

Early modern philosophy

Dr. Jacob Archambault

Course description

This course discusses the development of philosophy in the early modern period, i.e. philosophy as it was practiced roughly from the time of the Thirty Years' War to the revolutions in America and France.

Early modernity is marked by two fundamental occurrences: the scientific revolution and the development of the modern state. With the former, one finds Galileo's invention of the telescope, Kepler's laws of planetary motion, Descartes' development of analytic geometry, and Leibniz and Newton's discovery of calculus. Accompanying the latter, one finds the rise of absolute monarchies, constitutional monarchies, and constitutional republics; the widespread adoption of fractional reserve banking and paper money; mercantilism and colonial expansion, the slave trade, and the prolonged suppression or extermination of indigenous peoples and local cultures. Philosophy played an important role in both of these developments. Besides contributing directly to scientific developments, Descartes, Leibniz, and others sought to provide a philosophical foundation for the development of modern science, while political theorists from Hobbes and Locke to Rousseau and Adam Smith developed the theoretical basis for newly emerging modes of political economy. By the term's end, the student shall have attained familiarity with some of the most important ideas of the period, and have deepened his/her understanding of the place of philosophy within the development of modernity.

Required texts

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations*. Trans. George Heffernan. University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.

Leibniz, G. W. *Philosophical Essays*. Trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Hackett, 1989.

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Ed. C. B. Macpherson. Hackett, 1980.

Spinoza, Baruch. *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*. Trans. Samuel Shirley. Introduction and Notes by Steven Barbone and Lee Rice. Hackett, 1998.

Additional texts will be provided by instructor.

Assignments and Grading

1. **Homework** (33%)—Due on the day of the reading it covers, at the beginning of class.
2. **Midterm** (33%) - Administered in class.
3. **Final journal article** (33%)—Student shall write an original work in the style of a contemporary journal article on a question of philosophical importance. The paper must engage with at least one source from the *Philosopher's Index* (or alternative sources explicitly approved by the instructor), as well as one of the readings assigned in class. The paper will go through a blind review process by two other students in the class, prior to final submission.

Miscellaneous Policies

1. **Absences**—attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Each successive absence after the fifth will result in one's final grade being downgraded by 1/3 of a letter grade.
2. **Tardiness**—Students are expected to be present *at the beginning of class*. Being tardy will count for 1/2 of an absence.
3. **Participation**—Everyone in class is encouraged to participate. Doing so will help you to understand the texts better and will make for a more fruitful and enjoyable classroom experience for everybody, yourself included. Students are especially encouraged to prepare questions for clarification and discussion as they come up, e.g. while taking notes on the reading assignment for the next class.
4. **Electronics**—In order to foster an environment of active participation free from distraction, electronic devices (e.g. phones, computers) may not be used within the classroom. A student found violating this rule will be marked absent from class for that day.
5. **Plagiarism** will not be tolerated. 1st offense = failed paper. 2nd offense = fail course.
6. **Late assignments**—Papers will be downgraded by 1/3 of a letter for each day late. Assignments will not be accepted more than a week late.

Notice from the Office of Disability Services.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services.

Syllabus

Week	Tues	Wed	Fri
Jan 12-18	Semester Overview	Descartes, <i>Meditation I</i>	Third objections and replies (Hobbes), 1
Jan 19-25	<i>Meditation II</i> , 1-9	<i>Meditation II</i> , 10-16	Third objections and replies (Hobbes), 2
Jan 26- Feb 1	<i>Meditation III</i> , 1-12	<i>Meditation III</i> , 13-22	<i>Meditation III</i> , 23-39
Feb 2-8	Third objections and replies (Hobbes), 3	<i>Meditation IV</i>	Third objections and replies (Hobbes), 4
Feb 9-15	<i>Meditation V</i> , 1-6	<i>Meditation V</i> , 7-16	Third objections and replies (Hobbes), 5
Feb 16- 22	No Class	<i>Meditation VI</i> , 1-15	<i>Meditation VI</i> , 16-25
Feb 23- Mar 1	Third objections and replies (Hobbes), 6	Spinoza, <i>Principles of Cartesian Philosophy</i> , part 1	Spinoza, <i>Principles of Cartesian Philosophy</i> , part 2, to prop. 11.
Mar 2-8	Spinoza, <i>Principles of Cartesian Philosophy</i> , part 2, prop. 12-23	Spinoza, <i>Principles of Cartesian Philosophy</i> , part 2, prop. 24-37	Spinoza, <i>Principles of Cartesian Philosophy</i> , part 3
Mar 9-15	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 1-2	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 3-4	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 5.
Mar 16- 22	No Class	No Class	No Class
Mar 23- 29	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 6	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 7	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 8.
Mar 30- Apr 5	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 9-11.	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 12-14	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 15-17.
Apr 6-12	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 18	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , 19.	Leibniz, "On Body and Force, Against the Cartesians" and "Two Sects of Naturalists"
Apr 13- 19	Leibniz, "A Specimen of Dynamics," I	Leibniz, "A Specimen of Dynamics," II	No Class
Apr 20- 26	Leibniz, "New System of Nature"	Leibniz, "On Nature Itself"	Leibniz, "From the Letters to Clarke"
Apr 27- May 3	Leibniz, "From the Letters to Clarke" (cont.)	Semester Wrap-up	