

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2017-18

Philosophy 3022G: Cartesianism and its Critics

Winter Term 2018
P&AB 36
M 10:30-11:20
W 10:30-12:30

Instructor: Benjamin Hill
STVH 3142:
519-661-2111 x80143
Office Hours: M, 9:30-10:20
W, 13:30-14:20
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DESCRIPTION

This is an exploration of themes in Cartesian philosophy of mind. It begins with Descartes and traces out three strands central to the Cartesian revolution in the philosophy of mind from Descartes through the early stages of the Cartesian movement and ending with Malebranche's significant reorientation of Cartesianism in the 1670s and 1680s. It will explore (a) the nature and significance of the substantial union of mind and body in humans; (b) the nature of ideas and Cartesian intentionality; (c) the Cartesian accounts of free will and human (moral) agency. It will cover Descartes, Regius, Princess Elisabeth, La Forge, Cordemoy, and Malebranche.

Prerequisites: Philoso 2202 Early Modern Philosophy

Antirequisites: None

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Attendance is mandatory for this course and unexcused absences will adversely affect the student's grade. See Methods of Evaluation for information about how attendance is graded.

In this course students will develop:

1. A familiarity with several canonical and non-canonical thinkers and the capacity to articulate, explain, and defend their philosophical contributions to the development of Cartesianism and Cartesian philosophy of mind;
2. The capacity to historically contextualize ideas, arguments, and texts concerning philosophy of mind in the Cartesian tradition in the mid to late seventeenth century;
3. The capacity to philosophically analyze unfamiliar and complicated ideas, arguments, and texts;

4. The capacity to present, explain, and discuss alternatives to the standard, canonical narratives of Cartesianism and early modern philosophy;
5. The capacity to present, explain, and discuss the rich variety and diversity of Cartesian philosophers, Cartesian questions and issues concerning the mind, and lesser-known Cartesian texts and writings.

TEXTS

Both texts are available at The Bookstore at Western for your convenience.

Descartes, Rene. *René Descartes: Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*. Edited by Roger Ariew. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000. ISBN 0-87220-502-9.

Malebranche, Nicolas. *Nicolas Malebranche: Philosophical Selections*. Edited by Steven Nadler. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992. ISBN 0-87220-152-X.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Examinations (40%) Students are required to complete two self-administered, timed essay and short answer examinations. The examinations will be available for a limited time (48 hours) via OWL and are to be completed during that window. The examinations will be open-book, open-note, and students can use any resources they wish. Students are not to collaborate, discuss, consult with one another, or jointly complete the examination; completing the examination must be an individual effort. An honor pledge will be included with each examination. The examinations will cover all the materials in the assigned readings or discussed and reviewed during class. The examinations will each be available for 48 hours. The first between 18:00 Feb 7 (Wed) and 18:00 Feb 9 (Fri). The second between 18:00 Mar 21 (Wed) and 18:00 Mar 23 (Fri).

Exegetical Papers (20%) Students are required to submit TWO (2) exegetical papers (minimum 750 words each; minimum 1500 in total) addressing a set of texts or readings specified on OWL. The assignment will open 7 days before the due date. More details can be found on OWL under the “Assignments” tab. The first exegetical assignment is due 06:00 Feb 5 (Mon). The second is due 06:00 Mar 19 (Mon).

Term Paper (30%) Students are required to write and submit a minimum 1500 word analytic Term Paper. The paper is due at midnight on Wednesday April 11th. More details can be found on OWL under the “Assignments” tab. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the paper is uploaded or emailed *before* midnight according to the upload/email timestamp. Take steps to ensure that your paper is not refused or counted late because of a slight error in timing. No papers can be accepted after midnight on Wednesday April 11th per departmental and Senate policy. As of Thursday April 12th, all students who have failed to submit a paper will be awarded a score of 0, unless they receive decanal approval for an accommodation. Papers failing to fall within the required word count will not be accepted and will not be considered submissions; they will be awarded a score of 0 for the assignment on Thursday April 12th.

