SYLLABUS[[1]](#footnote-1)

PHIL 320, 49506R,

*History of Modern Philosophy*

MWF 9:00 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. THH 213

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**MATERIALS**: Ariew and Watkins, eds. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary*

*Sources*, 2nd edition, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis,

2009; ISBN 978-0-87220-978-7

Atherton, Margaret, ed. *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis,

1994; ISBN 0-87220-259-3

Handouts: selections from various philosophers

**DESCRIPTION**: This course involves an intensive examination of the writings of great British and European philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries. Specifically, we shall examine Descartes’ attempt to relieve systemic skepticism, his conception of knowledge, his theory about the origin of error and his account of the relation of the rational subject, the knower, to the object of knowledge, the known. Descartes’ arguments against skepticism were not well received even by admirers like Arnauld. They thought that if we doubt the capacity of human reason to know, we must doubt any attempt to relieve that doubt by the use of reason. Moreover, Descartes argued that a knowing subject is actually an immaterial or spiritual substance. But this raises an obvious worry about how an immaterial object (the soul) can interact causally with material objects. In fact, Leibniz and others denied the possibility of the casual interaction of mental (spiritual) and material substances, despite the fact that choice often leads to bodily movement, and changes in the body often lead to changes in sensation. Leibniz seeks to avoid the problems associated with causal interactionism by proposing a spectacular theory that denies the existence of material substances, affirms the existence of mental or spiritual substances and claims that the physical universe is actually composed of ‘composites,’ the subject matter of natural science, which are grounded in simple spiritual substances, which Leibniz calls ‘monads.’ We shall interpret monads liberally, thinking of them as units of information. Philosophers from the start readers found Leibniz’s theory bizarre, but if interpreted liberally, I believe that Leibniz’s theory gives us a plausible as well as original way of conceiving the natural world.

Rationalists Descartes and Leibniz were challenged by the empiricist John Locke. Contrary to Descartes and Leibniz, Locke claims that all knowledge of nature originates from and is validated by experience. In this way, Locke seeks to accommodate the new science of Galileo, Boyle and Newton. Locke develops an ambitious view about language in which he attempts to account for general terms on the theory that general terms designate general ideas. Locke’s theory was challenged by other empiricists, especially Berkeley and Hume, because Locke seems to affirm the existence of ideas that cannot really be ideas of particular things and hence cannot be plausibly supposed to derive from experience. For example, the general idea of a triangle would be an idea of a triangle that did not have particular characteristics, like having an interior right angle or an interior angle greater than 90 degrees or having no interior angle greater than or equal to 90 degrees. Yet every triangle must have one of those three characteristics. As odd as it sounds, one of the most difficult problems in philosophy is to explain the nature and origin of general terms and general ideas.

Another idea that poses great difficult is the idea of causation. Rationalists like Descartes thought that effects depend upon their causes both for existence and identity. This theory, often called ‘the imprint theory of causation,’ accords with common sense. For example, the imprint made upon a piece of paper by a seal is determined by the engraving on the seal. Rationalists thought that common sense examples of causation encourage the thought that all causation could be analyzed on the imprint model. Yet Newtonian science, which affirms gravitational attraction, does not seem to accord with the imprint model. Hume famously denies the imprint model by insisting that the effect cannot be ‘discovered’ in the cause. But what could substitute for the imprint theory? Hume argues that perfect correlations that tell us what would happen under various conditions can accommodate modern science. Even so, Hume maintains, there is no argument, neither demonstrative nor ‘from experience,’ which shows that correlations that have held in the past will continue to hold in the future.

Kant complained that modern philosophy finds itself entangled in the excesses of Leibnizian metaphysics or else hobbled by the skeptical conclusions of Hume’s empiricism. Kant set out to set philosophy free from both. According to Kant, our confidence in natural science is justified by the fact that the reality science seeks to describe and explain is informed by the very categories that we bring to an understanding of it. Thus, if we can successfully analyze the structure of our own understanding, we shall discover the structure of the reality we seek to understand. To be sure, the structures we are considering are very general; they include the mathematical structure of ‘arithmetic,’ what later became known as real analysis, as well as Euclidean geometry, and certain metaphysical structures, like causation, that necessarily characterize the reality we seek to understand, which Kant called the ‘phenomenal realm.’

