



Department of Philosophy,
University of Notre Dame

PHIL 30302 // History of Modern Philosophy

Spring 2025

Instructor: John William Waldrop

E-mail: jwaldrop@nd.edu

Meeting Days: Tues & Thurs

Section 1 Time: 12:30pm-1:45pm

Section 2 Time: 2:00pm-3:15pm

Room: DeBartolo Hall 224

Course description: In this course, we will rigorously examine the key philosophical thinkers and movements of the Early Modern period, focusing on the works of philosophers such as René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant. Through close readings of key philosophical texts, students will engage with foundational questions about knowledge, reality, God, perception, and the nature of the self. This course invites students to not only trace the development of philosophical thought but also to actively engage with key philosophical texts, drawing connections between foundational ideas and perennial debates in philosophy. Through writing assignments, discussions, and examinations, students will hone their critical thinking skills and deepen their philosophical acumen.

Student Responsibilities: To be successful in this philosophy course, students should attend all lectures prepared to actively participate in discussions; meticulously complete readings before class to enable productive dialogue; thoroughly review material in preparation for exams; and submit assignments on time while following provided format guidelines:

- Turn in hard copies of each of your short papers at the end of the lecture on the listed due date.
- Schedule a 20-minute slot during exam week for an individual oral exam. Signups will take place during the last week of classes.

Adhering to these expectations and procedures will lead to an enriching semester.

Course Materials: Most of the readings for the course will be from the following required textbooks:

1. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*. Editor: Robert Merrihew Adams (Hackett)
2. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translator: Donald A. Cress (Hackett)
3. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Editor: Eric Steinberg (Hackett)
4. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*. Translator: James W. Ellington (Hackett)
5. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*. Translators: Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew (Hackett)
6. Thomas Reid, *Inquiry and Essays*. Editors: Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer (Hackett)

The remaining readings for the course will be available under “files” in the page for this course on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation and Attendance (10%)
2. One mid-term exam (10%)
3. Four short papers (15% each)
4. One final exam (20%)

Important Deadlines: See the course schedule below.

Late submission policy: Paper assignments should be submitted by or prior to the listed due date. I will not typically punish reasonable delays, and please feel free to email me with good-faith requests for extensions. If this lenient policy is abused or if I conclude that it is leading to poor learning outcomes, a more inflexible policy will be instituted.

Attendance and Participation: Students should arrive on time to all lectures and should participate in discussions. Please feel free to email me informing me of reasonable reasons for your absence. For now, no particular penalties will attach to repeated absences, though if this lenient policy is abused or if I conclude that it is leading to poor learning outcomes, a more inflexible policy will be instituted.

Technology Policy: To facilitate engaged dialogue, laptops, phones and other electronic devices should be closed during class. Students should possess hard copies of all textbooks. Those requiring technology access due to learning needs or disability accommodations should provide appropriate notice through the Sara Bea Accessibility Services in the Center for Student Support and Care.

Outside of class, assignments should be completed without the assistance of LLM chatbots like ChatGPT or Claude.

Other Notes on Classroom Etiquette: Be respectful, kind, encouraging, and patient with others.

Interesting links:

1. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://iep.utm.edu>
2. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

Course Schedule:

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1: 1/13-17	1/14: First day of class	1/16
Week 2: 1/20-24	1/21: No class (traveling)	1/23
Week 3: 1/27-31	1/28	1/30
Week 4: 2/3-7	2/4	2/6
Week 5: 2/10-14	2/11	2/13
Week 6: 2/17-21	2/18	2/20
Week 7: 2/24-28	2/25	2/27
Week 8: 3/3-7	3/4	3/6: Midterm (& Papers 1 & 2 due Friday)
Week 9: 3/10-14	No class (Spring Break)	
Week 10: 3/17-21	3/18	3/20
Week 11: 3/24-28	3/25	3/27
Week 12: 3/31-4/4	4/1	4/3
Week 13: 4/7-11	4/8	4/10: Paper 3 due Friday
Week 14: 4/14-18	4/15	4/17
Week 15: 4/21-25	4/22	4/24
Week 16: 4/28-5/2	4/29:	5/1: Paper 4 due Friday
Week 17: 5/5-9	No class (Finals)	

