

PHL 262Y
History of Modern Philosophy
– University of Montana –

Soazig Le Bihan

Part I

Presentation and Introduction

Chapter 1

Syllabus

Course Information

- Course Number: PHL 262Y
- Credits: 3
- Class meets: TR 3:40 - 5 pm, Business Building L14
- Instructor: Soazig Le Bihan
 - Office Number: LA 153
 - Office Hours: Fridays, 2-4pm.
 - Mailbox: LA 101
 - Email: soazig.lebihan@umontana.edu
- Websites:
 - All current course information (including class handouts, assignments, announcements, any revision of the schedule, exam questions, links etc.) can be found on the course web site
 - <http://www.soaziglebihan.org/PHIL262.php>
 - Information about your grades is on Moodle

Course Description

This course will introduce you to seven of the major figures of the 17th and 18th centuries in philosophy: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant.

The 17th and 18th centuries are centuries of radical change in the domains of philosophy, science and politics. Most of our modern western culture originates in these times. That said, while studying modern philosophy, you should expect to encounter and to learn to understand worldviews that are alien to your own. Confronting radically different ways of thinking should shed new light on your own views, methods and prejudices. In analyzing competing views on a subject, you will not only learn some philosophy, but also learn to *do* philosophy.

We will focus on metaphysics (roughly concerned with the question of the nature and structure of reality) and epistemology (roughly concerned with the question of the nature and scope of knowledge), leaving aside moral and political matters. Very little emphasis will be put on the historical and social contexts.

The learning goals are:

1. to learn about the major views of the modern philosophers in metaphysics and epistemology;
2. to develop critical thinking skills (including analyzing philosophical texts, evaluating philosophical arguments, and exploring the relationships between different views);
3. to be able to construct, convey, and argue for your own coherent views in metaphysics and epistemology.

Required Textbook

Ariew R. and Watkins, E., *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, Hackett

Tentative Schedule

Week 1	Presentation of the course, Introduction
Week 2	Descartes, Meditation I, II
Week 3	Descartes, Meditation III and IV
Week 4	Descartes, Meditations V and VI
Week 5	EXAM WEEK
	2/25 – In class-Exam
	2/27 – Exam Review
Week 6	Spinoza
Week 7	Leibniz
Week 8	Locke
Week 9	EXAM WEEK
	3/27 – In-class Exam
	3/29 – No class
Week 10	SPRING BREAK
Week 11	Berkeley
Week 12	Hume
Week 13	Hume
Week 14	Kant
Week 15	Kant and Conclusion
Week 16	FINAL EXAM Monday, May 13: 1:10-3:10

Workload and Assessment

Your grade will be based on the following:

Attendance and Participation	5 %
Homework and Reflection Journal	20%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
<i>Comprehensive</i> final exam	35 %

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is required, and necessary to succeed in the course. There will be a lot of material covered, and the material covered will be difficult.

You are allowed to miss three classes without penalty. Following that, you will lose 2% each time you miss a class up to a maximum of 10% (that is a letter grade).

You are expected to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class. *Three late arrivals count as one absence.* If you have to leave early, please tell me at the beginning of class and sit close to the exit to minimize the disturbance to the class.

You are expected to give your full attention to the class. Cell phones or other means of communication should be silenced for the duration of class. You will be asked to leave if you are doing anything not relevant for class, e.g. reading the newspaper, sleeping, doing work for other classes, etc. *Three offenses of this type will count as one absence.*

That said, absences may be excused in cases of illness or other extreme circumstances. Relevant documentation is required in such cases. You also will be expected to work through the material covered during the classes you may have missed.

Participation in class will not be graded, but consistent and active participation to the class will increase your final grade by half a letter grade.

Homework and Maintenance of a Reflection Journal:

Each week, you will be given a reading assignment and some study questions on these readings. You will be required to:

- formulate answers to the study questions before the material is covered in class;
- re-formulate (better) answers to the study questions after the material is covered in class;
- write a response paragraph about the readings.

All of this should appear in your reflection journal, which should be a concrete physical thing (folder, binder).

Each Monday, you will have to turn in your answers to the study questions for the week as well as your corrected answers from the week before and your response paragraph. The answers should be short: one sentence is probably not enough, but more than ten is probably too much. A short paragraph should be right on target. *Your homework should be type written, and turned in by hand during class. So, you need to print TWO copies: one for me, and one for yourself.*

Every week, I will pick up your homework. I will grade your homework twice over the course of the semester. You will not be told which homework I will grade. I will give you some feedback on your first homework so that you have a clear sense of what I am expecting from you.

