

Philosophy 215 Foundations of Modern Philosophy (W)
Professor Laura Keating

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What exists? How can we know it? In this course, we will study the very different answers given to these questions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Many of the positions forwarded by these philosophers are still with us today. The goal of this class will be to understand why those philosophers held the positions they did. More particularly, we will study certain philosophical problems that emerged as modern science developed and replaced the prior Aristotelian view of nature. These problems concern the nature of the mind, the world, and our knowledge of them, as well as the nature of philosophy itself.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- 1) Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Hackett Publishing Company, 2000). Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-87220-502-4. \$18.95.
- 2) G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Hackett Publishing Company, 1989). Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-87220-062-3. \$19.95.
- 3) John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [Abridged], ed. Kenneth Winkler (Hackett Publishing Company, 1996). Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-87220-216-0. \$12.95.
- 4) George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (Hackett Publishing Company, 1982). Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-915145-39-3. \$7.95.
- 5) David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Second Edition, ed. Eric Steinberg (Hackett Publishing Company, 1993). Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-87220-229-0. \$7.95.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To be able to read a philosophical text with understanding: to be able to identify the main issue being addressed, the main position being forwarded and the philosopher's argument(s) for it, and to be able to use the text to defend one's interpretation of it.
- 2) To be able to understand and formulate relevant objections to a philosophical position or argument, and to determine how those objections could be met.
- 3) To be able to recognize and formulate alternatives to a philosophical position, and to assess the position in comparison to those alternatives.
- 4) To be able to write clear expository essays in which you present and explain material from the reading and from class.
- 5) To be able to write a critical paper in which you give sound arguments for a thesis, consider objections to it, and respond to those objections.
- 6) To gain a solid understanding of the main philosophical positions and methods of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, and to understand how each philosopher was responding to earlier philosophical positions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. Graded Assignments:

- 1) Three short (1-2 page) writing assignments - These are given out on the days listed on the syllabus, and are due at the beginning of the following class. They are primarily designed with the first objective in mind.
- 2) Paper - The paper is 8-9 pages, and will require your submission of a draft, which I will comment on, and you will then revise so as to address my comments. Papers turned in without a draft being submitted and returned with remarks will be marked down one whole letter grade. This assignment is primarily designed with the second, third, and fifth objectives in mind.
- 3) An in-class midterm and an in-class final exam - The exams will consist of essay questions which will be given out beforehand. These are primarily designed with the fourth and sixth objectives in mind.

B. Attendance and class participation:

Your regular attendance and class participation significantly add to the quality of the class. I expect you to attend class regularly, to arrive to class on time, to be prepared for class, to bring your book to class, and to contribute regularly to class discussion. You should do the reading before class and try to identify questions and objections you have about the philosopher's position and arguments.

The contribution of each to your grade is:	Attendance and Participation:	10%
	Short Assignments (best 3 of 5):	15%
	Paper:	25%
	Midterm:	25%
	Final Exam:	25%