Reading Schedule:

1. 1/14, *First day of class*: No readings
2. 1/16, *The Religious Context of Early Modern Philosophy*: Martin Luther, "Address to the German Nobility"; Galileo, "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina"
3. 1/21, **No Lecture—Traveling**
4. 1/23, *The Scientific Context of Early Modern Philosophy*: Galileo, selections from "Letters on Sunspots" (1613); Descartes, Part V from *Discourse on Method*; Descartes, "Letter to Mersenne"; van Maastricht, selections from *Novitatum Cartesianarum Gangraena*
5. 1/28, *Descartes (i)*: Descartes, "First Meditation" and "Second Meditation" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*
6. 1/30, *Descartes (ii)*: "Second Meditation" and "Third Meditation" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*
7. 2/4, *Descartes (iii)*: "Fourth Meditation" and "Fifth Meditation" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*; also Part I §§51-53 and Part II §4 in *Principles of Philosophy*
8. 2/6, *Descartes (iv)*: "Sixth Meditation" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*; also Part I §60 in *Principles of Philosophy*
9. 2/11, **No Class**
10. 2/13, *Descartes and Princess Elisabeth*: Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, "Selections from her Correspondence with Descartes" in Atherton, *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*
11. 2/18, *Logic and Method*: Gassendi, selections from *Dissertations in the Form of Paradoxes Against the Aristotelians*; Arnauld and Nicole, IV.11-13 in *The Port-Royal Logic*
12. 2/20, *Leibniz (i)*: §§1-7 in *Discourse on Metaphysics*; "On the Ultimate Origination of Things"
13. 2/25, *Leibniz (ii)*: §§8-16, 23-29 in *Discourse on Metaphysics*
14. 2/27, *Leibniz (iii)*: *The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology*
15. 3/4, *Leibniz (iv)*: Selections from Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*; Leibniz, §§30-37 in *Discourse on Metaphysics*; review §§78-90 in *The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology*

16. 3/6, *Midterm Exam (No Lecture)*

Spring Break: No Class

17. 3/18, *Locke (i)*: Skim Bk. I.2; read Bk. II.1 and begin reading II.8 in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

18. 3/20, *Locke, (ii)*: Finish reading Bk. II.8 and read Bk II.12 and II.23 in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

19. 3/25, *Berkeley (i)*: Dialogue One in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*

20. 3/27, *Berkeley (ii)*: Dialogue Two in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*

21. 4/1, *Berkeley (iii)*: Dialogue Three in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*

22. 4/3, *Hume (i)*: §§II-V (pp. 9-37) in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

23. 4/8, *Hume (ii)*: §VII & §XII (pp. 39-53 & pp. 102-114) in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

24. 4/10, *Reid (i)*: "Introduction" and "Of Smelling" (pp. 3-31) in *An Inquiry to the Human Mind: on the Principles of Common Sense*

25. 4/15, *Reid (ii)*: "Of Hearing" and skim "Of Touch" (pp. 31-61) in *An Inquiry to the Human Mind: on the Principles of Common Sense*

26. 4/17, *Reid (iii)*: "Of Sight" and §3 in "Conclusion" (pp. 61-103, 112-115) in *An Inquiry to the Human Mind: on the Principles of Common Sense*

27. 4/22, *Kant (i)*: "Preface" and "Preamble" (pp. 1-22) in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

28. 4/24, *Kant (ii)*: §§6-20 (pp. 23-42) in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*

29. 4/29, *Kant (iii)*: §§21-32, 40-44, 56 (pp. 42-53, 65-68, 83-84) in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*