

17th and 18th century philosophy

Philosophy 312, Spring 2021

Meeting on-line Wednesday and Friday 11:40–1:00

Professor: P.D. Magnus

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Office phone: (518) 442-4223

Office hours Wednesday 1:00–2:00 and by appointment

Texts: The course readings will largely be available via Blackboard. Descartes and Kant wrote in languages other than English, though, and the translations which are in the public domain are rough-going. I've opted for the easier-to-read translations, even though it means having to buy books.

- Descartes, René *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies* John Cottingham (translator) ISBN 9781107665736
- Kant, Immanuel *Critique of Pure Reason* Abridged, Werner S. Pluhar (translator) ISBN 9780872204485

Requirements: Most weeks, you will participate in a forum discussion. You will take a mid-term and a final exam. You will have to record a short video presentation on a topic related to the course. For grading:

35% forum discussion

10% class participation

15% video presentation

20% mid-term exam

20% final exam

Forum discussion: The assigned topic for a forum discussion will be given out by some-time Friday afternoon, at the latest. You are expected to make your initial post addressing the topic by class-time the following Wednesday. You should also respond to your classmates' posts. The expectation is that you will write at least two responses.

Although you can get credit for writing your post and two responses one right after the other, it makes for a better discussion if you come back at a later time to see if anyone has responded to what you wrote. You'll get more credit if some of your responses are made later. Any responses made by the end of day Friday will count toward your grade.

Academic honesty: Forum posts should be your own writing, although you are encouraged to discuss ideas with anyone who will listen. Exam answers are your own work. Cheating will not be tolerated.

Absences: Students who will need to class or assignments for foreseeable reasons should discuss them with the professor at the beginning of the term. If an emergency results in absence, the student should contact the professor as soon as reasonably possible.

Schedule of topics The assignment of topics to class days is an approximation. If a topic takes more or less time than is scheduled for it, we will make adjustments as we go. Barring emergencies, due dates are fixed. The topics and questions will cover whatever we have gotten to by that time.

Week 1 (feb3, feb5)

- Introduction
- René Descartes (read Meditation 1)

Week 2 (feb10, feb12)

- Descartes continued (read Meditations 2–4)

Week 3 (feb17, feb19)

- Descartes continued (read Meditations 5–6)

Week 4 (feb24, feb26)

- Descartes' critics (read Elizabeth)

Week 5 (mar5)

- No class Wednesday!
- General ideas (read Locke)

Week 6 (mar10, mar12)

- George Berkeley (read Preface and Introduction)
- Berkeley's idealism (read Part I ¶1–33)

Week 7 (mar17, mar19)

- Objections to idealism (read ¶34–66)
- Advantages of idealism (read ¶85–90, 133–149)

Week 8 (mar24, mar26)

- Berkeley's critics (read Shepard)
- review

The mid-term exam will be available March 26 and will be due March 31.

Week 9 (mar31, apr2)

- Hume on ideas (read Hume §§II–III)
- Hume: Sceptical worries (read §IV, §V pt 1)

Week 10 (apr7, apr9)

- Hume: Causal power (§VII)
- Hume: Freedom (§VIII)

Week 11 (apr14, apr16)

- Hume: Types of scepticism (§XII)
- Immanuel Kant (read Kant pages 1–24)

The video presentation will be due April 16.

Week 12 (apr21, apr23)

- Kant: the transcendental aesthetic (pages 25–38)

Week 13 (apr28, apr30)

- Kant: the deduction (pages 39–65)

Week 14 (may5, may7)

- reflection
- review

The mid-term exam will be available May 7 and will be due May 14.