

Department of Philosophy
PHL 302: History of Western Philosophy II
Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant
Semester II, 2013-2014

I. General Information

Meetings: TR: 9:30am-10:45am
Room, BAC 105B

Professor: Rob Thompson
Office: Sme Hall 207
Phone: 849-2930
Office Hours: See schedule on office door, and by appointment.
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Texts: Philosophic Classics Volume III: Modern Philosophy, 5/e, Baird and Kaufmann

II. Course Description

A survey of the major philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries with special consideration for the influence of their thought upon the modern world.

III. Course Learning Outcomes

1. Students will engage in the disciplined practice of asking questions about God, the world, and of themselves, including questions for which there may be no easy answers.
2. Students will differentiate among interrelated movements or figures in the history of philosophy, specifically the early modern period.
3. Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of human reasoning or experience to provide an adequate account of the human condition, the world, ethics and Christian life, especially in conversation with philosophical notions and movements prevalent in the early modern period.

IV. Course Requirements and Grading

Late work and extra credit: No late work will be accepted. No extra credit will be given.

5% **Attendance and Participation:** Attend *every* class session. No make-ups will be allowed for any required work unless the cause of the absence is one of the following: documented illness, religious observance, travel due to a sanctioned university event (e.g., team sports, musical presentation—be sure to see me to get such an absence cleared *before* missing the class). The student will be responsible for the content of any missed class. Moreover, significant tardiness will count as an absence. In addition, a warm body is a minimal requirement and is not sufficient. Thus, class participation is a critical component of the course.

Per the University's attendance policy, any student who misses more than 20% of the course may be de-enrolled without appeal. In addition to no credit being gained for the course, the student may receive a failing grade on his or her transcript if de-enrollment occurs after the last day to drop a semester class. As with any course requirement, each student bears the responsibility to insure that the attendance requirement is met.

- 15% **Readings:** Read *all* of the assigned material *before* coming to class. During roll call at the beginning of each class, students will be asked to give a number between 0 and 10 (10 being highest) indicating how much of the assigned reading was carefully and thoughtfully read. The number given will be the grade that the student receives for the day. For example, if you have read carefully and thoughtfully 85% of the reading for a given day, you should represent, and will receive, an 8.5 for the day. The lowest grade will be dropped, including if you have received a zero due to missing class. Only one low score will be dropped.
- 2% **Descartes Outline:** Each student will complete an outline of Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy*. The outline is due in stages related to when the various meditations are scheduled to be read and discussed in the class. Outlines must be typed, single spaced, in an accepted outline format, and are due at the beginning of class.
- 18% **Presentation:** Throughout the semester each student will do two in-class presentations. The presenter should include a brief and general introduction to, as well as a visual image of, the figure covered during that session. The presentation should mainly be an outline of the text(s) for the day and should reference (at the minimum) 10-12 significant portions (quotations or specific page/text references) highlighting the key ideas to be covered in class. The goal is to engage the text, get at the author's point of view, and foster robust discussion. Students must provide a detailed outline, complete with quotes, discussion topics, and interpretive questions, and a bibliography for each member of the class. Please refrain from using electronic sources unless these are full text journals accessed through our library's numerous database collections. Each presentation is 9%. (NB: the goal is both to move through the salient elements of the reading for the day and to engage in critical discussion on the reading, so the presentations should reflect an effort to accomplish both elements.)
- 32% **Mid-Term and Final Exam:** Each student will be expected to complete a written and oral mid-term and final examination. The written portion is a matching component and is completed individually. The oral portion of the mid-term will be administered in small groups and will cover the material through Leibniz. The oral portion of the final will be administered as a class on the day of the final and will cover the material after Leibniz. Both are 16%.
- 28% **Final Essay:** Each student will be expected to complete a final essay. Final essays should reflect a comprehensive approach to the philosopher and the text, careful, critical engagement with primary source material, and should also include research from secondary sources (at the *very least* 3), including journal articles. Papers should include a clear thesis, be carefully structured in terms of argument, employ accurate and elegant syntax and grammar, and be no less than 10 pages (3000 words). In addition, students must use inclusive language. You are encouraged to meet with me for paper topic ideas and to work on overall argument once a topic has been chosen. (Repetitive NB: As with all written work, grammar, organization, and spelling are of crucial importance.)

V. Miscellany

1. *Academic Misconduct Policy*: Academic misconduct includes plagiarism and the use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any exam or other academic exercise. It also includes assisting others in any attempt to cheat. It will not be tolerated. However, respect for academic honesty is consistent with discussing the ideas of the course with others. In fact, I encourage you to discuss any and all of the course material that you find interesting outside of class. In the end, however, you must do your written work on your own. If you have any questions about academic honesty, either in general or in particular, please ask me.

A special note on plagiarism is warranted. Each student is responsible to know what plagiarism is and to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism in his or her work. No act of plagiarism, whether born of one's intention or ignorance, will be tolerated in this class. Any student caught plagiarizing will incur severe academic punishment. Such punishment will include a grade of zero for the plagiarized work, and may also include expulsion with a failing grade from the course. The student's name and an explanation of the incident will also be forwarded to the Provost of the University. Please see the University policy stated in the catalogue.

2. *Harassment Policy*: Racial, sexual, and ethnic harassment, and any other type of disruptive behavior, are not conducive to a good learning environment. These behaviors will not be tolerated. However, I encourage all students to be open to any honest and tactful discussion of issues that might arise in the context of our learning.

3. *Reasonable Accommodation Policy*: All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of class. The ASC will contact professors with suggested classroom needs and accommodations. Approved documentation must be on file in the ASC prior to the start of the semester.

4. *Inclusive Language Policy*: The use of inclusive language is now prevalent, even expected, throughout most sectors of our society (e.g., academia, government, business). Further, inclusive language is very often a more accurate and fair representation of the intended meaning of a person's communicative content. As such, everyone is expected to make use of inclusive language in all written work. The avoidance of such use in a given project will result in a lowering of the grade for that project. In addition, everyone is expected to make use of inclusive language during classroom discussions.