

Disputes in Early Modern Philosophy

Course Info

Instructor: Richard Fry, rjf38@georgetown.edu

Meeting Time: Section 01: Tuesday/Thursday, 3:30-4:45PM, Walsh 390

Section 02: Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30-7:45PM, Walsh 498

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 5:00-6:00PM, Philosophy Department (2nd Floor, New North)

Course Description:

Within the philosophical communities that flourished from 1650 to 1800, thinkers debated issues both old and new. For instance, they disputed the status of the new experimental science—could it really ground knowledge?— and the place of human beings within that new vision of the world. In service of their positions, they offered clever arguments and compelling criticisms of their friends and rivals. They differed over arguments claiming to show that God exists, too, some claiming that they could—and did—conclusively show that there is a supreme being, others holding that the arguments were flawed. They argued about whether non-human animals have souls, among many other topics.

In this class, we'll look at how thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Isaac Newton, Margaret Cavendish, G.W.V. Leibniz, Samuel Clarke, and Anne Conway contributed to these debates by enacting them for ourselves. One class meeting every week will feature a debate, and two members of the class will serve as the lead for their debate teams. Every student will be expected to participate in one debate. In addition, each student will be expected to provide a write-up of her/his debate (6-8pp) at the end of the semester.

Required Texts:

Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources (Second Edition)
ed. Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins
ISBN: 978-0-87220-978-7

Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period
ed. Margaret Atherton
ISBN: 978-0-87220-259-7

Policies

The Honor Code and Plagiarism: You are expected and required to uphold standards of academic honesty in this course. Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable. Familiarize yourself with what counts as plagiarism: <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>

The Honor Council adjudicates cases of suspected academic dishonesty. In effort to uphold this university's high standards, I will submit any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Honor Council, who will investigate. Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.

Preparedness and Attitude: You are responsible for being prepared for class and comporting yourself in an appropriate manner. This includes reading assigned material, thinking about it so that you can ask questions, arriving on time, participating in discussion and treating other members of the class with respect and courtesy.

Readings and Laptops: You are expected to bring the assigned reading to each class meeting. Laptops will only be permitted when the readings are distributed electronically.

Due Dates: You are responsible for turning in your work on time. Each 24 hours or portion thereof that a piece of written work is late will result in the subtraction of 1/3 letter grade. All work more than a week late will receive an F. Missed presentations, unless rescheduled more than 24 hours *before the presentation is missed*, will receive an F.

Under some circumstances, it is possible to get an extension for written work because of illness, injury or family emergency. If you need an extension, email me *as soon as possible* with a brief description of your situation and if I approve we will work out an appropriate timeframe. Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

Grades and Grading: All papers for this course will be graded anonymously. Please submit your paper through Blackboard with the *last four digits* of your GUID and *without* your name. Failure to do so will result in a penalty to your grade.

If you believe the work you submitted deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask *in writing* for reconsideration. Your request must be submitted *within one week*, but no sooner than *two days after* the assignment is returned. Your written request *must explain why* you believe the work deserves a different grade. Please note that *if* a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

Changes: I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Blackboard.

Assignments and Assessment

Weekly Short Writing Assignment (30%)

In the first half of the course, you will be expected to write five short (150 to 200 word) reading response papers, about one a week. These papers should relate to the course content for the day they are turned in and should primarily consist of engagement with the text—working out positions, arguments or consequences—not reporting of opinions or personal experience.

Participation/Comportment (20%)

There is no attendance requirement for this class, but 20% of your final grade will be determined by participation. Participation should be understood broadly: be involved and attentive in class. You can get your participation points by making comments or asking questions in class, coming to office hours or emailing me. During the debates in the latter half of the course, asking good questions that demonstrate an understanding of the texts being discussed will be the primary way to get points. You'll lose points for looking at your phone, sleeping, failing to bring assigned readings, arriving consistently late, etc.

Your Debate (30%)

In the second half of the course, we will stage ten debates in class. Each debate will have three participants, one for each of the two positions being addressed and a third responsible for moderating the discussion and presenting objections and replies. The purpose of these debates is to make the positions and arguments of the authors involved clear so that we can further discuss the arguments and topics. Each debate will consist of three, ten minute presentations followed by about twenty minutes of Q&A from the class. Each presenter will be assessed individually on their presentation (including any slides or handouts they used) and response to questions. More details about this assignment and a rubric for it will be distributed during the term.

Final paper (20%)

At the end of the semester, you'll write a 6-8 page paper relating the content of your debate with special emphasis on the role you played. This paper will be due during the time scheduled for the final exam.

