

PHIL 302  
Origins of Modern Philosophy  
– IIT –  
Fall 2007

Soazig Le Bihan



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# Part I

## Presentation and Introduction



# Chapter 1

## Syllabus

### 1.1 Course Information

- Course Number: PHIL 302
- Credits: 3
- Class meets: Tuesday, Thursday, 3:15 - 4:30, Room TBA
- Prerequisites: A 100-level humanities course
- IIT Description: The study of major 17th and 18th century philosophers, such as Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.
- Instructor: Soazig Le Bihan
  - Office Number: SH 234
  - Office Hours: by appointment
  - Mailbox: 218 Siegel Hall
  - Email: [lebihan@iit.edu](mailto:lebihan@iit.edu)
- Websites:
  - Blackboard: <http://blackboard.iit.edu/>
  - Website: [www.soaziglebihan.org](http://www.soaziglebihan.org)

*Note that 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/PHIL302.php>

## 1.2 Course Description

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

The 17th and 18th centuries are centuries of radical changes in the domains of philosophy, science and politics. Most of our modern western culture, including modern science and modern democratic regimes, originates in these times. The course should help you understand the origins of our modern ways of thinking.

That said, in studying modern philosophy, you should expect to encounter and to learn to understand worldviews that are also 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 only learn to *do* philosophy.

We will focus on epistemology and metaphysics, leaving aside moral and political matters. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the origin, nature, and limits of knowledge. Roughly speaking, modern times are characterized by the debate between rationalists, who maintain that not all our knowledge, if we have any, comes from experience, and empiricists, who, on the contrary, take that all our knowledge, if we have any, comes from experience. The rationalists/empiricist debate will be one of the foci of the course.

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that studies what kinds of being exist and what kinds of being these have. Roughly speaking, modern times are characterized by the debate between materialists, who maintain that reality exclusively consists of matter, idealists, who maintain that reality exclusively consists of minds and their ideas, and dualists, who maintain that these two kinds of being coexist. The materialists/idealists/dualists debate will be the second focus of the course.

The class is discussion based. We will read and discuss original texts by the most important philosophers of the period. It will be important to learn



and to understand the major theses of each of these philosophers. Very little emphasis will be put on the historical and social contexts: we will mainly analyze and assess the arguments in the texts.

## 1.3 Documentation

### 1.3.1 Textbooks

#### Textbooks – required

- Fritz Allhoff, Anand Jayprakash Vaidya, and A. P. Martinich, *Early Modern Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, Blackwell Readings in the History of Philosophy (Paperback - Jan 1, 2007)
- Elizabeth S. Radcliffe, Richard McCarty, Fritz Allhoff, and Anand Jayprakash Vaidya, *Late Modern Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*, Blackwell Readings in the History of Philosophy (Paperback - Jan 1, 2007)

Note also that most original texts are available on the web. I will use these resources from time to time when needed.

#### Textbooks – recommended

- 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)

## 1.4 Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following:

1. Attendance and participation, 10 %;
2. Quizzes, 20 %;
3. Two take-home short papers, 20 % each;

4. An in-class comprehensive final exam, 30 %.

See the next chapter for detailed information about my grading policies.

**Attendance** Attendance is required. There will be a lot of material covered in this course and most of it is hard. While the in-class discussion should gradually (and somewhat painlessly) make you acquainted with most of the material, you should expect to be lost very quickly and probably to fail if you are not attending the course.

You will have *three classes that you can be absent for without penalty* (not including the exam classes which you must be present for). Beyond three classes, one absence counts as a zero.

That said, absences may be excused in cases of illness or other extreme circumstances. Relevant documentation is of course required in such cases. However, you will be expected to have worked by yourself on the material covered during the classes you may have missed.

**Participation** The class is primarily a discussion class, so that you are expected to participate. During lecture I will ask basic questions about the readings, and expect you to try to answer them. You will not be penalized for answering incorrectly. If you can't answer the questions I ask, I encourage you to ask questions. Both of these satisfy the class participation requirement. I have found that students learn best when they are asked to contribute to the lecture.

This means that, when reading at home, you have to be an *active reader*. Actively reading the original material will be one of the most important parts of the work you are expected to do for the course. Reading philosophy is hard, and you will sometimes encounter difficulties to understand the material during the semester. I will provide you with study questions to help you get prepared to the discussion in class.

Note that the class is mainly a discussion class also implies that you should ALWAYS bring your textbook with you in class.

For very useful guidelines on how to read philosophy, see J. Pryor web site:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

**Surprise quizzes :**

The surprise quizzes are meant to make sure that you work on a regular basis. They will consist on short, simple, multiple choices questions about the readings. You should expect to have about ten surprise quizzes. I will be generous in grading the quizzes. The point is not that you should have understood everything in the readings, but mostly to make sure that you keep on track of the homework.