An analytic essay or paper differs from an exegetical paper because it *defends a thesis*, and in the case of a philosophical essay or paper the thesis should be a philosophically important and interesting one. *A defense of a thesis* is an argument that shows the truth of the thesis. Because this is a course in the history of philosophy, your paper should be appropriate for the methodology of the history of philosophy. There are a variety of types

of projects that would be appropriate for an analytic history of philosophy paper, ***but they all must critically and substantially engage with a primary text assigned in this course:***

- (a) Defending a philosophical analysis of a specific doctrine or argument presented in the primary text;
- (b) Defending a philosophical assessment of a specific doctrine or argument presented in the text in a way that is sensitive to the text's historical context;
- (c) Critiquing an existing interpretation of a doctrine or text;
- (d) Defending a novel or alternative interpretation of a doctrine or text against the established interpretation(s) of it.

Papers will be graded largely on the nature of their thesis (its historical and philosophical importance and interest, the clarity and precision with which it is expressed, and contribution that it makes to our continuing discussions about and understanding of the texts in question) and the adequacy of their defense of that thesis (its clarity, coherence, and plausibility, its power and fruitfulness, and the depth and relevancy of the material marshalled in its support). There is no "research" requirement for this paper, but students are encouraged to do so if they want. It is generally helpful and fruitful and there is a correlation between doing such philosophical "research" and writing stronger and better papers. Students electing to do "research" are strongly encouraged to seek out and use only reliable, scholarly vetted and peer-reviewed sources. For example, wikipedia and self-published web or blog postings are prima facie frowned upon and should be used with caution. Students choosing to use such material rather than peer-reviewed articles and books or webposting recommended by the instructor or GTA should be prepared to justify his or her selection and use of such material within the paper's footnotes. Students are strongly encouraged to ask questions and seek help in the development of their paper projects, their thesis, and their argument. If an optional paper writing seminar is offered, students are strongly encouraged to participate.

Attendance (10%) All students are required to attend every class. A sign-in sheet will be distributed. Signing-in and leaving, arriving quite late and signing in nonetheless, signing in another student, and other ways of falsifying the record of attendance constitutes academic fraud and will be treated as such. Attendance does not connote mere physical presence in the classroom. Attendance involves paying attention and not engaging in rude, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior during the class. Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to: texting, checking email, reading the newspaper, reading material for another class, chatting or joking during class, surfing the internet, internet shopping, etc.. *The instructor reserves the right to strike any person's name from the attendance roll for engaging in the above, or any other such disruptive or disrespectful behavior.* Students are awarded 2.63 points per hour of class attended (38 hours).

Students are allowed only 5 hours of excused absences (13.16%), even if granted an accommodation from the Academic Dean.

To request that an individual absence be excused from the grade calculation, send a message via OWL to the "INSTRUCTOR ROLE" with the subject heading "ABSENCE" detailing the date of the absence and the reason(s) why it should be marked as an "excused absence". ONLY MESSAGES SENT TO OWL AS DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR EXCUSAL.

Grade available prior to

The following grades will be available prior March 7th.

- Attendance through March 7 (06%)
- Exegetical Paper #1 (10%)
- Examination #1 (20%)

Essay Course Word Count

As a course that satisfies the senior level essay course requirement, student enrolled in this course should expect to submit a minimum of 3000 words of written work.

Course Average

The course target average is set at 76 per departmental guidelines and policies.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICIES

Non-medical absences will be accommodated by the instructors with sufficient explanation and documentation for the absence. Late assignments and missed deadlines will also be accommodated by the instructors with sufficient explanation and documentation. Documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

The Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness is here:

<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

For accommodations of work worth less than 10% of the total course grade, documentation and decanal approval is not necessary.

No electronic devices or printed materials are allowed during in-class examinations.

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_undergrad.pdf.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

The policy of the Department of Philosophy is that all written work must be submitted to turnitin.com. See <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

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>). Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>)
Student Support Services (<http://westernusc.ca/services/>)

AUDITING

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.