In addition, we shall be interested in a conceptual revolution that occurred over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the early seventeenth century the medieval thesis that faith and reason are essentially complementary remained intact. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, natural science was thought to threaten religious belief, and by the middle of the nineteenth century many philosophers argued that religion and reason are actually incompatible. Religion, they claimed, requires a ‘leap of faith,’ presumably a leap over the chasm of doubt opened by reason. Many people have thought that substantive scientific doctrine, e.g., Newton’s theory of gravitation or Darwin’s theory of evolution undermined religion. Our course will consider the matter at a deeper level, looking to see how the scientific revolution occasioned crucial changes in concepts like *substance, causation, existence and identity* and how those changes threatened the medieval synthesis of faith and reason.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

1, To introduce students to major works by key figures in the development of European philosophy in the 16th to later 18th centuries.

2. To trace the ways the major philosophers in this period are in dialogue with one another, and in particular to examine the role of women writers in the dialogue.

3. To study the complex interaction of philosophy, science and religion in the period, when boundaries between these areas of human concern were much more fluid than they are today.

4. To gain a facility in interpreting difficult texts from a period far removed from our own.

5. To develop skills in writing critical and analytical essays.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIUES:**

Any student who has registered with the office of Disability Services and Programs (DSP) and who has been certified by DSP as needing specific accommodations will gladly be afforded those accommodations. Please meet with either instructor as early as possible in the semester to discuss the best ways of providing these accommodations. We are very glad to work with you to tailor course requirements to your specific needs subject to considerations of general fairness for all students in the class.

**REQUIREMENTS**: There will be an **in-class midterm examination**, which will test for knowledge of the reading assignments as well as the expository and supplementary information delivered during lecture. The **final take-home paper**, which will deal with the philosophies of Hume and Kant, **will count in place of the final examination**. ***Class attendance is mandatory.***

***There will be two papers, (approximately eight pages in length).*** ***All papers should* be submitted electronically with extensions .doc, docx, or .pdf via Turnitin.** Paper prompts and exam topics are incorporated in the following schedule of lectures and assignments.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Paper #1 – 20%

Paper #2 – 20%

In-Class Midterm Exam – 30%

Final Take-Home Paper - 30%

Grading scale:

94: A

90: A –

87: B +

84: B

80**:** B **–**

And so forth.

Please remember that the University ***strictly (viz zero tolerance; no excuses/no exceptions***) ***prohibits plagiarism***. ***Plagiarism can be the mere failure to acknowledge the work of another as well as the deliberate misrepresentation of the work of another as your own. You must acknowledge your indebtedness not only to the ideas of others but also to their words.***

**In general, the only valid excuses for late papers, missed examinations or a grade of “IN” are family emergency or illness. Please remember that it is impossible to accommodate a special request by a single individual unless the same opportunity is extended to everyone in the class. This makes it very difficult to accommodate extensions of due dates for reasons other than those indicated above.**

**SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS**:

1. Mon Aug 21**: Lecture #1: Atomism and Mechanism**: Introduction:

Aristotelian hylomorphism, including Aristotle’s basic theory of explanation;

Main idea underlying Ptolemaic astronomy (cycles and epicycles); significance

of the Council of Trent; immediate reactions to Kepler and Galileo

Readings: Boyle, ‘Notes on a Good and an Excellent Hypothesis,’ handout.

2. Wed Aug 23: **Lecture #2: Boyle**: Boyle’s rejection of Aristotelian substantial

forms; mechanism; the “communication” of motion and the distinction between

inertial and gravitational force.

Readings: Boyle, “On the Excellence of the Mechanical Philosophy,”

MP, pp. 308 – 16.