To that effect, I will provide you with study questions about the readings. The quizzes will be systematically based on the study questions. And you will be allowed to bring your reading notes with you in class for the quizzes. You will not be allowed to use your computer for notes: print them before class begins. You will be allowed to answer the quizzes on the basis of your notes.

*This means that, if you read carefully the texts assigned, and write down answers to the study questions, you will be able to answer correctly to the quizzes.*

**Paper** You will be assigned two short papers (800 to 1200 words, that is 2 to 4 pages 12 points double spaced). I will ask you to choose your topic out of a list distributed in class and available on my website. You will be first asked to turn in a *prospectus* of your paper. A prospectus consists in a tentative title and a summary of your argument, between 200 and 300 words. I will give general comments on your prospectuses in class.

Then, you will be asked to write a draft of your paper which you will have to bring a draft of your paper in class for *peer review*. Prospectuses and peer reviews are *mandatory*. *You will be penalized if you do not turn in your prospectus or if you do not come with your paper the day of the peer review by one letter grade each.*

*Note that, without prior arrangements being made with the instructor, the grade of any late assignment will be lowered by one letter a day.*

For guidelines on how to write a philosophy paper, see next chapter.

**In-class Exam** The final in-class exam is COMPREHENSIVE. It will consist in answering short questions, which will be taken out of a list which will be distributed in advance.

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

The exam is mandatory. Absences may be excused only in cases of severe illness or other extreme circumstances. Proof of extreme circumstances or severe illness is required.

**Academic honesty and Plagiarism** Unless collaborative work is specifically called for, work on assignments and exams is expected to be your own. Plagiarism is taken seriously in IIT. In case of plagiarism, your assignment will receive a zero. Also, I will report the case to the university. You may be in serious trouble, up to being expelled out of school, in case of recidivism. Please refer to the Code of Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook for details concerning sanctions.

I'll be glad to answer questions you may have about how to document sources properly. Here are very simple guidelines:

- *anytime you take a phrase or sentence from someone,*
- *anytime you take an idea from someone, you have to cite your sources.*

**Writing Center** The Writing Center (SH 232-233) provides free one-on-one consultation, both by appointment and as available on a walk-in basis. Consultants Ms. Kraus and Mr. Dabbert are especially trained in working with writers for whom English is a second language. You can help you tremendously in writing assignments.

**Special needs** Adaptation of methods and materials for students with documented disabilities will be made in consultation with the Center for Disability Resources. I will gracefully accommodate any special need.

## 1.5 Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change. Recommended readings will found on the website.

### Important Dates

Class begins	Aug 23
Last Day to register	Aug 31
Labor Day	Sept 3
Last Day to Drop	Sept 8
Fall Break	Oct 18-20
Last Day for Withdrawal	Nov 2
Thanksgiving	Nov 22-24
Class ends	Dec 8
Final Exam Period	Dec 10-15

Date	Assignment
08/23	Presentation of the course
08/28	Montaigne, Bacon, Galileo
08/30	Descartes, Meditation I
09/04	Descartes, Meditation II and III
09/06	Descartes, Meditation IV
09/11	Descartes, Meditation V
09/13	Descartes, Meditation VI
09/18	Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , 1-7, <i>Monadology</i> , 20-49
09/20	Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , 8-13 – Topics for first paper
09/25	Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , 30-31
09/27	Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> , 14-15, 19-22, <i>Monadology</i> , 1-28
10/2	Conclusion on the Rationalists – Prospectus due
10/4	Catch up day
10/9	Peer review
10/11	Locke, Selections
10/16	Berkeley, Dialogue 1 – Paper due
10/18	FALL BREAK
10/25	Berkeley, Dialogue 2 – Topics
10/27	Berkeley, Dialogue 3
10/30	James Pryor, <i>What is so bad about living in the matrix</i>
11/1	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , 1-4
11/6	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , 5 – Prospectus
11/8	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , 6-7
11/13	Peer Review
11/15	Hume, <i>Treatise</i> , 6
11/20	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , 12 – Paper due
11/22	Thanksgiving
11/27	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , 8
11/29	Kant, <i>Prolegomena to any future metaphysics</i> , Preface and Preamble
12/4	Kant, <i>Prolegomena to any future metaphysics</i> , Part I
12/6	Catch up day
Exam week	FINAL EXAM

## **Chapter 2**

**A guide to the course's  
evaluation**

## 2.1 Grading policies

### 2.1.1 Attendance and participation evaluation

- A range: The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts' relation to issues raised in lecture and section. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.
- B range: The student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to section well prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.
- C range: The student meets the basic requirements of section participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas, but do not facilitate a discussion.

Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of these criteria will result in a grade of "D" or below.

### 2.1.2 Paper and Essay evaluation

Six criteria for evaluating a paper:

- Substance,
- Thesis and argument structure, including introduction and conclusion,
- Use of supporting material and evidence,
- Quality of analysis, including the crucial distinction between unsupported assumptions, value judgments vs. analysis and argumentation,
- Quality of the sources used,



- Quality of writing including grammatical correction, clarity, concision and persuasiveness.

