

PHIL 3365: Modern Philosophy

Sam Houston State University

Spring 2021, CRN: 24153

SHSU Online

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Brommage

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Course Description: A survey of philosophical thought from about 1500 through the twentieth century. The course will examine the philosophical significance of the rise of modern science, the classical philosophies of rationalism, empiricism, the philosophy of Kant, and the development of these philosophies through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Course Modality (Online): This is designed as a fully online class delivered through SHSU Online. Content delivery will be asynchronous and remote, and all assignments will be completed and graded through the Blackboard system. There will be occasional course meetings scheduled for class review (especially before major assignments are due) but attendance in these will be optional, and recordings will be available for those who are not able to join.

Prerequisites: N/A

Textbook: Ariew and Watkins (eds.) *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, 3rd edition (Hackett, 2019), ISBN: 978-1-62466-805-0. \$50.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

1. *Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories.* Through reading and lecture, the student will come to understand the arguments of key figures in the Western Philosophical tradition.
2. *Developing skill in expressing oneself orally and in writing.* Through the papers, the student will develop skills explaining and evaluating the ideas of the various philosophers studied.
3. *Learning to analyze and critically examine ideas, arguments, and points of view.* The student will come to have a more examined approach to questions concerning issues such as free will and determinism, the nature of God, and how knowledge is formed.

Course Outline: The course divides into two modules, the first covering major texts from rationalist thinkers (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and the second covering the empiricist tradition (Locke, Berkeley, Hume). The discussion of Kant's philosophy in the last few weeks of the course—which will fall outside the scope of either of the papers, but will be included in the final exam.

January 13-15	.....Course Orientation
January 18-22	.....Ancient and Medieval Thought
January 25-29	.....Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i>
February 1-5	.....Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
February 8-12	.....Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> Bk. I-II, V
February 15-19	.....Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Method</i> §§1-13
February 22-26	.....Leibniz, <i>Monadology</i>
March 1-5	.....Locke, <i>Essay</i> I-II,
March 8-13	.....Locke, <i>Essay</i> II, IV; Paper #1
March 15-19	.....Spring Break (no class)
March 22-26	.....Berkeley, <i>Dialogues</i>
March 29-April 2	.....Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> §§1-6
April 5-9	.....Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> §§10, 12
April 12-16	.....Hume, <i>Dialogues</i> Paper #2
April 19-23	.....Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i>
April 25-30	.....Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (selections)
May 3-5	.....Review for Final

Important Dates:

MLK Holiday (no class)	.....January 18th
Add/Drop Deadline	.....January 29th
Spring Break (no class)	.....March 15th-19th
Q-Drop Deadline	.....March 26th
Good Friday (no class)	.....April 2nd
Course Final	.....May 10th

Course Evaluation: After the completion of each module, a response paper will be assigned. Each paper should be between 1250-1500 words (about 5-7 pages double-spaced), and relevant to a topic in the respective grouping of texts. They will be due approximately one week following the completion of the module. More details will be announced. In addition to that, there will be a cumulative final exam due at the end of the course.

The following weighting will be used to calculate your grade:

Rationalism Paper	.....25%
Empiricism Paper	.....25%
Discussion Board (best 10 of 12)	.....15%
Course Wiki (best 5 of 7)	.....10%
Final Exam	.....25%

Your rounded average of these assignments will determine your grade, based on the following scale:

A	.....100 - 89.5
B	.....89.4 - 79.5
C	.....79.4 - 69.5
D	.....69.4 - 59.5
F	.....59.4 - 0

Writing Enhanced: This course satisfies for being listed as “writing enhanced” by providing you the opportunity to write as a means to thinking critically about the material and to receive regular feedback on your writing. You will receive regular feedback from the instructor on your writing, including written, substantive feedback on your reading write-ups throughout the term. You will have a chance to incorporate this and any additional feedback from classmates on the written final exam. Written work will account for 100% of the student’s total grade.

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Please be aware that plagiarized work and any form of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” on the assignment. [SHSU Academic Policy Statement 810213](#) outlines the definition of academic honesty and the related disciplinary procedures.

You should also familiarize yourself with [Academic Policy Statement 900823](#), which outlines the procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty. Please read over these policies.

Course Evaluations: In accordance with University policy every student will have an opportunity at a specified date and time near the end of the semester to complete a course evaluation form from the IDEA course evaluation system.

For University policies on Student Absences on Religious Holy Days, Students with Disabilities, and Visitors in the Classroom you may view the official statements on the SHSU Website, <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an efficient class:

1. Especially true in philosophy more than most other subjects, diligence is important. Some of the reading will be difficult since we are looking at some of the most profound ideas in the history of the world. The difficulty of the subject is indirectly proportional to the amount of work put into the course.
2. Expect to have up to five hours a week of reading and practice in order to earn an “A” for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance. *If you do not regularly log in or keep up with the reading and exercises, do not expect to pass this class!*
3. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time—including your omniscient instructor.
4. Please feel free to make an appointment to discuss the material you do not understand. Waiting until the last moment in the semester to catch up is not advisable. I am excellent at fixing small problems, but horrendous at fixing large ones. The only difference between small and large problems is time.
5. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one’s mind can be an exhilarating process.