

Syllabus
PHIL 4010 (3 Cr.)
Senior Seminar
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips
Office: 108F General Classrooms
Office Hours: MW 3:00-4:00, TR 10:00-11:30 & also by appointment
Email: kristopherphillips@suu.edu

Office Phone: 435.586.7912
Cell: 616.364.8045
If you're feeling sad, call: 719-266-2837

Class Meets:
MWF 2:00p-2:50p in GC 109

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an in-depth study of the philosophy of Rene Descartes. Considered the “father of modern philosophy,” Descartes offered important contributions in metaphysics, epistemology, mathematics, science, and the study of religion. We will study Descartes’s works in their historical context and critically examine his views on core issues as diverse as God’s existence and nature, free will, the mind-body problem, and the foundations of knowledge. The first portion of the course will involve a deep reading of the *Discourse on the Method*, *The Meditations on First Philosophy*, and will be supplemented with selections from *The Principles of Philosophy*, and the *Objections and Replies* to the *Meditations*. The second portion of the course will focus on secondary literature concerning issues in Cartesian philosophy.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- **Critical Thinking:** The successful student will be able to differentiate between good and bad reasons for holding philosophical beliefs and will be able to seek out and identify the assumptions that lie at the basis of philosophical positions.
- **Inquiry and Analysis:** The successful student will be able to break complex philosophical problems into their components, and will be able to identify the consequences and implications of philosophical positions.
- **Reading Comprehension:** The successful student will be able to analyze and interpret abstract and difficult philosophical writing.
- **Writing:** The successful student will be able to express abstract and complex philosophical ideas in clear, precise, and logical prose.

Evaluation of these learning outcomes will be done through exams, papers, and in-class presentations.

TEXTS: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (vol. II) edited by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge, 1984) ISBN: 9780521288088
This can be found at the College Bookstore, and is *required*.

The following are *Strongly Recommended*:

The Philosophical Writings of Descartes (vol. I) edited by Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch (Cambridge, 1985)
ISBN: 9780521288071

The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: The Correspondence edited by Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch, Kenny (Cambridge, 1991) ISBN: 9780521423502

Materials not available in the required text will be provided on Canvas.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This list of readings is tentative, and the pace is brisk. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis, and the schedule is subject to revision.

I will email additional passages to read and think about on a day-to-day basis.

Weeks 1-2

Aristotelian Science and Metaphysics

Hankinson: *Science* [From the *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*] (Canvas)

Hankinson: *Philosophy of Science* [From the *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*] (Canvas)

Des Chene: *Aristotelian Natural Philosophy: Body, Cause, Nature* (Canvas)

Syllabus
PHIL 4010 (3 Cr.)
Senior Seminar
Spring 2015

complete answers to those questions. Each answer will likely be 3-5 pages. This is a substantial test. They will be open book and open note, but you are expected to complete the exam on your own.

One Term Paper. In addition to the exams, you are expected to write a term paper on any subject you like related to Descartes. Your paper should be 3000-5000 words. Since there are a number of cool issues here that we will not have time to cover, you are not limited to the topics or papers that we have covered. You will be required to provide me with a thesis/bibliography by the time I distribute the mid-term exam, and an outline of your paper by the close of week 11, at which time we will have a one-on-one meeting to discuss your paper. Start thinking about which issues are most interesting to you EARLY. Please note that the term paper is due at the start of WEEK 14. I encourage you to meet with me often regarding the term paper.

Two Presentations/Short Papers: During the first week I will ask you to sign up to present on, and subsequently write a short paper (roughly 700-1000 words) critically examining one of the *Secondary Texts* you have been assigned. You can, of course, do further research on these topics, and build upon the insights of your classmates, but further research is not a requirement of this assignment. I want to encourage you to meet with me a few days (or even better, a week) prior to each presentation.

Note: You may use these short papers as a basis for your term paper if you so desire.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Mid-Term Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Term Paper Thesis/Bibliography: 5%

Term Paper Outline/meeting: 5%

Final Term Paper: 15%

Presentation/Short Paper 1: 10%

Presentation/Short Paper 2: 15%

POLICY:

Late Work: I will accept late exams, but for each 24-hour period that the paper is late, the grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade.

Grade Disputes: If you feel that your work has been unfairly assessed, you may ask that I reconsider. I am, after all, a human who makes mistakes on occasion. I will do so **only if** you submit to me, on paper, a one-paragraph typewritten explanation of why you believe that your work has been unfairly evaluated. You must indicate the grade you believe yourself to deserve and explain clearly why it is that you deserve that grade. Your dispute must be submitted within **one week** of receiving your grade.

Attendance: Excessive absences (6 or more) will hurt you 1 letter grade (as in A- to B-). Philosophy is hard even if you come to class. Skip at your own risk. You are responsible for information that I offer in lecture that is not in the readings. I will not give you notes for unexcused absences because I am a recalcitrant bastard. Participation in class discussion can raise your grade up to 1/3 of a letter grade.

Plagiarism or academic fraud of any sort will result in an F for the course. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter. Please familiarize yourself with Southern Utah University's *Student Handbook*, which you can find online at <https://www.suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP633Academic.pdf>. I will follow the regulations described in this document for dealing with cheating, plagiarism, etc. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism or academic fraud after reading through the student handbook, please do not hesitate to ask me for further clarification.

Syllabus
PHIL 4010 (3 Cr.)
Senior Seminar
Spring 2015

Disabilities: I warmly welcome any of you who have disabilities. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Office for Students with Disabilities. The Office for Students with Disabilities determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of these services and aids. Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines. For Southern Utah University's full policy, see:

<http://suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP119Disability.pdf>.

Emergency Management: In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://suu.edu/emergency>.

HEOA Compliance: The sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S. copyright law, is prohibited by law.