3. Fri Aug 25: **Lecture #3: Project of the *Meditations***

Readings: Montaigne: Apology for Raymond Sebond, MP pp. 4 – 16.  
 Descartes: Dedicatory letter, Preface, Synopsis of the *Meditations*,

MP pp. 13 – 19 pp. 35 - 40.

4. Mon Aug 28: **Lecture #4: Descartes’ Method**: Clearly and distinctly perceiving

by the light of natural reason

Readings: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*: MP pp. 25 -34.

5. Wed Aug 30: **Lecture # 5: Cartesian Doubt:** Stages of Doubt; the Evil Demon

Hypothesis;

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations*: I, MP pp. 40 – 43.

6. Fri Sept 1: **Lecture #6:** **First Steps in the Resolution of Doubt**: The “*Cogito*,”

The nature of the self; ontological and epistemological status of the material

world;

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations*: II, MP pp. 43 - 47.

7. Mon Sep 4: **Labor Day University Holiday**

8. Wed Sep 6: **Lecture #7: Descartes’ First Argument for the Existence of God:**

Argument for the existence God from the fact of our idea of him, “*ex nihilo, nihilo*

*fit*,” the Correspondence Rule (formal and objective causes)

Readings: Descartes, Meditations III, pp. 47 -54.

9. Fri Sep 8: **Lecture #8: The Truth Rule**: Can the principle that whatever is

clearly and distinctly perceived is true withstand its own scrutiny?

Readings; Hand-out: “The Truth Principle”

10. Mon Sep; 11: **Lecture #9**: Responses to Descartes’ Argument for the Existence

of in *Meditations* III: Hobbes, Arnauld and Locke;

Readings: Hobbes and Descartes: *Objections and Replies*: MP pp. 78 – 82;

Arnauld and Descartes, *Objections and Replies*, MP pp. 83 – 92;

Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* MP pp. 406 – 11.

11. Wed Sep 13: **Lecture #10**: **The Nature of God, and the Compatibility of**

**God’s Existence with Human Error**: Descartes’ analysis of error; revisiting

systematic doubt, distinction between reasons for doubt and reasons to

withhold judgment, ontological argument for the existence of God, Cartesian

dualism, rational belief about the material world

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations* IV – VI, MP pp. 54 – 61.

12. Fri Sep 15: **Lecture #11 Descartes’ Philosophy of Mind in *Meditations***

**V and VI:** “Knowledge” of the material world; setting aside doubts about reason

previously raised in Meditation I; objections to Cartesian dualism;

Readings: Descartes, Meditations V, VI Correspondence, MP 58 – 68.

13. Mon Sep 18 **Lecture # 12 Descartes’ Critics** Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and

Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle

Readings: Elizabeth of Bohemia, “Correspondence with Descartes,” WPEMP,

pp. – 9 - 21.

Cavendish, “Philosophical Letters, Selections” WPEMP, pp. 22 – 45.

14.Wed Sep 20: **Lecture #13: Descartes Critics: Hobbes, Spinoza and Leibniz**

Material falsehood, the Circle, the Cartesian method and Cartesian dualism

Readings: Hobbes and Descartes: *Objections and Replies*: MP pp. 76 -9;

Spinoza: “Letter to Oldenburg” (1661), MP pp. 137 - 8.

“Letter to Oldenburg” (1665), MP pp. 142 - 3.

Leibniz: “Letter to Molanus,” MP pp. 104 – 5.

**Fri September 22, Paper #1: Due: Your paper** **must** **be submitted electronically with extensions .doc, docx, or .pdf via Turnitin in by 5:00 p.m. today, September 22.**

**Paper#1 Prompt: Precisely why does Descartes raise the` Evil Demon Hypothesis? Specifically, why is the doubt raised by EDH called ‘systematic doubt,’ as opposed to the ordinary doubt we experience when misperceive an object or hallucinate? What according to Descartes would relieve systematic doubt? What is Descartes’ argument for the existence of God in Meditations III. Why did some contemporaries think that Descartes method of resolving systematic doubt involves circular reasoning? Was Descartes’s reply convincing? *(approximately 8 pages)***

15. Fri Sep 22 **Lecture #14** **Leibniz: Simple “Spiritual Substances:** The

impossibility of material substance, simple spiritual substances, composites and

physical objects; the Identity of Indiscernibles, the Indiscernibility of Identicals,

the Principle of Sufficient Reason and the Principle of Non-contradiction;

Readings: Leibniz, *Monadology*, 1 – 37; MP, pp. 275 – 78.

