Immaterialism

This course treats one of the fundamental and most contested ideas in philosophy and theory: immaterialism. The readings, some of which are taken from the Theory qualifying exam list, will focus on the role of the immaterial in the history of metaphysics, while also charting materialism’s emergence in seventeenth-century thought. Our primary goal will be to grasp the notions of the immaterial as both foundational for metaphysics and occultish. Reflecting on its history from antiquity to early modernity, we will assess the fortunes of the incorporeal in an era of mechanistic materialism. Another aim will be to gauge the poetic and eclectic styles of philosophical writing that the immaterial elicits. The course concludes with one contemporary theorist’s return to the incorporeal as a critique of materialism.

Course Materials: Hayy Ibn Yaqzan is available at the UWO bookstore. Please purchase a copy. All other texts will be photocopied for you.

Syllabus

Phase One: A Short History of Metaphysics From the Point of View of Immaterialism

Sept 11 Introduction; Plato, Phaedrus excerpt

Sept 18 Plato cont’d, Plotinus from Essential Plotinus “The Intelligence, The Ideas, and Being” (V, 9[5]) and “The Descent of the Soul” (IV, 8[6])

Sept 25 Aristotle, Metaphysics Book 1 ch 1-2 pp 253-9; Book 4 ch 1-2; Book 7,

Oct 2 Aristotle, Metaphysics Book 7 cont’d; Book 12

Oct 9 Aristotle, De Anima selection
Ibn Tufayl, Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (Read pp 93-130; L. Goodman intro optional)

Oct 16 Ibn Tufayl, Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (pages 130-166)

Phase Two: Early Modern Philosophy: Materialism contra Immaterialism?

Oct 23 Stoicism: excerpt from A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, eds. The Hellenistic Philosophers vol 1
Nicholas Jolley, “Metaphysics” in Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy, ed. Donald Rutherford: read section on substance pp 103-114;
Descartes, selection
Oct 30  Cambridge Platonism: excerpt from Ralph Cudworth, *True Intellectual System of the Universe*

Nov 6  Fall Reading Week

Nov 13  Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* ch 1-2, 6-8; Jacqueline Broad, “Anne Conway” in *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*

Nov 20  W. G. Leibniz, “The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology”

Conclusions

Nov 27  Elizabeth Grosz, from *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics and the Limits of Materialism* (2017) intro and chapter 1

Dec 4  Grosz cont’d and conclusions; meetings regarding final essays

**Evaluation:**

1. Class Participation
   A. Weekly oral participation. Come to class having read the material thoroughly and prepared to contribute your thoughts and observations. I may send you study questions and a prompt to prepare.
   B. Respondent: one person will be designated to respond to the week’s oral presentation. Your task is to attempt to digest the presentation and ask questions, make comments, open up discussion points. The respondent will not have access to the presentation prior to class. A. and B. together: 20% of final grade.

2. Oral presentation of a reading and 5-6 page write-up. Write up is due before the next class or within 7 days in the case of the class before Reading Week. The primary aim is for you to present an analysis of some aspect of the text rather than summarize the whole, try to cover multiple ideas in the text, or present historical background and context. Your focus should be on understanding and analysis of a text. The secondary aim is for you to spur class discussion. You will be evaluated on content and on clarity of presentation. Plan to speak in class for no more than 15-20 minutes. 25% of final grade.

3. Essay: approx 15 pages on a topic of your choice, related to the course and readings. 55% of the final grade.

All written work shall be submitted in electronic format only via email (Word is preferable).

**Policies**

No laptops or other devices in class.
Absences are unacceptable except in extenuating circumstances.

**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) Additional guidelines can be found here.