List of Readings

*All readings are from Ariew/Watkins (AW), Atherton (Ath),
or are available on Blackboard (*).*

Beginnings of Rationalism and Empiricism

- 14 Jan** – Descartes, *Meditations* 1-2 (AW 40-46)
16 Jan – Descartes, *Meditations* 3, 5 (AW 47-54, 58-61)
Elizabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence* (Ath. 15-17, 20-21)
21 Jan – Descartes and Hobbes, *Objections and Replies Against Meditations 2 and 3* (AW 76-82)
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch.34 and 46 (AW 129-136)

Rationalism

- 23 Jan** – Malebranche, *Search After Truth*, III.ii.3-6, IV.ii.3 (AW 203-210, 212-215)
28 Jan – Spinoza, Letters (AW 137-143)
30 Jan – Leibniz, *Monadology* §1-48 (AW 275-279)

Letters, We Get Letters

- 06 Feb** – Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence through letter 4*

Mind/Spirit, Matter

- 11 Feb** – Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* (Ath. 24-45)
13 Feb – Conway, *Principles* (Ath. 48-76)

Empiricism

- 18 Feb** – Locke, *Essay*, I.ii.1-14, II.i.2-9,20-25, II.xi, III.iii (AW 318-321, 323-324, 327-328, 339-340, 377-381)
20 Feb – Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii, III.vi.1-26, IV.iii.6 (AW 367-377, 381-385, 393-395)
25 Feb – Locke, *Essay*, IV.x (AW, 405-411)
Berkeley, *Treatise* through I.33 (AW 438-453)
27 Feb – Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.6, *Dialogues of Natural Religion* 9 (AW 525-531, 621-623)
04 Mar – Hume, *Enquiry* 9-10 (AW 575-586)

**New readings will be assigned (and this syllabus will be updated) for presentation days
(March 6th and after).**

Class Calendar

Tuesday	Thursday
14 Jan - Beginnings of Rationalism Method of Doubt, Dualism	16 Jan - Beginnings of Rationalism Objections, Ontological Argument(s)
21 Jan - Beginnings of Empiricism Materialism	23 Jan - Rationalism Occasionalism, Ontological Argument(s)
28 Jan - Rationalism Infinite Substance	30 Jan - Rationalism Cosmological Argument, Thinking Matter
04 Feb - Canceled	06 Feb - Letters, We Get Letters Space, God, Identity
11 Feb - Mind/Spirit and Matter Thinking Matter	13 Feb - Mind/Spirit and Matter Matterly Spirits
18 Feb - Empiricism Innate Ideas, Abstract Ideas, Essences	20 Feb - Empiricism Identity, Terms, Thinking Matter
25 Feb - Empiricism Idealism, God, Minds	27 Feb - Empiricism Religion, Personal Identity
04 Mar - Empiricism Miracles, Animals	06 Mar - Spillover/Decision Day
11 Mar - Spring Break	13 Mar - Spring Break
18 Mar - Debate #1 Topic TBA	20 Mar - Debate #2 Topic TBA
25 Mar - Debate #3 Topic TBA	27 Mar - Debate #4 Topic TBA
01 Apr - Debate #5 Topic TBA	03 Apr - Debate #6 Topic TBA
08 Apr - Debate #7 Topic TBA	10 Apr - Debate #8 Topic TBA
15 Apr - Debate #9 Topic TBA	17 Apr - Easter Break
22 Apr - Debate #10 Topic TBA	24 Apr - Wrap-up/Spillover

Final paper due during the time scheduled for the final exam.

Resources

Philosophical Resources

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

The Philosopher's Index: accessible at library.georgetown.edu, through "Articles and Databases."

Philpapers.org: <http://philpapers.org>

-

Academic Resources

Academic Resource Center: Leavey center Suit 335

<http://ldss.georgetown.edu> and arc@georgetown.edu

The Academic Resource Center arranges accommodations for students with disabilities and provides assistance with study skills.

Writing Center: 217A Lauinger Library

<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu> and writingcenter@georgetown.edu

The Writing Center provides one-on-one assistance with academic writing skills. Their website also has many useful links for improving your writing.

Scholarly Research and Academic Integrity

Resources are available at <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorials/academic-integrity/refresher-tipsheet>

-

Health and Wellness Resources

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): Eastern Side of Darnall Hall

(202)687-6985 and <http://caps.georgetown.edu>

24-hour doctor on-call: (202) 444-PAGE

CAPS is a primary mental health resource assisting students in overcoming difficulties that interfere with the attainment of their personal and educational goals.

Health Education Services: 207 Village C West

(202)687-8949 and <http://healthed.georgetown.edu>

Health Education Services is comprised of health professionals who are available to help students deal with a range of health issues, including pregnancy, alcohol and drug issues, eating disorders, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and stress management. All services are individualized, confidential, and free for students.

Student Health Center: Ground Floor, Darnall Hall

Appointments: (202)687-2200; General info: (202)687-4500

<http://shc.georgetown.edu>