

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Graduate Course Outline**

**Philosophy 9602B: Seminar in Rationalism
Metaphysics from Leibniz to Kant**

Winter 2023
Wednesday 2:30-5:30
Stevenson 1145

Instructor: Robert DiSalle
Office Hours : Monday 12:30-2:30 (and by ap-
pointment)
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DESCRIPTION : Metaphysics from Leibniz to Kant

Early modern philosophy promised a revolution in metaphysics, integrating logic, mathematics, empirical science, and theology in a coherent picture of the natural world. This project was chiefly inspired by Descartes, but it Leibniz who tried to carry it out with the greatest philosophical rigour and depth. Yet by the end of the 18th century, Kant became convinced that Leibniz's approach to metaphysics was futile, and that another revolution—the "Critical philosophy"—was required. In this course, we will study the evolution of modern metaphysics by following this transition, from the rationalist metaphysics of Leibniz and his school to Kant's critique of metaphysics. We will begin with Leibniz's efforts to address the legacy of early modern philosophy, especially the ideas of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, and to comprehend them within his own logical, epistemological, and metaphysical framework. We then turn to Kant's early engagement with the Leibnizian tradition, his attempts to reconcile Leibniz's ideas with 18th-century conceptions of natural philosophy, and his gradual conviction that metaphysics could no longer be pursued in the traditional way. We finish with the beginning of Kant's Critical philosophy, and consider the significance of this transition for the subsequent history of philosophy. Particular problems to be discussed will include the nature of truth, the connections between natural philosophy and metaphysics, the relation between rational and empirical inquiry, and the relation between theology and philosophy.

TEXTS

Works of Leibniz, Kant, and their contemporaries will be posted on the OWL site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading of all assigned texts and regular participation in seminar discussions.
One seminar presentation (25%); one short paper (25%); one term paper (50%).