You will be allowed to miss one homework without penalty. Following that, you will lose 5% for each assignment missed up to a maximum of 10%.

Your answers to the study questions will be graded on the following scale:

- A range** : Readings are very well understood. The answers are well articulated and accurate. The assignment is written in whole sentences, good English and clear style.
- B range** : There are a few minor problems with the answers given. The assignment is written in whole sentences, good English and clear style.
- C range** : There are either several minor problems or one major one with the answers given. The assignment is written in whole sentences, good English and reasonably clear style.

D range: There is several major problems with the answers. The assigned material was read, but not well understood.

F range: The material was probably not read, and/or the answers are irrelevant.

As for your response to the readings, you should aim to fulfill most of the following criteria:

- (1) **Writing.** The student completes all journal entries. All entries are of appropriate length and utilize appropriate grammar/spelling/punctuation.
- (2) **Focus and Organization.** Entries are well targeted on the topic at hand and well structured.
- (3) **Knowledge Gain.** Entries include specific insights the student has gained from the readings and class discussions.
- (4) **Connections.** Entries demonstrate the student's capacity to make connections between personal experience and new knowledge acquired in class.
- (5) **Self-Reflection.** Entries give evidence of self-awareness and self-reflection relating to the student's views on metaphysics and epistemology.

In-class Exams:

All in-class exams (including the final) will consist in (1) answering short questions, which will be taken from the study questions, and, (2), a short essay.

Note that the short questions asked in the exams correspond to the study questions. This means that if you do your homework regularly, and if you correct your answers after we have covered the material every week, studying for the exams should be easy.

The exams during the semester deal with the material covered since the preceeding exam (or the beginning of the class for the first exam). **The final in-class exam is comprehensive.**

No notes nor books will be allowed during the in-class exams.

The exams are mandatory. Absences may be excused only in cases of severe illness or other extreme circumstances. Proof of extreme circumstances or severe illness is required. Make up exams will not be given unless there is proof of extreme circumstances.

Late Assignment Rules

Late assignments (homework) will NOT be accepted for this class. Again, you will be allowed to miss one homework without penalty. Following that, you will lose 5% for each assignment missed up to a maximum of 10%. You will receive a zero if you don't turn in an essay on time.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you encounter difficulties concerning an assignment, **it is almost always possible to make arrangements before the assignment is due.** No accommodation is possible once the deadline has passed. **Come and talk to me before it is too late.**

University Resources

Writing Center Students from all levels can take advantage of the writing center (LA 144: drop in or by appointment)

“The Writing Center exists to help all UM students improve their writing skills as they pursue their academic and professional goals. We provide free writing instruction through one-on-one tutoring, in-class workshops, and the Writing Assistant program.” (quoted from the writing center website)

The tutors will not write your paper for you, but they will teach you how to write better. For more information, go the website: http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/welcom_about.htm

Academic Misconduct You are strictly held to the University of Montana Student Conduct Code (<http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode1.pdf>).

Unless collaborative work is specifically called for, work on assignments and exams is expected to be your own. If you plagiarise, your assignment will receive a zero. You may fail the class altogether depending on the scircumstances. Also, I will report the case to the Dean.

I will be glad to answer questions you may have about how to document sources properly. Anytime you take a phrase or sentence from someone, you have to quote it. Anytime you take an idea from someone, you have to cite your sources.

All exams are closed-note and closed-books: you may not consult anything but your own mind in order to answer questions on the exam. You may not use cell-phones, or any electronic devices to aid you, nor fellow students, nor fellow students’ answers on exams, etc. You will receive a zero if you cheat on an exam. Your conduct will also be reported to the Dean.

Students with Disabilities If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, it is your responsibility to contact me and discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised I may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted Disability Services, located in Lommasson Center 154, please do so in order to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at www.umt.edu/dss/.

Suggested additional readings

If you need more sources of information, in addition to the material covered in class, I would suggest that you start with two great websites:

- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu>
- The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

No need to say, there is a lot of *inaccurate if not plainly false* information on the web. You need to learn how to recognize good sources of information.

Here are two useful introductory texts:

- John Cottingham, *The Rationalists*, History of Western Philosophy Series, Oxford University Press (Paperback - Sep 22, 1988)
- Jonathan Bennett *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes*, Oxford University Press (Paperback - May 15, 1971)

You can also trust the series “Cambridge Companion to ... ” and “Blackwell guide to ...”.