History of Philosophy: Early Modern (PHIL 210-3)

Professor Baron Reed
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office hours: MW 12:30-1:30

Spring Quarter, 2008
Technological Institute LR3
MW 2:00-3:20

Teaching Assistants: Matthew Mullins, Alison Peterman, Adam Ring, Wolfhart Totschnig

Course Description:
The transition from the Medieval to the Modern era in philosophy began, roughly, in the late 16th
and early 17th centuries and ended, again roughly, in the late 18th century. New methods of acquiring
knowledge, along with a radically different conception of the world, permanently transformed the
philosophical enterprise. In this course we will examine the views of six of the most important
modern philosophers—Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume—on the nature of
God, causation, substance, mind, knowledge, and the material world.

Required Texts:
Ariew, Roger and Watkins, Eric (eds.). 2000. Readings in Modern Philosophy, Volume I (Descartes, Spinoza,
Ariew, Roger and Watkins, Eric (eds.). 2000. Readings in Modern Philosophy, Volume II (Locke, Berkeley,

Recommended Texts:

Required Work:
Work for the course will include three papers and a take-home final exam:
1st paper: 4 pages, worth 20% of the final grade
2nd paper: 5 pages, worth 25% of the final grade
3rd paper: 5 pages, worth 25% of the final grade
final exam: worth 30% of the final grade

Excellent class participation may also factor into the final grade.

Course Policies:
(1) In order to pass the course, all assignments must be completed.
(2) Extensions must be requested before the due date.
(3) Only paper versions of the assignments may be handed in.
(4) VERY IMPORTANT: plagiarism will not be tolerated. All cases of alleged violation of
academic integrity will be referred to the Assistant Dean for Advising and Academic
Integrity. Possible penalties range from failing the course to permanent exclusion from
the university. For more on plagiarism, see:
http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/dishon.html
**Students with Disabilities:**
Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (847-467-5530) and the instructor, as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

**Blackboard:**
Much of the business of this course, including access to readings on reserve, will be conducted through the Course Management System (Blackboard). You are encouraged to check it frequently, as I may post announcements there from time to time. To access Blackboard, you will need to use your NetID and password. The web address for Blackboard is: https://courses.northwestern.edu/webapps/login/.

**Schedule of Readings:**

Mar. 31  Introduction to Early Modern Philosophy

Apr. 2  Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: First Meditation, Second Meditation (I, 27-34); Recommended (but after you’ve read the first two meditations): Letter of Dedication, Preface to the Reader, Synopsis (I, 22-7)

Apr. 7  Descartes, Third Meditation, Fourth Meditation (I, 34-45)

Apr. 9  Descartes, Fifth Meditation, Sixth Meditation (I, 45-55); Galileo, *The Assayer*, “Corpuscularianism” (I, 8-11)


First paper due


Apr. 23  Malebranche, *Search after Truth*: III.ii.6 (I, 220-2); VI.ii.3 (I, 225-233); Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*: 1-11 (I, 234-240)

Apr. 28  Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*: 12-37 (I, 240-257)

Apr. 30  Leibniz, *The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology* (I, 285-293); Third & Fourth Letters to Clarke (I, 307-13)

May 5  Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: I.1-2; II.1.1-5; II.8.7-26 (II, 11-18, 27-31); Boyle, *Of the Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular or Mechanical Philosophy* (II, 4-10)

May 7  Locke, *Essay*: II.27 (II, 61-70)

Second paper due


May 26  Memorial Day (no class)

May 28  No class


Third paper due

June 4  (Reading period—make-up class)
    Hume, *Treatise* I.iv.1 (II, 289-92); *Inquiry* XII (II, 387-394);

June 9  Final exam due 11 AM