

Syllabus  
PHIL 4120 (3 Cr.)  
Modern Philosophy  
Fall 2021

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips  
Office: 108F General Classrooms  
Office Hours: M: 4:00-5:00p, T: 11:00a-2:00p, W: 11:00a-12:00p & also by appointment

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Class Meets:  
MWF 3:00p-3:50p in GC 110

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The traditional narrative surrounding the development of philosophy in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries revolves around a dispute between so-called “rationalists” (Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz), “empiricists” (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume), culminating in a great unifier (Kant). There are a number of reasons to be unhappy with this narrative. It oversimplifies the complex interactions and influences important thinkers had on one another; ignores the contributions women made to the intellectual scene; forces us to study systematic thinkers in an incomplete way; and offers at best a shallow understanding of tremendously rich philosophical and scientific issues. In this class, we will focus on only three figures from the “modern” era: Rene Descartes, Margaret Cavendish, and David Hume. We will devote substantial time to developing and understanding their philosophical systems and the interconnections between these thinkers. The idea is to develop the skills required to approach the works from this era (for example: how to read texts closely, how to extract extended arguments from longer manuscripts, how to reconstruct arguments in a way that is charitable to the author, how to be sensitive to and avoid anachronism, and how to approach a philosopher’s work *systematically*). The reason that we will focus on these skills is that they will allow you continue to read modern philosophy carefully and attentively well beyond our short time together. To that end, I have included on the last page a list of works from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that we will not read this semester, but that deserve careful attention, and will prepare you for future studies better than almost any of your peers.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

- Critical Thinking: The successful student will begin to 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 begin to be able to break complex philosophical problems into their components, and will be able to identify the consequences and implications of philosophical positions.
- Writing: The successful student will be able to express some abstract and complex philosophical ideas in clear, precise, and logical prose.

Learning outcomes will be evaluated through exams, a paper, and discussions both in-class and on Canvas.

**TEXTS:** Rene Descartes: *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings* Trans. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch; Cambridge University press, 1998. ISBN: 978-0-521-35812-5 (**CSM**)  
Margaret Cavendish: *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy* Ed. O’Neill; Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN: 978-0-521-77675-2 (**OEP**)  
David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Steinberg; Hackett Publishing, 1993. ISBN: 978-0-87220-229-0 (**EHU**)  
These can be found at the College Bookstore, and are *required*.

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**SCHEDULE OF READINGS:**

This list of readings is tentative. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis.

**Week 1**

**Introduction**

*Dedicatory Letter to the Sorbonne & Preface to the Reader* (Canvas)

*Synopsis & First Meditation* (CSM 73-79) & Selections from *Objections and Replies* (CSM 123-126)

**Weeks 2-5**

**Descartes**

*Second Meditation* (CSM 80-86) & Selections from *Objections and Replies* (CSM 126-131)

*Third Meditation* (CSM 86-98) & Selections from *Objections and Replies* (CSM 131-133)

*Fourth Meditation* (CSM 98-105) & Selections from *Objections and Replies* (CSM 133-135)

*Fifth Meditation* (CSM 105-110) & Selections from *Objections and Replies* (CSM 135-143)

*Sixth Meditation* (CSM 110-122) & Selections from *Objections and Replies* (CSM 143-150)

*Passions of the Soul* (CSM 218-238)

**Recommended:** Griffioen and Phillips: *Via Transformativa: Reading Descartes' Meditations as a Mystical Text*  
**[Descartes Exam]**

**Weeks 6-10**

**Cavendish**

**Recommended:** Cunning: *Introduction* (Canvas)

**Part I**

*Sections 1-3, 9* (OEP 46-53)

*Section 16-17* (OEP 74-75) & Descartes *Principles* II (CSM 189-199) & Letter XXX (Canvas)

*Sections 18, 20-21* (OEP 79-90)

*Section 31* (OEP 125-131)

*Sections 35-37* (OEP 137-194)

**Part II**

*Sections 1-3* (OEP 195-200)

*Section 6* (OEP 204-208)

*Sections 9-10* (OEP 214-216)

*Sections 13-15* (OEP 218-224)

*Section 20* (OEP 227-240)

*Section 26* (OEP 247-248)

**Part III**

*All* (OEP 249-275)

**[Book Review Project Due\*]**

**[Cavendish Exam]**

**Weeks 11-13**

**Hume – Passages from the *Treatise* are recommended**

*Sections 1-3* (EHU 1-15) [*Treatise* 1.1.1-1.1.7 (Canvas)]

*Section 4-5* (EHU 15-37) [*Treatise* 1.3.1-1.3.6 (Canvas)]

*Section 6* (EHU 37-39) [*Treatise* 1.3.11-1.3.13 (Canvas)]

*Section 7* (EHU 39-53) [*Treatise* 1.3.14-1.3.15 (Canvas)]

*Section 8* (EHU 53-69) [*Treatise* 2.3.1-2.3.3 (Canvas)]

*Section 10* (EHU 72-90)

*Section 12* (EHU 107-111) [*Treatise* 1.4.1 (Canvas)]

**[Term Paper Due\*]**

**[Hume Exam]**

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**NOTE: There are some dates that I will have to offer the class via synchronous remote delivery, as I will be traveling. While online attendance is mandatory, I will record those classes and post the recording to Canvas. Those dates are:**

- Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Friday November 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Friday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Monday November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Additionally, we will not have class on the following dates:**

- Wednesday December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Monday December 13<sup>th</sup>.

**ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION, POLICY:**

*Three Exams* (60%; 20% for each exam) The exams will be take-home. You will be expected to complete the exams in roughly five days. I expect each exam to be 4-5 pages typed. You are to work alone; standard exam rules apply. More on this in class.

*Ten Weekly Discussion Board Posts* (10%; 1% for each) I expect you to keep up on the reading. To facilitate discussion and keep you on track, I expect you to complete 10 weekly discussion board posts. You may respond to a thread already going, or you may begin a discussion of your own. I expect these to be thoughtful, reflective, substantive posts. A question with no follow-up is not sufficient for your contribution. I would like to see careful engagement with the course material, but I'd also like to see you go *beyond* the class discussion. These may be critical or clarificatory, but must not be a mere summary of what you've read.

*Standard Term Paper* (30%) You will be expected to complete a term paper on any topic relevant to the modern philosophy. You are not limited to topics that we discuss explicitly in class, and you are welcome (and encouraged) to do research (whether secondary or primary) beyond the books we read. Your paper should be between 2000-3000 words. For standard approaches to writing papers in the history of philosophy, please see the "Some Basic Structures for Historical Papers" file on the Canvas homepage.

--OR--

*Book Review Project* (30%) You will be expected to write a scholarly book review of one (section) of one of the texts from the Modern period that we have not covered in class. On the last page of the syllabus, you will find a list of works by philosophers from (roughly) the Modern period. Select **ONE** of these texts and set up a meeting with me where we will determine which section(s) of it you will read.

Your written work should not exceed 2000 words in total. In short, I would like a critical response to the book (or section) you've read. To do so you must first summarize the central argument of the book (or section). After you have summarized the central argument in the text, you will need to raise *ONE theory internal* and *ONE theory external* objection to the view defended in the text. You must also explain how the author *should* respond. You may use secondary sources in order to better understand the text you are reading, but standard citation rules apply.

I will post a few examples of published scholarly book reviews on Canvas.

NOTE: I can and will feel free to utilize turnitin.com to ensure the originality of your work. As such, I will require at least an electronic copy of your paper, and probably a hard copy as well.

**Late Work:** I will accept late exams, papers and book reviews but for each 24-hour period that the paper is late, the grade will be reduced by 4%. I will not accept late online posts. **You must post your comment by 11:59p Sunday each week.**

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**Grade Disputes:** If you feel that your work has been unfairly assessed, you may ask that I reconsider. I am, after all, a human with a unique perspective and various background experiences and beliefs that may lead to different interpretations of your work than what you had in mind. 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.

**Extra Credit and Final Grades:** I will *not*, under any circumstances, offer extra credit. If you are concerned about your grade, come to my office hours. Please do so before the end of the semester. With regard to final grades, you will get the grade you have earned. Asking me to bump, round up, or otherwise adjust your final grade will guarantee that I will NOT adjust your final grade. Please do not ask.

**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.

**COVID:** I would prefer that we be able to keep this class Face-to-Face. In order to do so, I strongly recommend that you (a) wear a mask while in class, (b) consider getting vaccinated if you have not already, and (c) monitor your health carefully. If you have any symptoms of illness at all, STAY HOME. I will work with you to ensure you are able to get notes, will waive in-class works for you, etc. (if you let me know *before* class that you won't be there).

**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.

**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.

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**Other Important Works from the Modern Period (a non-exhaustive list)**

- Machiavelli: *The Prince*  
Montaigne: *Essays* (esp. *Apology for Raymond Sebond*)  
Bacon: *The New Organon*  
Galileo: *The Starry Messenger*  
Galileo: *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*  
Hobbes: *Leviathan*  
Hobbes: *De Cive*  
Descartes: *Principles of Philosophy*  
Descartes: *Le Monde* (The World)  
Descartes: *L'Homme* (Treatise on Man)  
Elisabeth of Bohemia: *Correspondence with Descartes*  
Cavendish: *The Blazing World*  
Spinoza: *Theological-Political Treatise*  
Spinoza: *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*  
Spinoza: *Ethics*  
Conway: *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*  
Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*  
Leibniz: *Monadology*  
Leibniz: *Correspondence with Clarke*  
D. Cudworth: *Correspondence with Leibniz*  
Newton: *De Gravitatione*  
Newton: *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*  
Locke: *Two Treatises of Government* (esp. the second)  
Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*  
Cockburn: *A Defense of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding*  
Malebranche: *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*  
Malebranche: *The Search After Truth*  
Berkeley: *Three Dialogues*  
Berkeley: *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*  
Berkeley: *Correspondence with Johnson*  
Pascal: *Pensées*  
Butler: *Fifteen Sermons*  
Mandeville: *The Fable of the Bees*  
Hutcheson: *An Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil*  
Smith: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*  
Hume: *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Parts II, III)  
Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*  
Reid: *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*  
Reid: *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*  
Rousseau: *The Social Contract*  
Rousseau: *The First and Second Discourses*  
Du Chatelet: *Commentary on Newton's Principia*  
Du Chatelet: *Discourse on Happiness*  
Du Chatelet: *Foundations of Physics*  
Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Right of Woman*  
Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*  
Kant: *Critique of Practical Reason*  
Kant: *Critique of Judgment*  
Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*  
Shepherd: *An Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect...*  
Shepherd: *Essays on the Perception of the External Universe*