*Objectives for a good paper: rigorous inquiry, critical thinking, effective written argumentation.*

- A range: This paper is outstanding in form and content.
  - The material covered in class is fully understood and mastered;
  - The thesis is clear and insightful; it is original, or it expands in a new way on ideas presented in the course. The argument for the thesis is unified and coherent;
  - The evidence presented in support of the argument is carefully chosen and deftly handled;
  - The analysis is complex and nuanced;
  - The sources are original texts or quality scholars' literature;
  - No grammatical mistakes, clear, precise and concise style;
- B range: The argument, while coherent, does not have the complexity, the insight, or the integrated structure of an A range paper;
  - The material covered in class is well understood;
  - The paper's thesis is clear;
  - The argument is coherent;
  - The paper presents evidence in support of its points;
  - The argument shows comprehension of the material and manifests critical thinking about the issues raised in the course;
  - The paper is reasonably well written and proofread.
- C range: This paper has some but not all of the basic components of an argumentative essay (i.e., thesis, evidence, coherent structure).

For example:

- - clear misunderstanding of the material covered in class, or
  - no clear or incoherent thesis, or

- incoherent structure of argument, for example simply repeats points made in class without an overall argument, or
- presents no evidence in support the thesis, or
- no use of original texts, but only secondary or popular literature (encyclopedia...), or
- poorly written and proofread.

A paper will fall below a "C" if it lacks more than one of the basic components of an argumentative essay.

### 2.1.3 Sources

" Tips for grading in the humanities, Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning website

" Introduction to the Humanities Program, STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Information for Faculty, 2005-06

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/ihum/instructors/>

## 2.2 Guidelines for writing a paper

This section gives you a check list before turning in a philosophy paper. These things are really important and will have a direct impact on your grade.

You *have to* go to Jim Prior's web site for details:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

#### CHECK LIST BEFORE TURNING IN YOUR PAPER:

1. you state your thesis and announce your arguments in the opening paragraph;
2. you state your thesis again and sum up your arguments in the closing paragraph;
3. each paragraph in the main part of the paper correspond to ONE idea or one argument;
4. you support your argument in each paragraph with relevant material;
5. you analyze the material and not only summarize it;
6. you illustrate abstracts points with concrete examples;
7. you *analyze the concepts* you are using in your arguments;
8. you articulate your arguments into an overall argumentation for the thesis;
9. you strictly avoid any decoration in style: clear, concise and precise should be your only aim;
10. you have discarded all terms like "evident", "obvious" and the like: either it will speak for itself, or it is merely a way to hide a lack of argument;
11. you strictly avoid value statements: they do not count as argument;
12. NO SENTENCE IS LONGER THAN TWO LINES: if you find one, break it up.

## 2.3 Good english matters

Here is the famous “How to write good list”. It is not clear who the original authors are, but some is derived from William Safire’s Rules for Writers.

1. Always avoid alliteration.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plagues they’re old hat.
4. Employ the vernacular.
5. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. Parenthetical words however must be enclosed in commas.
8. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
9. Contractions aren’t necessary.
10. Do not use a foreign word when there is an adequate English quid pro quo.
11. One should never generalize.
12. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “I hate quotations. Tell me what you know.”
13. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
14. Don’t be redundant; don’t use more words than necessary; it’s highly superfluous.
15. It behooves you to avoid archaic expressions.
16. Avoid archaic spellings too.
17. Understatement is always best.
18. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
19. One-word sentences? Eliminate. Always!
20. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
21. The passive voice should not be used.
22. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
23. Don’t repeat yourself, or say again what you have said before.
24. Who needs rhetorical questions?
25. Don’t use commas, that, are not, necessary.
26. Do not use hyperbole; not one in a million can do it effectively.
27. Never use a big word when a diminutive alternative would suffice.
28. Subject and verb always has to agree.
29. Be more or less specific.

30. Placing a comma between subject and predicate, is not correct.
31. Use your spell checker to avoid misspelling and to catch typographical errors.
32. Don't repeat yourself, or say again what you have said before.
33. Don't be redundant.
34. Use the apostrophe in its proper place and omit it when it's not needed.
35. Don't never use no double negatives.
36. Proofread carefully to see if you miss any words out.
37. Hopefully, you will use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
38. Eschew obfuscation.
39. No sentence fragments.
40. Don't indulge in sesquipedalian lexicological constructions.
41. A writer must not shift your point of view.
42. Don't overuse exclamation marks!!
43. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.
44. Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.
45. If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.
46. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.
47. Everyone should be careful to use a singular pronoun with singular nouns in their writing.
48. Always pick on the correct idiom.
49. The adverb always follows the verb.
50. Take the bull by the hand and avoid mixing metaphors.
51. If you reread your work, you can find on rereading a great deal of repetition can be by rereading and editing.
52. And always be sure to finish what

