

PHILOSOP 3024G

Leibniz

Winter 2025–2026

Instructor	Contact Information
Dr. Benjamin Hill (he/him/his) Associate Professor of Philosophy	Email: bhill28@uwo.ca Phone: 519.661.2111 x80143 Student Hours: Thursdays 11:00-12:00

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (e.g., First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research, and community service.

For more information: <https://www.communications.uwo.ca/land-acknowledgement/>

Course Description

How do simple, immaterial substances constitute the physical world? This course tackles one of early modern philosophy's most fascinating puzzles: Leibniz's claim that the entire universe—bodies, forces, causality, and even you—is grounded in windowless monads that never interact. We will investigate how Leibniz's seemingly bizarre metaphysics actually provides a sophisticated solution to 17th century problems about substance, causation, perception, and the mind-body relation. We'll examine how monads "express" the universe, how force emerges from immaterial activity, whether bodies are real or merely phenomenal, and what pre-established harmony means for freedom and scientific explanation. Through close engagement with Leibniz's major texts and his debates with contemporaries (Arnauld, Bayle, Clarke), you'll develop skills in systematic metaphysical reasoning and learn to appreciate how abstract philosophical principles shape concrete accounts of the natural world. This is philosophy at its most ambitious: a complete system that attempts to reconcile mechanism and teleology, necessity and freedom, the infinite and the finite. Perfect for students interested in abstract metaphysics, early modern philosophy, philosophy of science, or anyone who wants to understand how one of history's greatest minds tried to explain absolutely everything.

Course Type

This is a theoretical course in academic philosophy. This means that it is focused on knowledge development and learning outcomes involving understanding the readings and developing the skills necessary for philosophy as practiced by academics. Regular attendance, preparation, and full engagement with class discussions are essential to properly experiencing the course.



Prerequisites and Antirequisites

Prerequisites: None

Antirequisites: None

Important: 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 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to:

1. **UNDERSTAND** (Comprehension, Foundational) Explain Leibniz's core doctrines including the nature of monads, the pre-established harmony, corporeal substance, force, and the principle of sufficient reason. Demonstrate how these doctrines interconnect to form a mature, unified, and systematic philosophical framework.
2. **ANALYZE** (Analysis, Core Focus) Breakdown and reconstruct the logical structures of Leibniz's arguments on core metaphysical issues—substance, causation, mind-body union, phenomenalism, sense perception, freedom, etc.—by identifying his conclusions, explicit and implicit premises, inferential steps, and unstated assumptions.
3. **ANALYZE** (Analysis, Advanced) Trace how Leibniz's thinking developed, changed, or remained constant across texts, correspondences, and chronologically by analyzing how context, audience, and Leibniz's own expectations influenced his formulations without undermining the systematic coherence of his metaphysics.
4. **EVALUATE** (Evaluation, Introductory) Compare Leibniz's positions with the main alternative early modern positions (Cartesian, Spinozistic, Malebranchean, Baylean, and Lockean) by identifying key points of agreement and disagreement and making provisional judgments about the philosophical strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.

Required Course Materials

Required Book

1. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Philosophical Essays*. Edited by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Hackett Publishing, 1989. ISBN 9780872200623.

Selections from the Following

2. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Philosophical Papers and Letters*. 2nd ed. Edited and translated by Leroy E. Loemker. The New Synthese Historical Library 2. Kluwer Academic, 1989. ISBN 9789027706935.
3. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Leibniz's "New System" and Associated Contemporary Texts*. Edited by R. S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks. Clarendon Press, 1997. ISBN 9780198248460.
4. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Edited and translated by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett. Cambridge University Press, 1997. ISBN 0521576601.
5. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Theodicy: New Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*. Translated by E. M. Huggard. Open Court, 1985. ISBN 0875484379.

6. Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, and Samuel Clarke. *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence: Together with Extracts from Newton's Principia and Opticks*. Edited by H. G. Alexander. Manchester University Press, 1956. ISBN 9780719006692.