16.Mon Sep 25: **Lecture #15: Leibniz on Nature and Substance:** Newton’s

argument for absolute space; Leibniz’s argument against absolute space

Leibniz on composability and the pre-established harmony between

composites and simples,

Readings: Leibniz, *Primary Truths,* MP, 265 – 68.

Newton, from *Letters to Clarke*, MP, pp. 294 – 303.

17. Wed Sep 27: In-Class Midterm Examination

**Wed Sep 27: The in-class midterm examination will be distributed electronically before the beginning of class as a document of WORD. Please download the document as a WORD file and respond to each question. The examination and its questions will be in red; please respond in black. There will be two matters covered on the examination. The first will deal with Descartes’ philosophy of mind. The second will deal with Leibniz’s ontology. Please return your completed examination electronically with extensions .doc, docx, or .pdf via Turnitin. (Hard copies will be distributed at the beginning of class; you may write your responses on the hard copy if you chose.)**

18. Fri Sep 29: **Lecture # 16 Leibniz on the Pre-established Harmony:** the pre-

established harmony between final and efficient causes; Leibniz on the problem

of Cartesian dualism; the problem of relations for Leibniz’s philosophy.

Readings: Leibniz *Monadology,* 38 – 90, MP pp. 278 – 83.

19. Mon Oct 2: **Lecture #17 Leibniz’s Critics**: Leibniz’s conception of motion;

explanation of the false appearance of the possibility of interaction of mind and

body, difficulties with the notion of the capacity of motion originating in

unextended substances; issues concerning the definition of compossibility in a

context free of relation.

Readings: Anne Viscountess Conway, selections from *The Principles of the Most*

*Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, WPEWP, pp. 46 – 76

Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham, selections from her

“Correspondence with Leibniz,” WPEWP, pp. 80 – 95

Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, handout.

20. Wed Oct 4: **Lecture #18: Locke on the Origin of Ideas and Self-Evident**

**Truths:** Locke’s doctrine of empiricism, the distinction between simple and

complex ideas, of ideas in general and their origin, ideas of sensation, ideas of

reflection

Readings: Locke, E*ssay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP pp. 317 – 28.

21. Fri Oct 6: **Lecture #19**: **Locke on Simple Ideas:** Locke on simple ideas of one

sense, of more than one sense, of both sensation and reflection; primary and

secondary qualities

Readings: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP, p. 328-- 40.

22. Mon Oct 9: **Lecture #20: Locke on Complex Ideas:** Of duration, mixed

modes, power and complex ideas of substances

Readings: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP, 340 – 66

23. Wed Oct 11: **Lecture #21: Locke on Identity and Diversity:** Identity of

Things, personal identity, the self.

Readings: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP pp. 367 – 77;

Catherine Trotter Cockburn, *A Defence of Mr. Locke’s Essay on*

*Human Understanding*, WPEMP, pp. 128 – 146.

24. Fri Oct 13: **Lecture #22:** **Locke’s Semantics**: General terms and abstract ideas

the distinction between; real essence/nominal essence; Berkeley’s objection;

Readings: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP, pp. 377 - 86

Berkeley, *Principles of Philosophy*, introduction, 1 – 25,

MP pp. 438 – 54.

