

**PHIL 313: Modern Philosophy**  
**Fall 2006**  
**MWF 9:00–9:50 A.M.**  
**AC 222**

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Office Hours:  
MWF 10–11 A.M.  
T 11 A.M.–12 P.M.  
TH 2–4 P.M.

***Course Description and Goals***

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were an extraordinarily fertile period in European intellectual history. During this period European philosophers engaged in intense and highly sophisticated debates about the nature of God, the natural world, the human mind, human freedom and action, politics, morals, and, most characteristically perhaps, our knowledge of all these things. With the benefit of hindsight these debates can be seen as intellectual responses to both the rapid advances in the understanding and control of nature occurring at this time and the dramatic changes in economic and political arrangements that were transforming European societies. And just as these broader changes are now seen as constituting a transition from older, medieval societies to the modern world, so does the philosophy of these two centuries form a bridge between medieval philosophy, which was still deeply rooted in ancient thought, and the diverse philosophical movements that came to the fore in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In this course, we will closely examine writings of seven of the most important philosophers from this crucial period: René Descartes (French, 1596–1650), Baruch Spinoza (Dutch, 1632–1677), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (German, 1646–1716), John Locke (English, 1632–1704), George Berkeley (Irish, 1685–1753), David Hume (Scots, 1711–1776), and Immanuel Kant (German, 1724–1804). The goals of the course are for students to:

- 1) become intimately familiar with some of the major strands of European philosophical thought in the Modern period,
- 2) learn to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas and arguments examined in the course,
- 3) critically examine their own beliefs about the philosophical issues discussed in the course in light of the historical positions we will examine,
- 4) improve their general ability to understand and critically engage with complex philosophical ideas, both orally and in writing, and
- 5) improve their general ability to read, comprehend, interpret and evaluate difficult original source material.

The course promotes a number of goals and objectives of the undergraduate program. It aims to instill or deepen in students, in whole or in part,

- an understanding of the Western humanist tradition (1),
- an understanding of the Christian humanist dialogue of faith and reason (1b),
- a familiarity with some of the major developments in Western culture (1c),
- an understanding of the created universe and the human role within it (1d),

- an understanding of, and facility with, the skills of analysis, communication and problem solving that enable them to appreciate, assess and contribute to the Western humanist tradition (2),
- skill at reading, writing and speaking (2a),
- skill at employing contemporary research methods (2d),
- the ability to recognize and evaluate claims of intellectual authority (2e),
- an understanding of the purposes, methods and substance of a particular intellectual discipline (3),
- the capacity to honor their human nature—body, mind, and spirit—as a gift to be nurtured individually as well as in honest, responsible and compassionate relationships (4c),
- a personal synthesis of learning and the capacity for life-long inquiry that constitutes the ultimate goal of a liberal education (5),
- the capacity to connect the whole of their learning to their lives as scholars, professionals, citizens and people of faith (5d).

### ***Required Texts***

1. Ariew and Watkins (eds.). *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. Hackett. 1998.
2. Thomson, Garrett. *Bacon to Kant: An Introduction to Modern Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Long Grove: Waveland Press. 2002.

### ***Course Requirements and Expectations***

**Reading assignments.** Your first responsibility is to read the material assigned for the upcoming class. (See the schedule of readings below.) Doing the assigned reading is the precondition for everything else you will do in the course. The readings are difficult, so budget plenty of time for reading and re-reading them.

**Class participation and attendance.** On most days, a portion of the class period will be devoted to discussion. All students are expected to participate in these discussions. As you know from your other philosophy courses, philosophy cannot simply be “learned”; there is no such thing as the passive acquisition of philosophical knowledge. You must engage your minds with the material, and that is best done through exchange and debate. Socrates and Plato showed us that the essence of philosophy is dialogue. Therefore, I expect that you will come to class prepared to discuss your questions and confusions, and any agreements or disagreements you have with the material. A portion of your semester grade will reflect your involvement with this aspect of the course.