All texts are in Perusall for use in the Perusall assessments. Ariew and Garber: \$19.95 USD (perpetual online access). Selections from the other texts will be individually uploaded to Perusall by Dr. Hill.

Required Technology

iClicker Cloud

We will be using iClicker Cloud to track class attendance and conduct weekly quizzes. iClicker Cloud is a centrally supported active learning tool.

iClicker Join Code: ZERC

Students must download the iClicker app to their laptop, smartphone, or tablet. The app integrates with Brightspace.

Resources:

- [Western's eLearning Toolkit](#)
- [Western ITS Support](#)

Perusall

Perusall is a social learning annotation app that measures students' engagement with course readings. We will use it to track pre-class reading and consolidate student learning through collaborative annotation. The Perusall app integrates with Brightspace. Students are automatically enrolled through Brightspace.

Brightspace

All course material will be posted to OWL Brightspace:

<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Important: Students are responsible for checking the course Brightspace site regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

Communication Protocols

Email Subject Line: All email communications must contain the subject line "PHILOSOP 3024G: [topic]". Emails without the class code in the subject line will be ignored and deleted. I aim to respond to all email messages within 72 hours.

Course Accessibility

We strongly believe that philosophy is for everyone and that a philosophical education should be accessible to everyone. Feel free to adopt any supports that you require to fully participate in this course. Please bring to Dr. Hill's attention any barriers you encounter so that we can address them.

Accessibility measures in this course include:

- Automatic deadline flexibility for most assignments
- Class PowerPoints posted to Brightspace
- Audio of class discussion posted to Brightspace
- Transcript of class discussion posted to Brightspace
- Handouts of class material posted to Brightspace

- Audio podcasts that supplement class material posted to Brightspace

Preferred Names and Pronouns

If you prefer to be called something other than the name on file with the Registrar, please let us know. Please also feel free to specify the pronoun(s) you wish to be referred to by. If anyone mispronounces your name or forgets your preferred name/pronoun, please correct them. We always greatly appreciate being corrected when we mispronounce or forget someone's preferred name/pronoun.

Methods of Evaluation

Submission Policy: Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at 23:59 Eastern on their specified due dates and must be submitted via Brightspace or Perusall. Assignments with an automatic 48-hour grace period may be submitted as "late" but without any late penalty. To submit after the 48-hour grace period, contact Dr. Hill and, if necessary, your Academic Dean regarding academic consideration.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Component	Weight
Attendance	10%
Perusall Readings and Annotations	15%
Midterm Examination	25%
Analytic Skills Development	20%
Final Examination	30%

Attendance (10%)

Type: Formative Assessment | **Learning Outcomes:** Foundational

Students who are physically present and checked-in via iClicker will receive 1 point for each class attended. Points may be prorated for students arriving late or leaving early without prior permission. Students wishing to be excused for an absence must email the instructors before the beginning of class explaining their absence and requesting to be excused for it. Only three unexcused absences will be granted for the term without approval from the student's Dean's office.

Perusall Readings and Annotations (15%)

Type: Formative Assessment | **Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3

Perusall Readings "First Encounters" | Learning Outcome 1

Students are required to read the assigned texts at least once in the Perusall reader before the texts are discussed in class. This assignment is not eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period, even if a student is granted an unexcused absence. Academic consideration will be granted only if the student's Dean's office approves.

Perusall AI Grading Criteria:

- Opening the assignment = 20%
- Reading to the end = 60%
- Actively engaged for 60 min = 20%

Perusall Annotations | Learning Outcomes 2, 3

Weekly, students must post philosophically engaging annotations to the text(s) posted to Perusall. The annotations are marked by Perusall's AI.

Perusall AI Grading Criteria:

- Seven high-quality comments = 60% (no credit for medium-quality; no credit for low-quality). 10% deducted if all comments are clustered in a short span of text.
- Opening the assignment at least 3 times = 20%
- Posting 4 comments that elicit high-quality responses from other students = 40%
- Upvoting comments (7 required) or receiving upvotes (4 required) = 20%

Students concerned that the AI did not properly credit their annotations may ask Dr. Hill to manually review their submission. Instructors will be spot-checking submissions and may make adjustments.

