

Philosophy 302:
Modern Philosophy
Spring 2010

Morton Hall 337
TR 3:55-5:15

Professor: Nicholaos Jones
Office: Morton Hall 332B
Office Phone: 256.824.2338
Office Hours: TBA
Email: Nick[dot]Jones[at]uah[dot]edu
Web: www.uah.edu/njones/phl302.html
Call #: 10643

Course Description

This course is a survey of the European philosophical tradition from Descartes through Kant, examining issues such as the nature, sources, and extent of human knowledge, the composition of the physical world, the nature of the human mind and its relation to the physical world, the possibility of a rational understanding of God and the self, and the nature of human freedom.

Required Prerequisite: Introduction to Philosophy or permission of instructor.

Helpful Prerequisites: High School Geometry, Logic, Conceptual Physics or General Physics I.

Course Texts

- 1 - Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Hackett)
 - 2 - Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Hackett)
 - 3 - Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (Hackett)
 - 4 - Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*, trans. D. Garber and R. Ariew (Hackett)
 - 5 - Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (2nd ed.), ed. Eric Steinberg (Hackett)
 - 6 - Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics* (2nd ed.), trans. James Ellington (Hackett)
- Optional* - Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (abridged), trans. Werner Pluhar (Hackett)

Note on Reading: These texts are difficult. Prior to lecture, you are not expected to understand them. But you are expected to have made a sincere effort to understand them. (By "sincere effort", I mean that any attempt to intelligently and thoroughly answer the homework questions for the assigned reading, or any attempt to formulate, about the text, a question you are unable to answer for yourself despite repeated efforts.) And you are expected to come to class with some tentative idea, however vague or misconceived, of what is being argued for in the text and what the author's argument is. *You should expect to devote to this course an average of nine hours of work per week.*

Assessment

There are **ten homeworks**, each worth 2% of the final grade. (Details on separate sheet.)

There are **four comprehensive take-home examinations**, each worth 15% of the final grade.

There is **one term paper**, worth 20% of the final grade. (Details on separate sheet.)

A **mandatory draft** of the term paper is due by the end of class on April 8. Failure to submit a draft that shows significant progress shall result in an *automatic* loss of 5% from the final course grade.

Retain a copy of all graded work, in order to resolve grade disputes.

The instructor is not responsible for "lost" material.

Assessments and final grades are assigned according to the following measure:

>90% = A 80-89% = B 70-79% = C 60-69% = D <60% = F or NC (as appropriate)

The instructor reserves the right to augment the final grades of any student who consistently demonstrates superior class performance, or to lower the grades of any student who consistently demonstrates a dereliction of their work, fails to treat others with civility and respect during class, or fails to abstain from unreasonably interfering with the opportunity of other students to learn.

Academic Honesty

At the instructor's discretion, plagiarism and other academic misconduct will be reported promptly to the Vice President for Student Affairs as being in violation of the UAH Code of Student Conduct, Chapter 7, Article III, Part C, Section 1.

- Plagiarism is defined as "the act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product's of one's own mind" --Black's Law Dictionary, 5th edition.
- Students should refer to page 93 of the *Student Handbook* to review the definition and examples of academic misconduct. Students should contact the instructor without delay to discuss questions regarding academic misconduct.

UAH is committed to the fundamental values of preserving academic honesty as defined in the *Student Handbook*. The instructor reserves the right to utilize electronic means to help prevent and identify plagiarism, including the use of Turnitin.com. Students agree that by taking this course, all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service, as well as additional information about the company, are described at www.uah.edu/library/turnitin

No student may submit, in fulfillment of requirements for this course, any work submitted, presented, or used by the student in any other course, without the prior consent of the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to impose academic sanctions, in lieu of or in addition to those imposed by the Vice President for Student Affairs, upon any student who commits any form of academic misconduct during the course. Students have the right to discuss such sanctions with the instructor before they are imposed, and to protest sanctions to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Student Expectations

Abide by the UAH Code of Student Conduct.

In Class

Attend class regularly. Without doing this, success in the course is unlikely.

Arrive at class in a timely fashion: lateness is disruptive.

Ask questions and share thoughts, especially if something is not understood.

Participate courteously in class discussions.

Treat other people's questions as opportunities for learning rather than distractions from lecture.