25. Mon Oct 16: **Lecture #23:** **Locke’s Epistemology:** Of Knowledge and

Opinion: Knowledge in general, scientific knowledge and the experimental

method; Locke on the nature of demonstration and scientific investigation;

Readings: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP, pp 386 - 405

26. Wed Oct 18: **Lecture #24:** **Locke, Newton and Leibniz on Knowledge:**  Locke

on knowledge of the existence of God, of Degrees of Assent; contrasted with

opinions of Newton and Leibniz

Readings: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, MP, 405 - 21

Newton, *Principia,* *Optics*, MP 284 – 294

Leibniz, *Preface to the New Essays*, MP. 422 – 33.

27. Fri Oct 20: **Lecture #25: Berkelian Idealism:** Berkeley’s argument against

material substance; notions; the self and of God

Readings: Berkeley, *Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, 1 – 33, MP pp. 447 - 53.

Mary Shepard, “Selections from Essays on the Perception of an

External Universe,” WPEMP, pp. 147 – 159.

28. Mon Oct 23: **Lecture #26** **Hume on Idea Formation and Skepticism**

**Concerning the Projectabililty of Causal Knowledge**: Hume: skeptical doubts

concerning the understanding; argument against induction, the origin and

association of ideas, the nature of reasoning, abstract ideas, space and time,

Readings: Hume: *Treatise of Human Nature*, hand-out,

*An Enquiry Concerning Human* *Understanding,*

MP, pp. 533 – 48

29. Wed Oct 25: **Lecture #27 Hume on the Powers of Reason**: Hume’s

Conception of belief, probability of chances, probability ofcauses, arguments by

analogy and ‘unphilosophical probability’

Readings: *Treatise of Human Nature*, handout;

**Wed Oct 25, Paper #2: Due: Your paper must be submitted electronically with extensions .doc, docx, or .pdf via Turnitin in by 5:00 p.m. today.**

**Paper #2 Prompt: How does Locke account for general terms? for abstract ideas? What difficulties does Locke’s account face? How does Berkeley criticize Locke’s account? Why is it that Berkeley is called a ‘nominalist’? What difficulties are faced by nominalist accounts of abstract ideas? How does Berkeley deal with them? *(approximately 8 pages)***

30. Fri Oct 27: **Lecture #28: Hume on Free Will and the Self**: Hume on

‘Liberty,’ compatibilism and hard determinism, the possibility of founding a

religion on miracles

Readings: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, MP pp. 556 -76.

31. Mon Oct 30: **Lecture #29: Hume on Arguments for the Existence of God:**

The distinction between natural and revealed religion;The argument from

design; the cosmological argument and the ontological argument; significance of

Hume’s views about necessity in nature.

Readings: *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, MP 601 – 40.

32. Wed Nov 1: **Lecture #30: Hume on Metaphysics**: Against the concept of

substance, against Locke’s theory of the self, against the immateriality of the

soul, bundle theory of the self, skepticism concerning the self

Readings, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, MP pp. 576 -600.

*Treatise of Human Nature*, MP, pp. 517 – 32.

33. Fri Nov 3: **Lecture #31: Kant on Skepticism and the Excesses of**

**Rationalism**:Kant on the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction; analytic/synthetic

distinction, the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason,* MP pp. 717 – 29.

34. Mon Nov 6: **Lecture # 32: Kant’s Notion of the ‘Transcendental Aesthetic**,’

Kant’s philosophy of space and of time; the challenge of Einstein’s

theory of relativity. Arthur Eddington’s 1919 experiment; Can Kantian

philosophy accommodates conflicts between ‘perceiving’ and ‘conceiving’?

between theory and (Kantian) intuition?

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason,* MP pp. 729 – 37

hand-out

35. Wed Nov 8**: Lecture #33: Kant on the Unity of Apperception:** Kant on the

Pure concepts of the understanding; the Table of Judgments and Aristotelian

logic; emphasis on categories of quantity and of relations, ‘transcendental

deduction’ of the categories

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason,* pp. 737 – 56.

36. Fri Nov 10: **Lecture #34: Kant on the Axioms of Intuition and the**

**Anticipations of Perception**: The schematism of the categories, emphasis on

issues concerning cause and effect and the individuation of events by location

withinthe casual nexus: Did Kant solve Hume’s problem? Axiom of intuition,

anticipations of perception.

