

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**GRADUATE COURSE OUTLINE 2016-17**

**Philoso 9036A: Thinking Matter in the Seventeenth Century**

Fall Term 2016  
M 11:30-2:30  
StvH 1145

Benjamin Hill  
StvH 3142,  
Tues 1:30-2:30  
Thu 9:30-10:30  
by appointment  
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**Description**

The metaphysics of minds and persons in the seventeenth century is a hot topic right now. It intersects many interesting topics concerning the nature of thought, embodiment, morality, freedom, the nature of body, and life after death. This seminar-style course will engage with canonical and non-canonical primary literature as well as the recent secondary literature on this topic. The focus will be on how the problem(s) of thinking matter intersect (and vice versa) with positions in the philosophy of mind and representation, morality, action theory, natural immortality and resurrection, and ontology. Special attention will be paid to the following issues: Representation and the Achilles argument against materialism; The unity of distributed cognitive powers; animal cognition; Moral vs Metaphysical arguments for Immortality; the requirements for the conceptual possibilities of immortality and resurrection; the degree and nature of our freedom; the metaphysical requirements for freedom, responsibility, and moral accountability; and voluntarist and rationalist conceptions of metaphysical possibility and necessity. Figures studied will include: Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, More, Suarez, Cavendish, Cordemoy, La Forge, Charleton, Bayle, Overton, and (possibly) Malebranche. (Leibniz and Anne Conway will not be considered in this course.)

The seminar will presuppose some broad familiarity with Locke's thought and usual conceptions the trends in seventeenth-century philosophy. An undergraduate's grasp of Locke's place in the history of seventeenth-century philosophy should be sufficient. Students are advised to refresh their understandings before the first class meeting. Samuel Rickless's recent book *Locke* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), which is available via Weldon as an e-book, is an excellent resource to consult before the course begins. There are several others that would be good too. Students might be interested in pre-reading Nicholas Jolley's *Locke's Touchy Subjects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) as well because my own project is a reaction to (and correction of) it.

This is a graduate level seminar rather than a graduate level course. As I understand it, that connotes two features regarding student engagement with the material and class time. As seminar is a collection of researchers joining together to explore a topic in which each has independent yet overlapping interests and projects. It is principally about providing rich and various perspectives on the topic and resource materials as well as receiving and providing

feedback on the various projects and perspectives. So, participants should approach the seminar with a project already in mind (in various states of development and refinement in fine) or with the expectations that they will be transforming an interest in the topic into a project early in the term. Participants should also approach the seminar with the expectation that they will be actively involved in and engaged with class discussions and activities rather than the expectation of passively listening to lectures. To be sure, others will have things to say and present in class, but in-class presentations should not be (and will not be) single-voiced, sustained recitations of prepared material. Participants in a seminar should expect a dynamic interaction addressing ideas, arguments, and themes from the readings.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

During this seminar, students will:

- 1) Develop an understanding and appreciation of the role the history of philosophy plays (or should play) in contemporary philosophical development;
- 2) Develop an understanding of the nature of research in the history of early modern European philosophy;
- 3) Develop the capacity to plan and engage in research in the history of early modern European philosophy;
- 4) Develop an understanding of dynamics of the variety of philosophical thinking about the mind in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe;
- 5) Develop an understanding of the philosophical intersections between natural immortality and resurrection and the nature of mind and thought according to seventeenth-century European thinkers;
- 6) Develop an understanding of and appreciation for the philosophical arguments used to defend various positions regarding the metaphysics of mind by European philosophers in the Seventeenth Century;
- 7) Develop an understanding of and appreciation for the unique form(s) of materialism and dualism across seventeenth-century European philosophy and their conceptual strengths and weaknesses;
- 8) Develop an understanding of and appreciation for the significance that non-canonical texts, themes, areas, and figures play in the evolution of early modern European philosophy;
- 9) Develop an understanding of and appreciation for the important and significant ways that investigation of and research into the non-canonical directly impacts our understandings and interpretations of canonical figures, areas, texts, and themes.
- 10) Develop the capacity and confidence to orally present their original research in the history of early modern European philosophy.

