

# Philosophy 202—Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Modern Period

Mount Holyoke College

Spring 2015

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 3:00–4:00 p.m., and by appointment

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## MEETINGS:

Tuesday/Thursday, 8:35 a.m.–9:50 a.m., Clapp Laboratory, Room 127

## DESCRIPTION:

Investigates the development of Western philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the writings of Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant. Focus on the apparent conflict between modern natural science and traditional religion as sources of knowledge and belief. Topics include the nature and extent of human knowledge, the nature of the mind, the existence of God, and the possibility of human freedom.

## OBJECTIVES:

One of the aims of this course is to introduce you to some of the thinkers and themes from a period in the history of philosophy known as the modern period. But another aim of this course—perhaps even more important than the first—is to develop your skill at the kind of reading, writing, thinking, and speaking called for when working on the history of philosophy. There is a *historical* component to this latter aim: you'll learn to read historical texts closely and carefully. And there is a *philosophical* component to it: you'll learn to thoughtfully but critically assess the arguments we find in those texts. The readings, assignments, and class sessions will all contribute toward realizing these aims.

## TEXTS:

Books are available for purchase at the Odyssey Bookshop. They are also on reserve at the MHC Library.

- Ariew, Roger and Eric Watkins, eds., *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, Second Edition, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. (November 25, 2009), ISBN-10: 0872209784. Abbreviated as “MP” on the schedule, below.
- Atherton, Margaret, ed., *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. (October 1, 1994), ISBN-10: 0872202593. Abbreviated as “WP” on the schedule, below.
- I will distribute additional readings and other class resources through Moodle.

## READINGS:

Readings listed on the schedule below are required unless otherwise noted. You should plan to do the readings in advance of the session for which they are listed. Be sure to give yourself ample time to complete the readings. Philosophical writing often makes for—and benefits from—slow reading. This is especially so for historical texts. You should expect most of these readings to be difficult and dense. So plan ahead and when you do approach them, do so slowly and carefully.

## SCHEDULE:

*Note:* any handouts used during sessions will be distributed in hardcopy but will also be available at that time in an electronic format (typically a .pdf available through the course Moodle site).

- **Session 1 (T, 1/20): Introduction**
- **Session 2 (Th, 1/22): Background to the Modern Period**
  - *Readings:* Aquinas, selections from *Summa Theologica* [Moodle]; Galileo, Letter to the Grand Duchess [Moodle].
  - *Recommended:* Bacon, selection from *New Organon*, Book I [MP pp. 16–20].
- **Session 3 (T, 1/27): snow day!**
  - *Readings:* none.
  - *Recommended:* Millhauser, “Snowmen”
- **Session 4 (Th, 1/29): Descartes—introducing doubt**
  - *Readings:* Dedication, Preface, Synopsis, and Meditation One [MP pp. 35–43].
  - *Recommended:* Hobbes, Against Meditation I, and Descartes’ reply [MP p. 76].
- **Session 5 (T, 2/3): Descartes, cont.—removing doubt**
  - *Readings:* Meditation Two [MP pp. 43–47]; Hobbes, Against Meditation II, and Descartes’ replies [MP pp. 76–79].
- **Session 6 (Th, 2/5): Descartes, cont.—doubt, deception, and God**
  - *Readings:* Meditations Three–Five [MP pp. 47–61]; Fourth Set of Objections (Arnauld) and Descartes’ reply [MP pp. 83–92].
  - *Recommended:* St. Anselm’s Ontological Argument [Moodle]
- **Session 7 (T, 2/10): Descartes and Elisabeth on the mind and the body**
  - *Readings:* Meditation Six [MP pp. 61–68]; selections from Elisabeth of Bohemia’s correspondence with Descartes [WP pp. 11–21].
  - *Recommended:* reread Meditation Two [MP pp. 43–47] and the first six paragraphs of Meditation Five [MP pp. 58–59]; Wartenberg, “Descartes’s Mood: The Question of Feminism in the Correspondence with Elisabeth.”

- **Session 8 (Th, 2/12): Cavendish—intelligent matter**
  - *Readings*: Selections from *Philosophical Letters* [WP pp. 24–45]; selections from *Observations upon experimental philosophy* [Moodle].
  - *Recommended*: James, “The Philosophical Innovations of Margaret Cavendish” [Moodle]
- **Session 9 (T, 2/17): Locke—against innate ideas**
  - *Readings*: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk I (sel.) [MP pp. 316–322]
- **Session 10 (Th, 2/19): Locke, cont.—on simple ideas; primary and secondary qualities**
  - *Readings*: *Essay*, Bk II.i–xi (sel.) [MP pp. 322–340].
- **Session 11 (T, 2/24): Locke, cont.—on complex ideas; on substance**
  - *Readings*: *Essay* Bk II.xi–xii [MP pp. 339–342] and II.xxiii [MP pp. 359–367]
  - *Recommended*: *Essay* Bk III.iv [MP pp. 381–386].
- **Session 12 (Th, 2/26): Locke cont.—on personal identity**
  - *Readings*: II.xxvii [MP pp. 367–377].
  - *Recommended*: reread II.i.9–14, 19; Hume, “Of Personal Identity” [MP pp. 525–532].
- **Session 13 (T, 3/3): Locke, cont.—on the limits of human knowledge**
  - *Readings*: *Essay*, Bk IV.i–iii, x–xi [MP pp. 386–403, 405–415].
- **Session 14 (Th, 3/5): Rationalism vs. Empiricism**
  - *Readings*: handout on Rationalism vs. Empiricism [Moodle]
  - *Recommended*: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Rationalism vs. Empiricism” [<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/>]
- **Session 15 (T, 3/10): Berkeley—against abstract ideas**
  - *Readings*: Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Preface and Introduction [MP pp. 438–446].
- **Session 16 (Th, 3/12): Berkeley—against materialism (and Shepherd, against Berkeley)**
  - *Readings*: Berkeley, *Principles*, Part I, Sections 1–33 [MP pp. 447–453]; Shepherd, selections from *Essays on the Perception of an External Universe* [WP pp. 149–159].

