

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Philosophy

Philosophy: 211G
Early Modern Philosophy

Instructor: Robert J. Stainton

Class Days and Hours: MWF, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

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Students are responsible for following the Philosophy Department procedures included with this outline.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A critical examination of key works of selected figures of the 17th and 18th centuries. This is one of the most important periods in the history of philosophy and was a time when (among other things) key views in philosophy of mind, epistemology and metaphysics were classically articulated. Of particular interest for this course will be: the nature and workings of the mind, personal identity and the mind/body distinction; the break from Aristotelian science, and resulting concerns about the place of God and persons in the “mechanical” world; primary and secondary qualities; our knowledge of the external world; the nature and aims of philosophy itself. All of these issues will be surveyed as they figure in selected works of four major continental “Rationalists” and British “Empiricists”: Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, and Hume.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Thomas Hobbes, *Human Nature* and *De Corpore Politico*, J.C.A. Gaskin, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

René, Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Donald A. Cress, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980).

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Kenneth Winkler, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett: 1996).

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Eric Steinberg, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

First “very short” essay (1000 words): 25% (Due on Friday February 17th, in class)

Second “short” essay (1500 words): 35% (Due on Friday March 31st, in class)

Final exam: 40%

COURSE SYLLABUS:

a) Hobbes' Philosophy of Mind

- i) The Parts of the Mind: *Human Nature* §§I-IV (Gaskin pp. 21-34); *De Corpore* §XXV (Gaskin pp. 212-228)
- ii) Language, Reasoning and Knowledge: *Human Nature* §§V-VI (Gaskin 31-43); *De Corpore* §§I.1-3 (Gaskin pp. 185-88); *Human Nature* §XIII (Gaskin pp. 73-77)
- iii) Action: *Human Nature* §XII (Gaskin pp. 70-73)

b) Descartes' New Science and Its Rationalist Foundations

- i) Breaking with the Past: *Discourse on Method* §§I-II (Cress pp. 1-13); *Discourse* §IV (Cress pp. 18-22)
- ii) The New Cartesian Science: *Discourse* §§V-VI (Cress pp. 23-44)
- iii) The Method of Doubt: *Meditations* §I (Cress pp. 59-63)
- iv) Mind and Body: *Meditations* §II (Cress pp. 63-69)
- v) Proofs of God's Existence: *Meditations* §III (Cress pp. 69-81)
- vi) Truth and Clear-&-Distinct Ideas: *Meditations* §IV (Cress pp. 81-87)
- vii) The World Regained for Science: *Meditations* §§V-VI (Cress pp. 87-103)

c) Locke's Empiricist Epistemology and Metaphysics

- i) Epistle to the Reader (Winkler pp. 1-3)
- ii) Innate Ideas: *Essay* §I.i.1-4,6-8; ii.1-9, 12, 14-16; iii.1-6, 9, 22, 24-25; iv.1-5, 8-9, 24-25
- iii) Sensation: *Essay* §II.i.1-8, 20, 23-25; ii, viii.1-6, iii-vi; vii.1-2, 7-10
- iv) Perception: *Essay* §II.viii.7-26; ix.1-4, 8-9; x.1-2; xi, 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 15, 17
- v) Substance: *Essay* §II.xii; xiii.1-5;xxii.1-5, 9; xxiii.1-11, 15-20
- vi) Identity: *Essay* §II.xxvii.1-3
- vii) Abstract Ideas: *Essay* §III.iii.1-4, 6-13, 15-18
- viii) Essence: *Essay* §III.vi.1-9, 12, 14-19, 23, 25-26, 32
- ix) Degrees of Knowledge: *Essay* §IV.i; ii.1-7, 14; iii.1-14, 17-18, 21

d) Hume and Philosophical Naturalism

- i) Good and Bad Philosophy: *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* §I (Beauchamp pp. 87-95)
- ii) The Nature and Source of Our Ideas: *Enquiry* §§II-III (Beauchamp pp. 96-107 and pp. 124-130)
- iii) Sceptical Doubts: *Enquiry* §IV (Beauchamp pp. 108-118)
- iv) Sceptical Solutions: *Enquiry* §V and §IX (Beauchamp pp. 119-130 and pp. 165-168)
- v) Philosophical Scepticism and Ordinary Life: *Enquiry* §XII (Beauchamp pp. 199-211)