Outside of Class

Keep up with the material.

Carefully read the selections assigned for each class, and formulate questions to ask in lecture.

Seek help from the instructor (or other students) as often as needed.

Devote, on average, about nine hours of work per week to this class.

Students are expected to arrive at class in a timely fashion: lateness is disruptive.

Lecture, Reading, and Assessment Schedule (*Tentative*)

Week 1 1/12-1/14	Scholastic Synthesis, Modern Predicaments Read Descartes <i>Discourse</i> , Part 1
Week 2 1/19-1/21	The Cartesian Method Read Descartes <i>Discourse</i> , Parts 2-4
Week 3 1/26-1/28	God and Cartesian Science Read Descartes <i>Discourse</i> , Parts 4-6 Receive Exam 1 on 1/28 (R)
Week 4 2/2-2/4	Spinoza's Method and Theism Read Spinoza <i>Ethics</i> Part 1: Definitions, Axioms, Prop. 1-11 & 14-16 Exam 1 (comprehensive) due 2/4 (R)
Week 5 2/9-2/11	Freedom, Mechanism, and Mind Read Spinoza <i>Ethics</i> Part 1: Prop. 24-33 and Part 2: Prop 1-2, 5-13, 32-47
Week 6 2/16-2/18	...
Week 7 2/23-2/25	Lockean Ideas Read Locke <i>Essay</i> Bk1: Ch.1-2, Ch4.1-3, 8-10; Bk2: Ch1.1-8, 20-25, Ch2, Ch7, Ch10-12.2 (<i>Interpretation</i> : "Bk2: Ch1.1-8" means Book 2, Section 1 through 8 of Chapter 1.)

Midterm!

Week 8	Lockean Metaphysics; Leibniz on God
3/2	Read Locke <i>Essay</i> Bk2: Ch8.7-17, 21-23; Ch23.1-5, 37; Ch27.3; Ch9; Bk.4: Ch2, Ch4
3/4	Read Leibniz, <i>Ultimate Origination</i> Receive Exam 2 (comprehensive) on 3/4 (R)
Week 9	Monads
3/9	Exam Day (no official class meeting)
3/11	Read Leibniz <i>Ultimate Origination, Discourse 8-9 & Monadology 1-9</i> Exam 2 due 3/11 (R)
Week 10	Spring Break
3/15-3/19	No Class
Week 11	Harmony and Freedom
3/23-3/25	Read Leibniz <i>Discourse 9, 13, 30 & Monadology 56-58; Discourse 14 & Monadology 7</i>
Week 12	Empiricism, Induction, Skepticism
3/30-4/1	Read Hume <i>Enquiry</i> Sections 2-5/Part I, Section 12/Parts I & II Receive Exam 3 (comprehensive) on 3/30 (T)
Week 13	Metaphysical Cognition
4/8	Read Kant <i>Prolegomena</i> Sections 1, 2, 4, 5, 6-12 Helpful Supplement: <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> A19/B33 - A25/B40, A50/B74 - A52/B76 Exam 3 due 4/8 (R)
Week 14	Incongruent Counterparts
4/13-4/15	Read Kant <i>Prolegomena</i> Section 13 plus Remarks I and II Mandatory Term Paper Draft Due 4/15
Week 15	Critical Metaphysics
4/20-4/22	Read Kant <i>Prolegomena</i> Sections 40-42, 44-49 Helpful Supplement: <i>Critique</i> A426/B454 - A444/B472, A592/B620 - A602/B630 Receive Exam 4 (comprehensive) on 4/22 (R)
Week 16	The Bounds of Pure Reason
4/27-4/29	Read Kant <i>Prolegomena</i> Conclusion & Solution Helpful Supplement: <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> A795/B823 - A831/B859
Week 17	Philosophy after Kant, Course Evaluation
5/4	No Reading
Finals	Term Paper and Exam 4 both due 5/10 by noon (early submission is OK)

Miscellany

Philosophy is not easy. You must make a serious effort to understand and articulate the material. It helps to take detailed notes, and let your mind wander over what you find interesting outside of the classroom. It also helps to discuss ideas with others, especially people not in the class. And it helps to read from secondary sources in the library. Most of what is worth reading about modern European philosophy is *not* available on the web.