### **Recommended Text:**

John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). ISBN 9780198245957

### **Requirements and Assessments:**

**Research Paper Prospectus (10%) Due before Friday Oct. 7, 2016:** All registered students are required to submit a 500—750 word prospectus and preliminary bibliography and have a 30 minute discussion with the instructor regarding the prospectus, the research project, and the preliminary bibliography. Please refer to the

assignment rubric and guidelines for more details. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to schedule a date/time for the meeting and to submit the prospectus/bibliography 48 hours prior to the meeting. Students are advised to arrange their meeting times as early as possible to avoid the problem of being unable to make arrangements because the instructor is unavailable or has scheduled other prospectus meetings during the student's desired times.

**Secondary Literature Reports (15%) Due Friday Nov. 4, 2016 at 11:55 pm:** All students are required to submit TWO detailed 1000 word reports each on a single secondary source (peer reviewed article or book) directly relevant to the course material and/or their research projects. See the assignment rubric and guidelines for more details.

**Annotated Bibliography (10%) Due Wednesday Nov 23, 2016 at 11:55 am:** All registered students are required to submit comprehensive, annotated bibliographies for their research projects. Please refer to the assignment rubric and guidelines for more details.

**Work in Progress Conference (10%) Held on Mon Dec 5, 2016:** All registered students are required to present drafts of their research papers at the Works in Progress Conference to be held at the final class meeting (Monday Dec 5, 2016 from 11:30-2:30pm). Drafts are to be submitted and pre-circulated among the students by **Friday Dec 2, 2016 at 7:00 am**. Oral presentations and discussions will take place during the conference. The amount of class time available for each project depends on the number of registered students.

**WIP Peer Feedback (05%)** All students are required to provide peer feedback on every work in progress submitted for the conference. The peer feedback form to be used is available via OWL. Please refer to the assignment rubric and guidelines for more detail.

**Research Paper (50%) Due Wed Jan 4, 2017 at 11:55 pm:** Registered students are required to write an 8 500—10 000 word research paper. The standard for the paper is something suitable for publication in journals that publish scholarship in the history of philosophy as a contribution to the subdiscipline of the history of early modern European philosophy. The paper should fit the type and style that constitutes contemporary scholarship in the history of early modern European philosophy. It should substantially engage with the secondary literature as well as the primary literature and should defend a thesis that extends or develops our understanding of the philosophical issues addressed. Please refer to the assignment rubric and guidelines for additional details and guidance.

**Attendance Extra Credit (up to 02%):** Students will receive an extra 02% added to their course average for a perfect record of attendance (based on class hours). For attendance less than perfect, extra credit will be pro-rated according to class hours present.

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### Schedule of Topics and Reading Assignments:

N.B., because of our assigned meeting day, we lose one week of class time to the Thanksgiving holiday. Please plan your projects and research accordingly.

- Sept 12          Course Introduction: Mind, Person, Substance, and Natural Immortality
- Sept 19          Crisis: Platonism, Averroism, and Ignorance  
Readings: Fifth Lateran Council 1512-17 (session 8, 19 December 1513)  
<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum18.htm>  
Pomponazzi, Immortality, from *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 280-381  
Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, Bk I, ch. 1-4, pp. 15-59
- Sept 26          16<sup>th</sup> Century Attempts: Woolton, Suarez, and Rogers/Jackson  
Woolton, *Treatise on Immortality* (1576)  
Rogers, *Philosophical Discourse* (1576)  
Mornay, *A Work* (1587)  
Primavdaye, *Second Part* (1594)  
Jackson, *The Soul* (1611)  
  
Suarez, *De anima* (1621), d2.q3.sect1-48;  
Suarez, *Metaphysical Disputations* (1597), d15.q1-2,5-6, and 9
- Oct 3            Christian Mortalism and Materialism: Overton, Hallywell, and Howe  
Overton, *Man Wholly Mortal* (1655)  
Overton, *Man's Mortalitie* (1643)  
Hallywell, *Private Letter*, (1667)  
Howe, *Vanity* (1672)
- Oct 10          Happy Thanksgiving — No Class
- Oct 17          Hobbes and Cavendish  
Hobbes, TBD  
Cavendish, *Grounds* (1668)
- Oct 24          Descartes and the Cartesians: Descartes, Charleton, La Forge, Cordemoy  
Descartes, *Meditations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> (1640)  
Charleton, *Immortality* (1657)  
La Forge, *Treatise on Human Mind* (1664)  
Cordemoy, TBD
- Oct 31          Henry More and the Cambridge Platonists: Henry More  
More, *Immortality* (1659)
- Nov 7          Lock on the Resurrection  
Richard Baxter  
Locke, TBD