Readings: *Critique of Pure Re*ason, pp. MP, p. 757 -68

37. Mon Nov 13: **Lecture #35: Kant on the Analogies of Experience**: Analogies

of experience, pure reason as the seat of transcendental illusion, the

paralogisms of pure reason,

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason*, MP pp. 769 – 88.

38. Wed Nov 15: **Lecture #36 Kant of the Error of Taking Conditions of**

**Experience To Be the Objects of Experience:** The antinomies of pure

Reason: Emphasis on space and time and on ‘free will,’introduction to the

concept of ‘pure practical reason.’ making room for faith

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason*, MP, pp. 789 – 819.

39. Fri Nov 17: **Lecture #37**: **Kant on Causation, Self and God –** Skepticism

concerning God, criticisms of traditional ‘proofs’ of theexistence of God; ’the

possibility of ‘religion within the bounds of reason alone’

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason*, MP, pp. 819 – 31.

40. Mon Nov 20: **Lecture #38: Kant on Faith and Morals:** Introduction to

Kant’s conception of ‘pure practical reason,’ ‘intimations of the noumenal’

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason*, MP, pp. 831 - 35.

41. Wed Nov 22: **Thanksgiving Wednesday: University Holiday**

42. Fri Nov 24: **Thanksgiving Friday: University Holiday**

43. Mon Nov 27: **Lecture #39: The World View of the Enlightenment:** Newtonian

principles of scientific investigation, revisiting the theory of substantial forms

and Boyle’s vision of the mechanical hypothesis. The strict determinism of

d’Holbach and Laplace contrasted with Hume and Kant.

44. Wed Nov 29: **Lecture #40**: **Contemporary Challenges to the World-View of**

**the Enlightenment:** General Relativity andthe rejection of the Newtonian

conception of absolute space and time; rejection of Euclidean

geometry,randomness in nature (beta decay), indeterminism (Heisenberg),

gaps in detectible causal relations (non- locality)

45. Fri Dec 1: Course Evaluation (9:00 – 9: 15) Discussion of final take-home

paper

**Mon Dec 11 Take-home final: Due: Your paper must be submitted electronically with extensions .doc, docx, or .pdf via Turnitin by 1:00 p.m. today, Dec 11.**

**Final Paper Prompt: Explain how Hume distinguishes relations of ideas from matters of fact in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and how Kant distinguishes *a posteriori* from *a priori* knowledge as well as synthetic from analytic propositions. Where do Hume and Kant agree, where do they disagree? Contrast Hume and Kant on the concepts of space and time and of causation and causal laws, exhibiting the key concepts and presuppositions of each point of view. How would a Humean criticize the Kantian position; how would a Kantian criticize the Humean position?**

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

The questions below are designed to help you focus on the most important parts of the readings and lectures. ***There may be additions to the list of the study questions during the semester and the questions themselves may be modified.***

DESCARTES

D1. What are the three stages of doubt identified by Descartes in Meditation I? How are they related to each other? What is the purpose of the doubt? Does the fact that a proposition is doubted show that Descartes has a reason for doubting it?

D2. What is the difference between a “first personal” or “meditational,” and a “third personal” interpretation of the *Meditations*? To whom does Descartes address the *Meditations*? How do you think we should account for the fact that Descartes did not think that his resolution of “Cartesian doubt” is circular but that his critics did?

D3. Apparently, Descartes believes that he is a thinking thing because he has *concluded* that he exists because he thinks. Discuss the significance of this fact for understanding Descartes’s conception of the relation of mind and body.

D4. Reconstruct Descartes’ proof of the existence of God found in Mediation III. Be sure to discuss his famous principle about the formal reality and the objective reality of ideas and well as the truth principle and the medieval principle: *ex nihilo nihilo fit*.

D5. According to Descartes, error arises when our will extends beyond the scope of our understanding. Why does Descartes insist that error cannot originate in the understanding?