If at any time you would like to discuss the issues covered in class or philosophy in general, feel free to visit during office hours or arrange a meeting. We'll have a friendly and enjoyable chat. If at any time you are having problems with the subject matter or the manner of its presentation, *do not hesitate* to bring this to my attention (in person, via email or anonymous note, etc). It is your responsibility to bring any course-related concerns to my attention.

Any student who feels that accommodations based on the impact of a disability are required should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please also contact the Disability Support Services at 113 University Center (256-824-6203); they coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Any student who feels that their life is overwhelming or unmanageable is encouraged to contact the Counseling Center at 113 University Center (256-824-6203) for free and confidential appointments. It is normal to use counseling services: no problems are too big or too small.

I encourage a free and tolerant atmosphere in class. I encourage and expect questions and challenges at appropriate times during class. I welcome visits to my office. *I am here to help you learn.*

I expressly reserve the right to alter any or all portions of this syllabus, at my sole discretion, at any time, and in any manner.

If you are struggling but receptive to support, counselors are available throughout the semester at the University Center, Room 127. You may call them during normal business hours at 256-824-6203 or 256-824-3313. You also may call 24 hours a day to 256-824-7777.

Homework

You must complete ten (10) homework assignments prior to the end of the semester. (There are fourteen (14) total assignments available.) The choice of which assignments to complete is up to you.

Each assignment is graded on a three point scale:

- Receive 1 point for being on the right track.
- Receive 2 points for *also* illustrating your answer with an example from everyday life.
- Receive 3 points for *also* demonstrating some insight and engagement with the issue.

Homework is due at the beginning of the class for which it is assigned.

- No late assignments are accepted for any reason.
- No email submissions are accepted for any reason.
- If you do not attend the class, I will not accept your assignment.

I recommend bringing an extra copy of your homework with you, to help with class discussion.

Group work is not allowed.

Week 1 Assignment - Due 01/14 - Descartes, *Discourse*, Part 1

Descartes states that he prefers not to believe too firmly what he has learned from example and custom? What does he mean? And why does he believe this? What is his alternative for coming to form beliefs?

Week 2 Assignment - Due 01/21 - Descartes, *Discourse*, Parts 2-4

Why does Descartes resolve to accept nothing without first submitting it to rational scrutiny?

Week 3 Assignment - Due 01/26 - Descartes, *Discourse*, Parts 4-6

Why does the claim "I think, therefore I exist" survive rational scrutiny? Why do claims about sensory experience not?

Week 4 Assignment - Due 02/02 - Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 1

In Book 1, Definition 1 of *The Ethics*, Spinoza talks about things whose essence involves existence. An essence is what makes a thing what it is and makes it unique. Give two examples of things whose essence does *not* involve existence. [Helpful Definition: the essence of X involves Y = Y is necessarily true of X.] In Book 1, Axiom 7 of *The Ethics*, Spinoza talks about things that can be conceived as not existing. Give two examples of things that can be conceived as not existing (i.e., two things that you can imagine to not exist). For each of these things: does their essence involve existence? Can you think of any *counterexamples* to Axiom 7 (i.e., can you imagine a thing that does not exist but whose essence involves existence)?

Week 5 Assignment - Due 02/09 - Spinoza, *Ethics*, Parts 1&2

In Book 1, Proposition 24 of *The Ethics*, Spinoza argues that anything produced by God has an essence that does not involve existence. Write each step of this argument on its own line, being sure to include the steps that Spinoza cites (in parentheses) but does not explicitly write down and any steps that remain unmentioned even though the argument requires them. On each line, cite the justification for that line (in terms of definitions, axioms, propositions, or previous lines in your proof)--give the reason for thinking that that line is true.

Week 7 Assignment - Due 02/25 - Locke, *Essay*, Book 1

How does Locke define an innate principle in Section 1 of Chapter 2 of Book 1? To what extent does this agree with the way in which Descartes thinks of innate ideas? In Section 8-10 of Chapter 4 of Book 1, Locke argues that the idea of God is not innate. What is the argument? What might Descartes (or Spinoza) say in response to this argument?

Week 8 Assignment - Due 03/04 - Locke, *Essay*, Books 2-4

For Locke, what is substance and what is the relation between substance and quality? Compare and contrast Locke's notion of substance with either Descartes' or Spinoza's. Who has the better definition, and why?