*Spring Break: 3/14–3/22*

- **Session 17 (T, 3/24): Hume—on the origin and association of ideas**
  - *Readings*: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Author’s Advertisement and Secs. I–III [MP pp. 533–542].
- **Session 18 (Th, 3/26): Hume, cont.—skepticism about induction**

- *Readings*: Hume’s *Enquiry*, Secs. IV–V [MP pp. 542–555].
- **Session 19 (T, 3/31): Hume, cont.—on causation**
  - *Readings*: Hume’s *Treatise*, Bk I, Pt III, Sec II–IV [Moodle]; Hume’s *Enquiry*, Sec. VII [MP pp. 556–564].
- **Session 20 (Th, 4/2): Hume, cont.—on skepticism**
  - *Readings*: Hume’s *Enquiry*, Sec. XII [MP pp. 593–600].
- **Session 21 (T, 4/7): Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason***
  - *Readings*: Kant, CPR, Prefaces to the A & B editions [MP pp. 717–724] and the Introduction [MP pp. 724–729].
  - *Optional*: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Preface [MP pp. 661–665] and Preamble [MP pp. 665–672].
- **Session 22 (Th, 4/9): Kant’s CPR, cont.**
  - *Readings*: Transcendental Aesthetic [MP pp. 729–737]
- **Session 23 (T, 4/14): Kant’s CPR, cont.**
  - *Readings*: review, as needed, the Transcendental Aesthetic [MP pp. 729–737].
- **Session 24 (Th, 4/16): in-class paper workshop**
  - *Readings*: none
- **Session 25 (T, 4/21): Kant’s CPR, cont.**
  - *Readings*: the Transcendental Logic [MP pp. 737–756]
- **Session 26 (Th, 4/23): wrapping up Kant; conclusions**
  - *Readings*: read my notes for Session 25; also read The Second Analogy [MP pp. 772–779]

*Reading period: 4/28–4/30*

*Final exam period 4/30–5/4*

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

*Note*: you must pass each portion of the course in order to pass the course.

- Attendance & participation: 20%
- Reading questions: 10%
- Shorter papers: 30%
  - Paper #1: 25%
  - Paper #2: 25%
  - Paper #3: 50%

- Final paper: 40%
  - Paper plan: 10%
  - Final version: 90%

## ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

Your attendance and participation is essential to the success of this course. Thus:

- Attendance is required. (Also: be sure to bring the readings to class with you.) If, for whatever reason, you cannot attend a class, please contact me *as soon as possible*.
- Participation in class is strongly encouraged—even if it is simply to tell me that you have no idea what I just said or what some bit of text means. (If you’re thinking this, you’re probably not the only one.)
  - *Note:* I will set up a general discussion forum on the course Moodle site. Posting questions or comments to the forum or responding to other people’s questions/comments will count toward your participation grade, but neither is required.
- You should expect to disagree from time to time—with things we read or discuss, with other people in class (including me), and perhaps on occasion even with yourself. These disagreements may be *vigorous* but must always be *reasoned* and *respectful*.
- *A note on gadgets:* laptops, iPads, and so forth are permitted in class as long as you’re using them to take notes, to refer to assigned readings, or to run software that assists with either of these functions.<sup>1</sup>

## READING QUESTIONS:

- You will be required to send me **six emails** over the course of the semester, each of which should raise a question about the interpretation of a passage or the assessment of an argument studied in class.
- *I must receive your email 24 hours in advance of the session in which we will discuss the text.*
- *You must send me **four** before spring break and **two** afterwards.*
- Please include the phrase ‘Reading Question #n’ (where ‘n’ is 1–6) in the subject line of your email.
- The emails will be graded pass/fail.

## SHORTER PAPERS:

Over the semester you will write three shorter papers:

- Paper #1: Exegesis (1–2 pages)
  - I will ask you to explain or interpret a selection of text.
- Paper #2: Analysis (1–2 pages)
  - I will ask you to critically assess an argument or thesis.
- Paper #3: Exegesis and Analysis (3–5 pages)

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<sup>1</sup>See <http://bit.ly/1ihJUxL> for some evidence that suggests multitasking (e.g., looking at Facebook during class) is bad for learning.