D6. Reconstruct Descartes’ argument for the existence of God found in Meditation V. Be sure to include a discussion of the significance of the fact that God is eternal in elaborating the proof. Do you think that Descartes argument for the existence of God in Meditation V presupposes that existence is a predicate? Do you think that Descartes proof of the existence of God in Meditation V is based upon Aristotle’s idea that in the case of immaterial objects final and efficient causes are identical?

D7. According to Descartes, the doubts that he entertained in Meditation I are not fully warranted once we have come to see that God exists and that he is not a deceiver. Specifically, how does the existence of God relieve Cartesian doubt?

LEIBNIZ

L1. What is Leibniz’s argument for his claim that ‘the world’ consists of simple, spiritual substances? How does Leibniz reconcile the existence of matter with his view that the world consists of simple spiritual substances? According to Leibniz, what is physics about, and what do physical laws describe?

L2. What according to Leibniz is a perception? What sorts of entities have perceptions? How does Leibniz distinguish perceptions from apperceptions? What sorts of entities have apperceptions? What is the role of appetition in Leibniz’s account of choice?

L3. Leibniz argues that there is an internal principle that accounts for ‘change’ in monads. What can possibly be meant by ‘change’ in this context?

L4. Russell claims that Leibniz ‘forgot relations.’ What is the meaning of this criticism? How does Russell attempt to justify it? Did Leibniz really forget about relations, or did he just understand them in a way that Russell rejected?

L5. Leibniz claims that each monad mirrors the universe. How is this claim related to the theory that for Leibniz all relational properties are conceived as intrinsic properties? What does Leibniz mean by the ‘pre-established harmony?’ Specifically, what does the pre-established harmony harmonize? What in Leibnizian metaphysics is a human being?

L6. What is Leibniz’s principle of the identity of indiscernibles? What is his principle of the indiscernibility of identicals? What is Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason? Of non-contradiction?

L7. Leibniz argues against the Newtonian conception of absolute space. What is his basic argument?

L8. What, according to Leibniz, is a possible world? Why does Leibniz believe that this must be the best of all possible worlds?

L9. What according to Leibniz is the pre-established harmony? What is it meant to explain? Be sure to deal with both the pre-established harmony between physical composites and simples as well as the pre-established harmony between the efficient and final causes.

L10. According to Leibniz, some influences upon us incline us without necessitating? What philosophical problem is addressed by this distinction? How, according to Leibniz, is it possible for us to choose freely if all our actions are pre-ordained and foreseen by God?

LOCKE

LO1. Locke argues that it is not possible for ideas to be impressed upon the mind without perceiving them. What is the importance of this point in his argument against the rationalists? Why is it important in Locke’s defense of his view that there cannot be innate ideas?

LO2. What according to Locke is the origin of all our ideas? Does Locke believe that there are self-evident truths? Necessary truths?

LO3. What, according to Locke, are simple ideas? What are the origins of simple ideas?

LO4. For Locke is it possible to have a positive idea of something that involves privation? Something that includes negation? What is the significance of this issue for Locke’s complaint about rationalists like Descartes and Arnauld for understanding of ideas like the idea of God?

LO5. How does Locke distinguish between primary and secondary qualities? How does Locke argue that qualities like ‘cold’ are secondary?

LO6. What is Molyneux’s problem, and how does it relate to Locke’s claims about perceptual judgments concerning convex surfaces of spheres? What difficulty does Locke encounter in dealing with Molyneux’s problem?

LO7. How does Locke account for the idea of space, of time?

LO8.What, according to Locke, is a power? (Be sure to distinguish active from passive powers in your response.)

LO9. Why is it important for Locke to account for ideas like space, time and power? Is his account consistent with his concept empiricism?

LO10. How does Locke distinguish between the concept of a body, of a human being, of a soul or finite spirit, of the self?

LO11.What is Locke’s explanation of the origin of the idea of God? How might Descartes respond to it? For Locke is it possible for us to have a positive idea of God?