- Nov 14        Locke on Mind  
              Locke, *Essay* (1690), II.i
- Nov 21        Locke on Substance  
              Locke, *Essay* (1690), II.xxiii  
              Locke, *Corr w/ Stillingfleet* (1697-98)
- Nov 28        Locke on Persons  
              Locke, *Essay* (1694), II.xvii
- Dec 5         Works in Progress Conference

## **Expectations and Advice for Graduate Students**

I encourage all graduate students to review SGPS's Graduate Supervision Handbook ([http://grad.uwo.ca/faculty\\_staff/viceprovost/supervision.html](http://grad.uwo.ca/faculty_staff/viceprovost/supervision.html)) and the Teaching Support Centre's *Guide to Graduate Supervision*

([http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/resources/pdf/PG\\_1\\_Supervision.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/resources/pdf/PG_1_Supervision.pdf)). Virtually all the advice and principles discussed there apply to graduate level course/seminars and graduate student-professor relationships more generally. I am happy to discuss and draw up a Letter of Understanding with any graduate student regarding this seminar. I believe strongly in the values of Open and Clear Communication, Availability, and Trust and Respect for graduate level courses and seminars and strive to bring those to my graduate level teaching. I am happy to meet with or communicate with you whenever you wish and aim to be as clear and forthright as possible.

- I expect all graduate students to be on time for and present at all classes and scheduled meetings (barring truly exceptional circumstances).
- I expect all graduate students to be properly prepared for classes and meetings. By being properly prepared, I mean be having completed all assignments and being ready to engage in a sustained, critical, and philosophical discussion of the topic, including all pre-assigned readings.
- I expect all graduate students to be actively engaged with the material and with seminar discussions.
- I expect all graduate students to meet pre-established deadlines. If it begins to look like a deadline will not be met, I expect to be informed at the earliest possible time and a discussion of a revised timeline for completion.

Graduate school is a busy, difficult, and stressful period in one's academic career. It is not uncommon for academic and non-academic pressures to generate anxieties or negatively impact one's studies and academic progression. There are lots of supports and help for students struggling. I strongly encourage students to seek out such supports as needed and I am happy to help and direct students to the appropriate resources as necessary. Please take care of yourselves, your self-esteem and well-being, and seek any support necessary at the earliest possible time.

- I advise that assigned material be read and reread carefully prior to class meetings and that students arrive at class meetings ready to actively engage with the material by asking questions, offering critical comments or reflections, noting connections and comparisons between texts, or philosophically analyzing and critiquing arguments and ideas (among others).
- I advise that students begin setting up a timeline for completion of their seminar projects or course requirements early and that they resist the temptation to "back load" drafting and writing. You should plan and take a break between terms and holiday seasons are (and ought to be) especially busy with personal and family commitments. Please allow yourself time and energy for those between terms.
- Having an occasional "off" day or day when you are feeling unengaged and unproductive is not uncommon or problematic. Don't worry about it, but learn what works best for getting yourself back on track. But if you find yourself regularly having such "off" days (e.g. once every two or three weeks) or find yourself in an unproductive funk for more than two days, you should seek out some help to get back on track. Please contact your

advisor, mentor, or a trusted source for advice and assistance. Feel free to talk with me about it, if you wish.

- I advise that you plan on devoting a bit of time pretty much every day to each of your courses or projects, even if you have specific days that you concentrate on one of them. A bit of reading and/or quiet reflection on a topic or text will soak in and repay your efforts in significant ways.

### **The Real Secrets for Success in Graduate School (and Academic Life Generally)**

- Be attentive to your overall well-being and happiness and take the appropriate steps necessary to retain and develop it. I advise reviewing UC Berkeley's 2014 report on Graduate Student Well-Being and following the guidelines offered there (<http://www.ga.berkeley.edu/wellbeingreport>). Please take care of your selves and your well-being first and foremost.
- Cultivate and maintain effective time management skills. Part of what makes graduate school such a difficult pressure-cooker is that we are overloaded and overburdened with reading, writing, thinking, and projects. Managing our time and work efficiently is the only way to survive and succeed. There are lots of apps, tools, and techniques to help with cultivating, refining, and maintaining our time management skills. Find what works for you and make use of it. Ask around for what others recommend.