Week 9 Assignment - Due 03/11 - Leibniz, *On the Ultimate Origination of Things*

What does it mean to say that the present state of the world is physically necessary? What might it mean to say that something is metaphysically necessary? Why might Leibniz think that the universe is not metaphysically necessary? (In trying to make sense of what Leibniz is saying, it might help to keep in mind Spinoza's first definition in *The Ethics*, Part 1. But note well that Leibniz's definitions might differ from Spinoza's.)

Week 10 - Spring Break - No Class

Week 11 Assignment - Due 03/23 - Leibniz, *Monadology*, Section 7

Leibniz asserts that monads "have no windows." Using what you know about Leibniz's metaphysics, and especially his definition of individual substance, provide a proof that it is impossible for one monad to cause any change in any other monad. *Do not* give the proof that Leibniz gives in Section 7 -- that proof depends upon the proof you are being asked to provide.

Week 12 Assignment - Due 04/01 - Hume, *Enquiry*

Make a 2x2 table. Label the columns "Relations of Ideas" and "Matters of Fact". Label the rows "Necessary Truths" and "Contingent Truths". (Contingent truths are truths that could be false; necessary truths could not be false.) For each box in the table, and thinking like Hume, *either* explain why there is no truth that could go in that box *or* give an example of a truth that goes in that box. For example: which box does the truth " $2+2=4$ " go in? What about "The sun will rise tomorrow"? *Hint*: Two

of the four boxes are *empty*. (For fun: in which box do the Propositions from Spinoza's *Ethics* go, according to Hume? And into which box would *Spinoza* think they go?)

Week 13 Assignment - Due 04/06 - Kant, *Prolegomena*, Sections 1-12

Make a 2x2 table. Labels the columns "Analytic" and "Synthetic". Label the rows "apriori" and "aposteriori". For each box in the table, either give an example of a truth that Kant thinks goes in the box and explain why it goes in that box, or explain why Kant might think that no truth could go in the box. For example: what box does the truth " $2+2=4$ " go in? *Hint*: Only *one* of the boxes is empty. (For fun: Compare this box to the box for Hume, assuming that "Relations of Ideas" correspond to "Analytic", "Matters of Fact" correspond to "Synthetic", and that a truth is knowable apriori just if it is necessary.)

Week 14 Assignment - Due 04/15 - Kant, *Prolegomena*, Section 13

In Remark II for Section 13, Kant contrasts his philosophical stance with Idealism. Explain Kant's reason for saying that his view is not Idealism. And evaluate the goodness of his reason.

Week 15 Assignment - Due 04/20 - Kant, *Prolegomena*, Sections 40-49

Explain, to the best of your ability and using Kant's theory, why the existence of a permanent soul is unknowable. Make sure your answer says more than "Because the permanence of the soul can be proved only during the life of a person." This is relevant; but there is more to be said.

Week 16 Assignment - Due 04/29 - Kant, *Prolegomena*, Conclusion & Solution

How is metaphysics possible as a science, according to Kant?

Term Paper

There are two possibilities for a term paper.

- (1) a comparative essay, containing a thesis about the relation between two or more philosophers on a particular point and the comparative strengths and weaknesses of each philosopher's stance. For instance: a comparison of Descartes', Spinoza's, and Locke's arguments for God's existence; a comparison of Descartes' and Locke's arguments in favor of the existence of an external world.
- (2) an evaluative essay, containing a thesis that critically evaluates one or more of the theses or arguments by a single philosopher. For instance: an evaluation of Descartes' arguments for mind-body dualism, or Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

Both kinds of term paper should involve an exposition of the philosopher's argument(s) of interest, textual support for that exposition, a clearly stated thesis, arguments in favor of that thesis, and consideration of possible objections to the thesis.

Whichever kind of paper you decide to write, I recommend meeting with me to discuss your thesis and your plan of attack for writing the paper. You should plan to meet with me prior to spring break. But the meeting is not mandatory.

Grading for the term paper is a function of: relevance of topic to the course; clarity of expression; depth of understanding; quality of interpretation, explanation, and argumentation; and degree of engagement with other thinkers, including sagacious use of quotations and illustrative examples.