Needless to say, you cannot participate unless you attend class. Poor attendance, accordingly, will have a significant downward impact on your participation grade. (Not to mention that it will give me the impression that you are not serious about the course.)

Students are also encouraged to discuss questions they may have with me during office hours. I especially encourage you to take advantage of office hours if you find yourself becoming confused about any of the material in the course. Making serious use of office hours can to some extent substitute for weak class participation.

### **Protocols and critical reading summaries**

*How to choose authors for protocols and reading summaries.* You must do *either* a protocol *or* a summary on one author from **each** of the following groups:

- a. Descartes
- b. Spinoza or Leibniz
- c. Locke, Berkeley or Hume
- d. Kant

For example, if your protocol is on Berkeley (group c), you must write a summary on one author in each of groups a, b and d. (You should not write on Locke or Hume.)

*Protocols.* Each student is required to give **one** short (3–5 minute) protocol in which he or she summarizes the previous class’s lecture and class discussion. Please pay strict attention to the following guidelines:

- The protocol giver must submit his or her protocol to me by e-mail by the end of the day of the class on which he or she is giving the protocol. (Example: Your protocol is Friday, so it covers the previous Wednesday’s class. You must send your protocol to me by 12:00 midnight on Wednesday.)
- I will send reactions to the protocol giver by 5:00 P.M. the following day.
- The protocol giver will revise his or her protocol in light of my comments and will read the revised protocol at the beginning of class the next day.
- A hard copy of the final version of the protocol should be submitted at the end of class after the protocol is read.
- A sign-up sheet for protocol dates will be distributed at the beginning of the semester.

*Critical reading summaries.* Each student will write **three** short (max. 2 pp.) critical reading summaries covering the assigned readings on the day the summary is submitted. Please observe the following guidelines:

- In your summary you should (a) identify what you take to be the most important claim or argument in the reading, (b) summarize and explain that claim or argument in your own words, and (c) briefly evaluate the claim or argument, i.e., say whether you think that there is good evidence for the claim or that the argument is sound, and why you think so.
- Summaries should be submitted to me by e-mail as an attached Microsoft Word document. Do not put your summary in the body of the message.
- I must receive your summary *before class* on the day we are scheduled to discuss the reading you have chosen. Late summaries will not be accepted.

**Paper.** You will write one short (3–5 pp.) paper. Papers must be submitted in hard-copy form and are due at the *beginning of class* on the due date. Late papers will be marked down by one grade-step (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for each class day they are late.

## ***Evaluation***

### **Semester grade breakdown:**

Protocols and reading summaries	40% (10 % each)
Papers	30% (15% each)
Final exam	20%
Class participation	10%

In calculating your grade, I will use the following grading scales:

A	12	95–100%	C	6	73–76%
A-	11	90–94%	C-	5	70–72%
B+	10	87–89%	D+	4	67–69%
B	9	83–86%	D	3	63–66%
B-	8	80–82%	D-	2	60–62%
C+	7	77–79%	F	0	below 60%

In addition, certain qualitative or “intangible” factors, such as effort and improvement, may be taken into account (especially in borderline cases) in determining your final grade. (See note above about attendance!)

### **Grading standards**

I will be looking for a number of different things in your written work, including but not limited to: competent use of the English language, comprehension of the relevant material, engagement with the author’s ideas and arguments, originality of thought, effective organization of ideas, the ability to support claims with arguments. The following is intended to give you an idea of the standards I use in grading written work:

- A Exceptionally clear and original expression of ideas, efficient organization, complete grasp of the relevant material and its implications, especially insightful reflection on the relevant texts, flawless grammar and spelling
- B Clear expression of ideas, effective organization, strong grasp of the material and its implications, good reflection on the text, minimal grammatical and spelling errors
- C Adequate expression of ideas and organization, general grasp of the material and its implications, minimal reflection on the text, frequent grammatical and spelling errors
- D Inadequate expression of ideas, unsatisfactory organization, little grasp of the material and its implications, no reflection on the text, excessive grammatical and spelling errors
- F Turning in an incomplete assignment, no argumentation or organization of ideas, profound lack of understanding of the material, unacceptably high numbers of grammatical and spelling errors