BERKELEY

B1. State Berkeley’s argument against Locke’s account of abstract ideas.

B2. Why does Berkeley think that mental substances exist but that material substances cannot exist?

HUME

H1. What is Hume’s argument against the existence of substance? How does his argument affect our conception of ourselves, of God? What are Hume’s criticism(s) of the conceptions of substance found in the works of Descartes? of Leibniz? of Spinoza?

H2. What is Hume’s distinction between matters of fact and relations of ideas? Are causal statements matters of fact or relations of ideas? Why? What is Hume’s understanding of causation and how does it differ from the view of causation found in philosophers like Descartes? What difficulties does Hume’s account of causation raise for his theory of personal identity?

H3. What are the following distinctions in Hume’s philosophy? Between ideas and impressions; between simple and complex ideas, between ideas of sensation and ideas of reflection?

H5. What is Hume’s argument against the claim that there are non-question begging ‘proofs’ to show that past regularities are projectable?

H4. What according to Hume is a belief? What are the conditions under which beliefs are formed? How does Hume distinguish belief from knowledge? What according to Hume are special cases of belief that are called ‘knowledge’?

H5. What according to Hume is experimental reasoning? How do inferences justified by experimental reasoning differ from demonstrations? Are animals capable of drawing inferences?

H6. What is Hume’s criticism of Locke’s account of our perception of external objects? (Be sure to include a discussion of Hume’s view about the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.)

H7. What epistemological work does ‘common sense’ do in Hume’s philosophy? Does it show that Hume’s philosophy is subjectivist?

H8. How does Hume attempt to counter arguments for the existence of God in the ***Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*?** Specifically, how does Hume deal with the argument from design, the cosmological argument and the ontological argument?

KANT

K1. What, according to Kant, are synthetic ***a priori*** judgments? How are synthetic ***a priori***judgments related to the pure forms of intuition and the pure concepts of the understanding? How does Kant attempt to justify his claim that every event has a cause?

K2. How does Kant deal with the notion of substance? Is substance a concept in Kant’s sense of ‘concept’? Is substance an object of possible experience? Why does this matter to Kant? What are the consequences of Kant’s views about substance for his conception of the self? for his conception of God? According to Kant, what is wrong with the conception of the self that we find in Descartes and Leibniz?

K3. Kant claims that he ‘has found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.’ (***Critique of Pure Reason***, Preface to the Second Edition, p. 513) What is it that Kant believes that we cannot know? What are the objects of faith? How, according to Kant, is it possible for us to ***think*** of God?

K4. Kant believes in the determinism of nature and in the free (autonomous) will. How does he attempt to reconcile these two apparently conflicting claims? What are the consequences of his dualism with respect to the self for his views about morality and religion?

K5. According to Kant, does this difficulty undermine our notion of freedom?

K6. What is the essence of Kant’s objection to the ontological argument, to the cosmological argument, to the teleological argument?

K7. What difficulty does Einstein’s theory of relativity pose for Kant’s claims about synthetic *a priori* truth? What would Kant need to do in order to overcome the difficulty?

COMPREHENSIVE

C1. Discuss the role that changing conceptions of substance and causation play in undermining rationalist views of God and the self, and explain how they facilitate the skeptical views of Hume and the critical views of Kant. In particular, how does the ‘imprint theory’ differ from Hume’s regularity theory, from Kant’s ‘critical’ theory?

C2. What distinguishes the Enlightenment as a world-view from the world-view of the Rationalists? Specifically, how do the two world-views differ with respect to their theories of knowledge and belief? What are the consequences for our understanding of God and of ourselves?

C3) Contrast Empiricism with Rationalism during the early modern period. Be sure to consider both the issues of belief and of conception formation. How does Kant try to reconcile the differences between the two views in his “critical philosophy?”

1. ***This version of the syllabus is subject to change before the beginning of classes and supersedes all prior versions. Also, the schedule of lectures, although firm, may be varied somewhat to accommodate special interests as they arise.*** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)