Midterm Examination (25%)

Type: Summative Assessment | **Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3, 4

Students are required to write a timed (90 min) midterm examination consisting of 3-5 long answer, "essay" prompts. The examination will be closed book/notes and electronic devices will not be permitted.

Date: 02 March 18:30-20:00 | **Location:** STVH 1145

Make-up: 05 March 18:30-20:00 | **Location:** STVH 1145

Important: The midterm exam is a **Designated Assessment**, which means that all requests for academic consideration due to an "Undocumented Absence" will be denied.

Analytic Skills Development (20%)

Type: Summative Assessment | **Learning Outcomes:** 2, 3

Students are assigned two selections of text to analyze. Each assignment has three components, an Argument Map (600 words), a Detailed Argument Reconstruction and Analysis (1000 words), and a Metacognitive Reflection on their analytic process (200 words). ASD Assignment #1 "Adams, Leibniz's Phenomenalism" has the following due dates: Arg Map (Jan 30), Reconstruction (Feb 6), and Reflection (Feb 13). ASD Assignment #2 "Bayle's Remark H" has the following due dates: Arg Map (Mar 27), Reconstruction (Apr 2), and Reflection (Apr 9).

Final Examination (30%)

Type: Summative Assessment | **Learning Outcomes:** 1, 2, 3, 4

Students are required to write a cumulative, 3-hour final examination consisting of 6-8 long answer, "essay" prompts. The examination will be closed book/notes and electronic devices will not be permitted.

Date and Location: To be assigned by the University Registrar during the examination period

Essay Course Word Count

As a course that satisfies the senior-level essay course requirement, students enrolled in this course should expect to submit a minimum of 2500 words of written work, including in-class examinations.

Department Target Average Policy

The Philosophy Department has a policy requiring a 76 average for each 3rd-year course. The grades assigned will be in the Brightspace Gradebook. Should there be any discrepancy between the grade recorded in Brightspace and your "official" grade reported by the Registrar, contact the Philosophy Department Undergraduate Chair for clarification.

Academic Policies

Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices of any kind is **permitted** in the course **except during examinations**. During examinations, no electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones, and smart watches) are permitted.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Core Policy: Generative AI may NOT be used to generate text for any assignment or assessment in this course. If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them.

Permitted Use: Students ARE permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources.

Student Responsibilities: Students must critically evaluate obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. Assignments must reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work.

Western's guidance on generative AI is available at <https://ai.uwo.ca/>

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.

Policy: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism Checking Software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University. 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 between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

Professionalism

Education is a professional activity, and campus is a professional environment. Everyone is expected to comport themselves in a manner appropriate for and conducive to such an environment. All academic activities, interactions, and conversations should be conducted in a respectful, inclusive, and professional manner. **Judgmental, belittling, shaming, rude, ridiculing, bullying, and all other such behavior, comments, and attitudes are inappropriate and will not be tolerated.** We require that all discussions be respectful and kind even when that discussion is critical, defensive, emotional, and contradictory.

Academic Consideration and Accommodation

Policy on Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances—that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

Process:

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests must include: (a) Self-attestation signed by the student; (b) Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request; (c) Supporting documentation as relevant.
3. Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes completion of a Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods always require formal supporting documentation.

Full Policy: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Religious Accommodation

Students should review Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Policy: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf

Accessibility Accommodation

Academic Accommodation is "a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program." Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity.

Resources: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/ | **Policy:** https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer you whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic-related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help.

Contact Info: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Resources: <https://uwo.ca/health/>

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts.

Support Services: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact: support@uwo.ca

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Resources: <https://learning.uwo.ca>

USC Services

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC: <https://westernusc.ca/services/>

Additional Information

Department of Philosophy Policies

The Department of Philosophy Policies which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website. 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 for appeal. <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>

Audit

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

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