### ***Departmental Statement on Academic Integrity***

One of the curricular goals of Mount Saint Mary's University is to develop the skills and habits of good writing. Essential to the attainment of this goal is not only the development of the ability to express clearly your own ideas but also the requirement that in any work you submit you distinguish your own thoughts from those of others and that you not submit the words or ideas of another as your own. The failure to satisfy this requirement is called plagiarism; plagiarism is a form of dishonesty, inconsistent with genuine scholarship, and a serious offense against university policy. This policy forbids all forms of cheating, including plagiarism, and it stipulates (1) that all offenses be reported both to the Chair of the instructor's department and to the Dean of Academic Affairs, (2) that the minimum penalty for the first offense will be a failing grade for the assignment or examination on which the offense occurred, (3) that the minimum penalty for the second offense will be a failing grade for the course in which this second offense occurs, and (4) that the penalty for the third offense will be expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism takes many forms and need not be intentional to be plagiarism. It can include quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, or utilizing the published or unpublished work of others without proper acknowledgment. Most frequently it involves the unacknowledged use of published books or articles from periodicals, magazines, newspapers, or the Internet. However, any unacknowledged use of another's ideas constitutes plagiarism; this includes the use of, among other things, papers written by other students, interviews, radio or TV broadcasts, any published or unpublished materials (e.g., letters, pamphlets, leaflets, notes, or documents), and so forth. Some practices to avoid (because they can be considered plagiarism) and some examples of plagiarism can be found in *Keys for Writers* by Ann Raimés (New York: Houghton Mifflin). Consult index for her discussion of this topic.

Good writing and good scholarship require that you produce original work—in your own words. Anytime you use the work, the words, or the ideas of another you **must** acknowledge this use with a footnote or other reference. Adequate acknowledgment requires that in the case of printed materials the footnote or other reference be to the specific work utilized and that it include the exact page or pages containing the utilized material; a general reference to a work or a listing in a bibliography is not sufficient. When the borrowed idea is the result of private discussions—and even in assignments intended to involve collaboration with other students—there should be a footnote or a page of acknowledgments indicating with whom the ideas expressed in the paper have been discussed. For an explanation of the correct form for footnotes and endnotes, in-text references, and bibliographical references, see Raimés.

Another form of cheating in regard to papers is to submit in one course a paper originally written for another course. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating in this or any other course, please contact your instructor before submitting any written work.

Department of Philosophy  
Mount Saint Mary's University

### *Schedule of Readings and Assignments*

Wed., Aug. 23 Course Introduction – no readings

#### **Descartes**

Fri., Aug 25 *Discourse on Method*, parts 1 and 2 (12–19); *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Letter of Dedication, Preface to the Reader (22–25)  
Optional background reading: Thomson, 1–7, 11–13

Mon., Aug 28 *Meditation I* (27–30)  
Thomson, 14–20

Wed., Aug 30 *Meditation II* (30–34)  
Thomson, 20–25, 37–39

Fri., Sept 1 *Meditation III* (34–41)  
Thomson, 26–32

Mon., Sept 4 *Meditation IV* (41–45)  
Thomson, 35–36

Wed., Sept 6 *Meditation V* (45–48)  
Thomson, 32–35

Fri., Sept 8 *Meditation VI* (48–51)  
Thomson, 39–42

Mon., Sept 11 *Meditation VI* (51–55)  
Thomson, 42–51

#### **Spinoza**

Wed., Sept 13 *Ethics I*, Definitions, Axioms, Propositions 1–17 (129–38)  
Thomson, 54–64

Fri., Sept 15 *Ethics I*, Propositions 19–36, Appendix (138–49)  
Thomson, 65–69

Mon., Sept 18 *Ethics II*, Definitions, Axioms, Propositions 1–13 (149–56)  
Thomson, 69–73

