

Instructor: Prof. James Genone

Office Hours: TBD

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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to early modern philosophy. We will focus on the works of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant, examining their views about knowledge and the nature of reality. Particular attention will be paid to the relation between philosophy and the scientific revolution, the relation between mind and body, and knowledge of God, the self, and the external world.

Course Goals:

In addition to developing an understanding of the philosophical ideas we will discuss, as well as their historical context, students will learn the skills involved in recognizing, analyzing, and evaluating arguments in support of claims or theories. The skills and knowledge students will acquire include:

- 1) **Understanding early modern philosophical theories:** Students will learn about prominent philosophical theories regarding the nature of the mind, knowledge, and reality in 17th and 18th century Europe.
- 2) **Understanding early modern philosophy in context:** Students will learn about the dynamics of religious authority and scientific innovation that shaped and were shaped by early modern philosophy.
- 3) **Understanding the influence of early modern philosophy:** Students will learn how developments during this period have impacted contemporary philosophy and psychology.
- 4) **Critically reading difficult texts:** Students will become proficient at identifying the questions being raised and the claims being made in argumentative texts, as well as the evidence used to support these claims, and any hidden assumptions made by the author.
- 5) **Defining key terms:** Students will learn to recognize when specialized terms are being employed, when familiar terms are being used in new ways, and be able to define these terms based on the author's usage.
- 6) **Evaluating theoretical claims and arguments:** Students will learn to evaluate the effectiveness of an argument by considering potential objections to it.
- 7) **Applying abstract ideas:** Students will learn to utilize abstract claims, concepts, and theories to generate concrete examples that test the plausibility of an argument or view.
- 8) **Comparing different theories:** Students will be prepared to discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of competing theories.

Class Format:

No prior familiarity with philosophy will be assumed in this course. Class meetings will involve a combination of lecture, discussion, short assignments, and group work. Students will be expected to have read assigned texts **in advance** of the class meeting for which they are assigned, and should be prepared to summarize, discuss, and raise questions about the readings. Assigned readings **must** be brought to class. Some class meetings will be partly devoted to discussing reasoning and argument, essay writing, and other philosophical skills.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Note: All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Participation: 10%

Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading for the day, and should be prepared to ask questions and engage in discussion and group work. Assigned readings must always be brought to class.

Writing Assignments: 15%

There will be weekly writing assignments related to the course readings which will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Any reasonable response to the assignment will be given full credit. We will go over answers to the assignments in class.

Essays: 75%

You will be required to write three short (3-5 page) essays for this course. The first will be worth 15% of your grade, the second 25%, and the third 35%.

Required Texts:

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Cambridge)

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (Hackett)

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett)

The rest of the readings will be available in a Course Reader at the campus bookstore.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 (Jan): Introduction

Reading: Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* (excerpt)

Week 2 (Jan): Descartes

Reading: Descartes, *Meditation I, Objections & Replies*

Assignments: First essay assigned

Week 3 (Feb): Descartes

Reading: Descartes, *Meditation II, Objections & Replies*

Week 4 (Feb): Descartes

Reading: Descartes, *Meditation III, Objections & Replies*

Assignments: First essay due

Week 5 (Feb): Descartes

Reading: Descartes, *Meditations IV-V, Objections & Replies*

Week 6 (Feb): Descartes

Reading: Descartes, *Meditation VI, Objections & Replies*; Elizabeth, *Correspondence with Descartes*

Assignments: Second essay assigned

Week 7 (Mar): Locke

Reading: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpts)

Week 8 (Mar): Locke

Reading: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpts)

Assignments: Second essay due

****No Class : Spring Break****

Week 9 (Mar): Berkeley

Reading: Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* First and Second Dialogue

Week 10 (Apr): Berkeley

Reading: Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* Third Dialogue; Shepherd, *Essay on Berkeley*

Week 11 (Apr): Hume

Reading: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Week 12 (Apr): Hume

Reading: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Assignments: Third essay assigned

Week 13 (Apr): Kant

Reading: Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Preface and Introduction to the second edition

Week 14 (Apr): Review

Reading: none

Assignments: Third essay due

Resources:

Tutoring:

Free academic tutoring, including help with essay writing, academic coaching, and assistance for ESL students, is available at the campus learning center (<http://learn.camden.rutgers.edu>).

Student Affairs:

The division of student affairs office can help with non-academic concerns including transitions for freshmen, transfer students, international students, and veterans, academic advising, health, and stress management (<http://studentaffairs.camden.rutgers.edu>).

SafeZone: Rutgers-Camden is an inclusive campus and aspires to all people being treated with respect regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, age or ability (<http://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/safezone>).

Course Policies:

Attendance:

Attendance and participation in class discussions is required. If a student has a prolonged illness, varsity athletic competitions, religious observance, or a personal situation that might lead to multiple absences, the student should contact the instructor **before** missing class. Students are permitted one unexcused absence. After that, each absence will lower your participation grade. If you contact the instructor in advance with a legitimate reason for missing class, you will be allowed to complete make up work so that your participation grade is not affected. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class, so late arrivals will be counted as absent.

Extensions/Late Papers:

Extensions will only be granted in the case of a verifiable severe illness or personal emergency. You must contact the instructor **before** the assignment is due to request an extension. In all other cases, late papers will be graded down one full letter grade for each 24-hour period they are late.

Technology and Software:

Laptops and tablets are discouraged, but permitted for note taking. Cell phones must be put away during class. Anyone using a laptop, tablet, or phone in a distracting or disruptive way will be asked to leave class. Essay assignments must be submitted as PDF documents, and viewing instructor comments will require a PDF viewer such as Adobe Acrobat.

Email and Sakai:

Course announcements and changes to the reading schedule will be communicated via email. It is the student's responsibility to make sure your correct email address is on file with the university. You should check your email regularly, at least once per day. Email is also the best way to contact the instructor outside of class meetings and office hours. Students should also be prepared to use Sakai, where assignments will be submitted.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability that requires academic accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services for Students at (848) 445-6800 or dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu. An official accommodation letter from ODS is required in order to make appropriate arrangements for the course, and must be presented well in advance of any assignments. Please notify the instructor as quickly as possible if the material presented in class is not accessible (e.g., videos need captioning, handouts are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).

Academic Honesty:

All written work must be your own, and all sources of quotations or ideas must be cited. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism. It is your responsibility to be aware of what constitutes plagiarism, so please consult with the instructor if you have any questions. Essay assignments will be submitted to Turnitin.com, an electronic plagiarism detection software program. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and strictly enforced. For information on the academic honesty policy at Rutgers please see: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>