letter II,” pp. 57–76 of *Letters on Sympathy*, edited and translated by Sandrine Bergès and Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019 [1798]).

- Apr 26** Sophie de Grouchy, “Letter III” and “Letter IV,” pp. 77–104 of *Letters on Sympathy*, edited and translated by Sandrine Bergès and Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019 [1798]).
- Apr 28** Sophie de Grouchy, “Letter V” and “Letter VI,” pp. 105–131 of *Letters on Sympathy*, edited and translated by Sandrine Bergès and Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019 [1798]).
- May 3** Sophie de Grouchy, “Letter VII” and “Letter VIII,” pp. 133–155 of *Letters on Sympathy*, edited and translated by Sandrine Bergès and Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019 [1798]).