

PHIL 3365-01: Modern Philosophy

Sam Houston State University

Spring 2026 | CRN: 22298

T/Th 3:30-4:45 PM | CHSS 242A

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Brommage

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Office Hours: Monday through Thursday 2-3 PM

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Course Description: Students survey philosophical thought from about 1500 through the twentieth century via an examination of topics that may include 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.

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. \$56.

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 constituted.

Important Dates:

First Day of Classes Monday, January 12th
Add/Drop Deadline Wednesday, January 28th
Spring Break (no class) Monday, March 9th – Friday, March 13th
Q-Drop Deadline Wednesday, March 26th
Course Final Tuesday May 5th (3–5 PM)

Writing Enhanced: This is a “W” course, which means that at least 50 percent of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools your instructor will use to help you learn course material. Some writing activities will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback. Others may not receive a grade but are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool your instructor will use to assess your level of learning. Written work constitutes 75% of the course grade.

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 will constitute the last few weeks of the course and will fall outside the scope of either of the papers, but will be included in the final exam.

January 13	Syllabus and Course Introduction
January 15 – 23	Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i>
January 27 – 29	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
February 3 – 5	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> Part I-II
February 10 – 12	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> Part V
February 17 – 19	Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> §1-13
February 23 – 26	Leibniz, <i>Monadology</i>
March 3 – 5	Locke, <i>Essay</i> I, 1-2; II, 1-14, 21-7; Paper #1
March 10 – 12	Spring Break (no class)
March 17 – 19	Locke, <i>Essay</i> III 3, 6; IV, 1-4, 10-1, 15-6
March 24 – 26	Berkeley, <i>Dialogues</i> , I-II
Mar 31 – Apr 2	Berkeley, <i>Dialogues</i> , III; <i>Principles</i> (selections)
April 7 – 9	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> §1-6, 8, 10
April 14 – 16	Hume, <i>Dialogues</i> I, II, IX-XII
April 21 – 23	Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part 1-2; Paper #2
Apr 28 – 30	Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part 3; Review for Final
May 5 (3 – 5 PM)	Final Exam

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. Topics will be distributed for each paper, or you may craft your own thesis. Each paper will be due approximately two weeks following the completion of the module. More details on due dates and assignment guidelines are posted on Blackboard. In addition, there will be a cumulative final exam at the end of the course.

The following weighting will be used to calculate your grade:

Rationalism Paper	25%
Empiricism Paper	25%
Attendance	10%
Participation	15%
Final Exam	25%

Attendance and Participation: An attendance sheet will be distributed most class days. It is your responsibility to sign-in on the official roll sheet, otherwise you will be considered absent. Your attendance will be judged as a percentage of the number of days that you attend class. Everyone will have two (2) absences that will not count against his or her grade (should you not use these three absences, your grade will be adjusted up accordingly). For example, if I take attendance 22 times in the semester, and you have attended 18 of those meetings, your attendance grade would be a 90% (18/20). Aside from the two automatically excused absences, *no additional absences will be considered excused* except when required by law or university policy.

Your participation grade will be a qualitative measure based on your effective in-class participation. For this measure, “effective” participation is a function of the quality—not the quantity—of your in-class participation. In most cases, your participation grade will be no higher than your attendance grade (since, of course, if you’re not in class, then you can’t participate).

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%

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 and possible university disciplinary action.

[SHSU Academic Policy Statement 810213](#) outlines academic honesty and related disciplinary procedures. You should also familiarize yourself with [Academic Policy Statement 900823](#), which outlines procedures for students to file an academic grievance should you wish to appeal your grade for reasons other than academic dishonesty.

Classroom Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cell phones must be turned off before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

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.

Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom: Students submitting work entirely or substantially generated through AI is unethical and a mix of plagiarism, collusion, and abuse of academic resources. Doing so will result in a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

Pregnant and Parenting Students: Pregnant and parenting students fall under Title IX equal educational opportunities that “prohibits educational institutions from discriminating against students based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions.” Resources are available on the [SHSU Pregnancy & Parenting](#) page.

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

Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an efficient class:

1. Please arrive to class on time and expect to stay the entire duration of the class. If this is an impossibility, please make every attempt to notify me in advance of tardiness or absence.
2. 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.
3. Expect to have up to five hours a week of reading and thinking about the material in order to get an “A” for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance. *If you do not attend class or keep up with the reading, do not expect to pass this class!*
4. Please come to class prepared (i.e., any reading assigned read, any questions concerning exercises or lectures prepared, etc.)
5. Please be respectful of each other in the class. There will be times when students disagree about a topic discussed in class. This is a didactic process, not a combative one.
6. Due to the great excess of material and limited time in which we must over ground, please do not create a disruption for those people who are attempting to learn. Disruptions include blurting out answers, name calling, chiding each other, snoring, etc. Laughing at the Instructor’s jokes is obviously exempted from this policy. In addition, personal audio devices (except those in use to record lectures) and loud crunching snack foods are prohibited from the classroom.
7. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time—even your omniscient instructor.
8. 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.
9. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one’s mind can be an exhilarating process.