Wed., Sept 20 *Ethics II*, Postulates, Propositions 14–49 (156–72)  
Thomson, 74–77

Fri., Sept 22 *Ethics V*, Propositions 21–42 (172–80)  
Thomson, 77–79

#### **Leibniz**

Mon., Sept 25 *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sections 1–15 (184–93)  
Thomson, 83–84, 90–91, 86–87

Wed., Sept 27 *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sections 16–37 (193–207)  
Thomson, 88–90

Fri., Sept 29	“Primary Truths,” “A New System of Nature” (225–34) Thomson, 84–86, 87–88
Mon., Oct 2	<i>Monadology</i> (235–43) Thomson, 92–100
Wed., Oct 4	Newton, <i>Principia</i> , “Scholium to Definitions”; Leibniz, <i>Letters to Clarke</i> , First and second letters (244–252) Thomson, 104–08
Fri., Oct 6	Catch-up day – no new readings <b>First paper due</b>
Oct. 7–15	FALL BREAK
<b>Locke</b>	
Mon., Oct 16	<i>Essay I</i> , chaps. 1–2; II, chap. 1 (270–81) Thomson, 147–50
Wed., Oct 18	<i>Essay II</i> , chaps. 2–8, 12 (281–90, 293–95) Thomson, 150–59
Fri., Oct 20	<i>Essay II</i> , chap. 23 (312–20) Thomson, 160–64
Mon., Oct 23	<i>Essay II</i> , chap. 27 (320–29) Thomson, 165–69
<b>Berkeley</b>	
Wed., Oct 25	<i>Three Dialogues</i> , Preface, First Dialogue/first half (413–23) Thomson, 186, 194–97
Fri., Oct 27	<i>Three Dialogues</i> , First Dialogue/second half (423–33) Thomson, 186–93
Mon., Oct 30	<i>Three Dialogues</i> , Second Dialogue (433–43) Thomson, 198–204
Wed., Nov 1	<i>Three Dialogues</i> , Third Dialogue/first half (443–52) Thomson, 204–207
Fri., Nov 3	<i>Three Dialogues</i> , Third Dialogue/second half (452–61)
<b>Hume</b>	
Mon., Nov 6	<i>Inquiry</i> , Author’s Advertisement, sections 1–3 (491–99) Thomson, 211–16
Wed., Nov 8	<i>Inquiry</i> , section 4 (499–506) Thomson, 218–28
Fri., Nov 10	<i>Inquiry</i> , sections 5, 7 (506–12, 514–22) Thomson, 216

Mon., Nov 13	<i>Inquiry</i> , sections 6, 10 (512–514, 534–543)
Wed., Nov 15	<i>Inquiry</i> , section 12 (550–557)
Fri., Nov 17	<i>Inquiry</i> , section 8 (522–32)
Mon., Nov 20	Catch-up day – no new readings <b>Second paper due</b>
Nov 22–26	THANKSGIVING BREAK
<b>Kant</b>	
Mon., Nov 27	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , Prefaces (634–641) Thomson, 249
Wed., Nov 29	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , Introduction, sections 4–7 (641–46) Thomson, 250–51
Fri., Dec 1	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , Transcendental Aesthetic (646–53) Thomson, 251–56
Mon., Dec 4	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , On Logic as Such (653–54); <i>Prolegomena</i> , The Transcendental Problem, Part II, §§14–20, 27–33 (597–600, 604–07) Thomson, 262–64
Wed., Dec 6	<i>Prolegomena</i> , The Main Transcendental Problem, Part III, §§40–45 (612–15); <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , Third Antinomy, Possibility of the Causality through Freedom as Reconciled with the Universal Law of Natural Necessity (713–15, 728–29)
Fri., Dec 8	Course wrap-up – no new readings
Wed., Dec 13	<b>Final Exam: 9:00–11:00 A.M.</b>