

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-2023**

**Philosophy 4037G: Seminar in Rationalism**  
**Metaphysics from Leibniz to Kant**

**Winter Term 2023**

**W 2:30-5:30**

**Stevenson 1145**

**Instructor: Prof. Robert DiSalle**

**Office Hours: M 12:30-2:30**

**(and by appointment)**

**Stevenson Hall 4141**

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**Seminar in Rationalism: 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 OWL.

**METHOD OF EVALUATION**

2 short essays (each 25% of final mark)

Final exam (40% of final mark)

Regular participation in class discussion (10% of final mark)

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To study classic texts in early modern metaphysics

2. To understand philosophical ideas of the 17th and 18th centuries in their context
3. To understand the impact of early modern metaphysics on later developments in philosophy
4. To develop competence in critical analysis by careful reading and discussion
5. To develop skills of oral expression and argument through class discussion
6. To develop writing skills through written assignments

### **AUDIT**

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

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://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.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

[http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

### **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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

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>.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.