General Formatting

Take as many or as few pages as you need in order to complete all elements of the assignment. Chances are your paper will be more than 5 pages but less than 20. But there is no page requirement. This means that there is no need for fluff.

Please staple or otherwise bind together the pages of your essay. Please use a readable font. Times New Roman 12 point is a nice one. Please also double-space the text.

DO NOT use a separate cover page. Put your name at the very top of the first page. And put a title below that, with center justification. Then insert one or two blank lines and begin your essay.

DO NOT use a separate Works Cited page. After the last sentence of your paper, put two blank lines and then list your references.

If you are in doubt about how to format the paper, use your favorite method from high school: just do not waste paper on separate pages for things that could go on the same pages as your main essay. Also, there is no need to put the paper in a folder.

If you use outside sources, be sure to cite them in a consistent manner, and in a way that would allow a reasonable person to locate the source. If you are unsure, show someone else your citation and see whether they could find the source.

General Advice

As a student, write for your parents (or someone else with no prior exposure to philosophy.) If your parents could not understand what you've written, try again. Part of the task of writing a philosophy paper is to demonstrate that you understand the material. Rehashing terminology or lecture notes does not accomplish this.

If a person from high school, looking only at your notes, could have written your paper, then try again. Expect more from yourself.

Your paper must include more than a summary of what others think and a statement of your opinions. It must also defend a thesis with reasons (as opposed to, say, psychological facts about your experience in reading the philosopher you're discussing). One way to come up with reasons for a thesis is to think of how you would respond to criticisms of your thesis.

Good writing is not separable from clear writing. Clear writing involves, among other things, grammatically well-formed sentences, correctly spelled words, properly used punctuation, sacrifices of style to intelligibility (the best sounding sentence is not always the easiest to understand one), and frequent indications to the reader about what is going on in the paper.

Generic Outlines

This is a suggestion for how to structure your term paper. Other paper structures are acceptable. And following this structure does not guarantee a good grade: the content of the paper matters also.

Comparative Essay

Part 1: X argues that p concerning topic T. Y argues that q concerning T (such that either q differs from p or the argument for q differs from the argument for p). I shall argue that X's position/argument is more/less well-supported/persuasive than Y's.

Part 2: A brief explanation of topic T: what's the issue, why were the philosophers X and Y concerned with the issue? This part should motivate why the issue is philosophically important (or, at least, why X and Y thought the issue was philosophically important).

Part 3: An explanation of what X says about T, namely, p. This part should explain to a nonphilosopher what the content of X's position is. It should also give some textual support that, as a matter of fact, X holds that p is true.

Part 4: An exposition of X's argument(s) for p, supported by textual evidence and written for an audience that is unfamiliar with the philosopher.

Parts 5 and 6: Repeat parts 3 and 4 for a different philosopher.

Part 7: Clear and unambiguous statement of thesis.

Part 8: Critical comparison of X's argument for p and Y's argument for q. Factors to consider include (but are not limited to): plausibility of premises, cogency of the argument itself, ability to withstand objections.

Evaluative Essay

Part 1: X argues that p concerning topic T. I shall argue that (insert thesis here). Possible theses include: the argument is flawed, but an alternative argument is available to X using the resources of X's system; although many think the argument is flawed, their criticisms are mistaken; the argument is flawed, and this has repercussions a, b, and c for the rest of X's philosophical system

Part 2: A brief explanation of topic T: what's the issue, why was X and Y concerned with the issue, and what is the place of X's answer to this issue within X's overall system? This part should motivate why the issue is philosophically important (or, at least, why X thought the issue was philosophically important).

Part 3: An explanation of what X says about T, namely, p. This part should explain to a nonphilosopher what the content of X's position is. It should also give some textual support that, as a matter of fact, X holds that p is true.

Part 4: An exposition of X's argument(s) for p, supported by textual evidence and written for an audience that is unfamiliar with the philosopher.

Part 5: Clear and unambiguous statement of thesis.

Parts 6+: The remaining parts of the essay differ, depending upon the kind of thesis. See me for further suggestions. Every paper should include: some argument(s) for your thesis, possible replies the philosopher might make (if you are being critical of the philosopher) and what you would say in response, and consideration of other possible objections to your thesis.