- This paper will combine the activities of Papers #1 and #2.

More details forthcoming with each individual assignment.

### **FINAL PAPER:**

In the second half of the semester you will begin working on a longer paper (5–7 pgs). It will engage with the texts we've been studying and the arguments they raise, and it will call upon the skills you will have developed through your work on the shorter papers. I will provide a list of suggested topics, but you will also have the opportunity (with prior approval from me) of working on a topic of your own choosing.

There will be two official stages of work on the final paper and one unofficial stage:

- *Official stage 1:* paper plan due in class and online (see below for dates). You should be prepared to discuss in class the ideas for your paper. (I will also provide comments on your plan.)
- *Unofficial stage:* I will read drafts of your papers and meet with you to discuss them *but only if I receive your draft by 8 a.m. on Saturday, 4/25*. (Note that you are not required to submit a draft.)
- *Official stage 2:* The final version of the paper is due during the final exam period.

More details forthcoming on the final paper assignment.

### **EXTENSION POLICY**

- Three “no-questions asked” 24-hour extensions per semester. (For use on papers.)
- These may be combined for a three-day extension on one assignment or broken up among multiple assignments. *You must request the extension in advance of the deadline.*
- No other extensions (except for exceptional circumstances)
- Unexcused late papers lose 1/3 grade per day or portion thereof (*e.g.*, an “A” paper turned in during the first 24 hours after a deadline will receive an “A–”).
- No late work accepted after the next assignment is due.

### **IMPORTANT DATES:**

- Friday, 2/6: Shorter paper #1 topic/instructions posted on Moodle (by 8 a.m.)
- Friday, 2/13: Shorter paper #1 due as .pdf on Moodle (by 8 a.m.)
- Friday, 2/20: Shorter paper #2 topic/instructions posted (by 8 a.m.)
- Friday, 2/27: Shorter paper #2 due (by 8 a.m.)
- Wednesday, 3/4: Shorter paper #3 topic/instructions posted (by 8 a.m.)
- Friday, 3/13: Shorter paper #3 due (by 8 a.m.)
- Wednesday, 4/15: Plan for final paper due on Moodle (by 8:00 a.m.).
- Thursday, 4/16: in-class paper workshop
- Saturday, 4/25: Last day to submit final paper drafts for my review (due by 8 a.m.).

- Friday, 5/1: Final paper due by noon (12:00 p.m.).<sup>2</sup>

For other important college-wide dates, consult the Registrar's academic calendar.<sup>3</sup>

## ACADEMIC HONESTY:

As students at Mount Holyoke College, you have each agreed to live by the following code of honor: "I will honor myself, my fellow students, and Mount Holyoke College by acting responsibly, honestly, and respectfully in both my words and deeds." Pages 55–59 of the Student Handbook<sup>4</sup> describe the application of the Honor Code to academic matters. In particular, note that "It is the responsibility of each student to read *A Guide to the Uses and Acknowledgment of Sources* and the *Student Handbook*, which define the standards adopted by the College; to observe the established procedures in preparing assignments and writing papers and examinations, and to submit as one's own only that work that she or he has originated" (p. 56). I will expect you to be mindful of these responsibilities when producing work for this course. Additionally, I will expect you to have reviewed *The Proper Use of Sources Tutorial*.<sup>5</sup> Remember: when in doubt, cite—and, of course, you can always check with me. Whatever you do, don't plagiarize. ***Plagiarism could result in failure on the assignment or in the course as a whole.***

For some additional information about academic responsibility (written for international students in particular, but good for everyone to read) see: [http://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/global/docs/academic\\_responsibility\\_pamphlet\\_for\\_intl\\_students.pdf](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/global/docs/academic_responsibility_pamphlet_for_intl_students.pdf)

## ASSISTANCE:

- You should always feel free to contact me about any questions or concerns you have about the course. Write me an email, visit my office hours, intercept me on campus!
- The SAW (*Speaking, Arguing, Writing*) Center can provide assistance with, well, your speaking, arguing, and writing. You can schedule an appointment or swing by during their drop-in hours.<sup>6</sup>
- The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program<sup>7</sup> provides support for Mount Holyoke students whose first language is not English. For more information, contact the ESOL Coordinator, Mark Shea (markshea@mtholyoke.edu).
- If you have a disability and would like to request accommodations, please contact AccessAbility Services, located in Wilder Hall B4, at (413)-538-2646 or [accessability-services@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:accessability-services@mtholyoke.edu). If you are eligible, they will give you an accommodation letter which you should bring to me as soon as possible. That way we can work together to make sure all of the course content is accessible to you.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>This due date ensures that you are able to use all three of your 24-hr extensions on the final paper should you choose to do so.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/registrar/calendar>.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/deanofstudents/docs/mhcstudenthandbook.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/lits/ris/Plagiarism/>.

<sup>6</sup>You can find out more here: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/saw/peer/center>.

<sup>7</sup><http://www.mtholyoke.edu/esol>.

<sup>8</sup>More information on AccessAbility Services here: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/accessability>.