

INSTRUCTOR: Colin McLear
COURSE: PHIL 232
TIME: T/R 12:30-1:45
LOCATION: OLDH-208
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HISTORY OF EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Course Overview

- This course surveys the metaphysical and ethical views of some key figures in Early Modern (17th—18th century) European philosophy. We will examine five key ideas that drove much of the philosophical debate of the Early Modern period: Dualism, Materialism, Idealism, Monism, and Skepticism. Figures discussed include Astell, Cavendish, Descartes, Galileo, Hobbes, Hume, Leibniz, Newton, Poullain de la Barre, and Spinoza.

Course Objectives & Outcomes

- This course satisfies ACE requirement 5, that students use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues. Students will be evaluated with respect to these outcomes by taking regular quizzes, and more comprehensively, by two exams and a final paper.
- In completing this course students satisfy this outcome by being able to (i) find the argument of a text and restate it clearly in their own words; (ii) explain viewpoints clearly that are not their own; (iii) think critically about the ideas discussed in this course. This includes being able to (iv) articulate some of the central metaphysical, epistemological, and scientific disputes in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth-century; (v) clearly explain the different positions of the figures discussed in the course, as well as their dialectical context. Finally, students will (vi) write papers using theses, organization, arguments, evidence, and language suitable to analytical writing in general and the discipline of philosophy in particular.

Course Materials

The following books are required for this course:

- Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings*
- Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*
- Atherton (ed.), *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*
- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and *Dialogues on Natural Religion*
- Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader*

Other readings will be posted on the [course website](#) under “[Assignments](#).”

Course Requirements

- **Preparation:** You are expected to attend every class meeting fully prepared to discuss each assigned reading, to submit written work punctually, and to offer thoughtful and constructive responses to the remarks of your instructor and your classmates. Make sure that you bring the relevant readings with you to every lecture class. I further expect you to treat both the texts at hand and your classmates' ideas with openness and respect.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is required. You are also expected to attend every section meeting. 1/2 a letter grade will be deducted from your final course grade for every absence from section after your fifth.
- **Website:** We will use a course website for all materials. The site address is: phil232.colinmclear.net. Upcoming assignments and readings will be posted there. Please let me know if you have any problems. Technical glitches, computer malfunctions and crashing hard drives are not excuses for failing to complete work in this class.
- **Format for Papers:** Please submit work as a .docx or .rtf file. All work must be typed. I will not accept any handwritten work aside from that we do in class. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. Your name, my name, the date and assignment should appear in the top left hand corner of the first page. Your last name and page number must appear in the top right hand corner on each subsequent page. Please staple or paperclip hard copies of papers and drafts. You are responsible for the presentation of your papers.
- **Late Work:** Late papers and assignments will standardly be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade for each day the work is late (for example, from A- to B+, from B+ to B, and so on).

Evaluation

Two Exams: 40%

- The exams involve a combination of passage analysis, definitions, multiple choice, and short answer.

Written Essay: 20%

- Explain and critically assess a philosophical argument. Topics will be suggested. Approximately 3-6 pages (750-2000 words).

Quizzes: 10%

- There will be at least ten quizzes with no more than one given in a particular week. I drop your two lowest grades and count your high quiz grade twice. There will be no makeup quizzes given.

Weekly reading responses: 20%

- 250 words maximum; posted to the course listserv every week by Wednesday 8 pm. Your reading responses should detail your observations about a primary text (though one can also relate this to secondary readings). *They are not summaries*. Move to delimit 1-2 major points or ideas from the reading and discuss them. What do you find interesting or compelling? What do you find logically problematic?

Participation: 10%

- The participation grade takes into account your attendance in class and section as well as the quantity and quality of your participation.

Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with UNL's Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code, available online. **In this course, the normal penalty for any violation of the code is an "F" for the semester.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – It just isn't worth it.
- **University Policies:** This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.
- **ADA:** In compliance with University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.
- **Miscellaneous:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

Further Resources

- **Jargon:** It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "Philosophical Terms and Methods."
- **Help with writing:** Papers should adhere to some consistent practice of footnoting and citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.). I don't really mind which one you use as long as you are consistent. On writing a philosophy paper, there is no better on-line guide than Jim Pryor's. Please consult it. Hacker's A Writer's Reference is also extremely helpful. Useful online writing help may be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check the Writing Center website for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments.

- **Reference:** The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu> is an excellent online resource.