

Barnard College, Columbia University
Department of Philosophy
Spring 2011

SEMINAR
METAPHYSICS: CAUSATION

C 3912, Sec. 005. Call No. 04170. Wednesday 9:00 a.m.-10.50 a.m. Place TBA

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Office Hours are by appointment: email me, or see me after class.

Conceptions of "cause" and "effect", and theories of causation, from antiquity through today. Beginning with Aristotle and the Greek skeptics, we study the contributions of philosophers who have made notable contributions within this area of metaphysics: Suarez, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, and contemporary thinkers such as Davidson and Lewis. 3 pts.

NOTE: This course is intended for Philosophy majors only, preferably Seniors and Juniors.

REQUIRED TEXT (paperback, available at Labyrinth Books, 536 W 112 St):
Hume. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp. Oxford Philosophical Texts. Oxford University Press, 1999.

NOTE. This edition of Hume's *Enquiry* is essential for the course: the class and the instructor must be "on the same page". The prescribed readings below include texts on Reserve and additional readings which will be made available, normally as PDF documents, via Courseworks (CW).

READINGS ON RESERVE (Butler):

- Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. 1999. *The Causation Debate in Modern Philosophy 1637-1739*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Descartes. *Meditations, Objections and Replies*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew and Donald Cress. Hackett.
- Leibniz. *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Hackett. Referred to as "AG" in the Readings.
- Nadler, Steven (ed.). 1993. *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy: Cartesianism, Occasionalism, and Preestablished Harmony*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.
- Schmaltz, Tad M. 2008. *Descartes on Causation*. Oxford University Press. EBOOK (Columbia Libraries).
- Sosa, Ernest and Michael Tooley, eds. *Causation*. Oxford Readings in Philosophy. OUP, 1993.
- Spinoza. *Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, Selected Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley. Hackett.
- Watkins, Eric. 2005. *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*. Cambridge University Press.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Paper I. 6 pages, double-spacing (20%), due February 16.

Paper II. 6 pages, double-spacing (20%), due March 23.

Paper III. 12 pages, double-spacing (60%), due April 20.

I will set the topics for Papers I and II, and announce them two weeks before the due date. In each paper you'll be asked to choose one from a small number of topics. The topic for Paper III will be your choice, and subject to my approval, which means we'll discuss it during my office hours or at another agreed time.

OVER →

Week 1. Introduction. General problems about causation. The Skeptics.

Readings: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. III. chaps. IV-V. (CW)

Weeks 2-3. Aristotle on causation and chance. The Four Causes.

Readings: *Physics* II. 2-9. *Metaphysics* V.1-2. (CW)

Week 4. The Scholastics: Francisco Suarez. On efficient causality.

Readings: *Metaphysical Disputations* (1597), Disp. 17.2, Disp. 18.1, 18.8, 18.10, Disp. 19.1-3.(CW) Schmaltz, chap. 1 (Reserve).

PAPER I due Wednesday, February 16.

Week 5. Descartes. Occasionalism: Malebranche.

Readings: Descartes: *Meditations* III, VI, Objections & Replies (CW and Reserve). Malebranche: *The Search after Truth*, Bk. VI, pt. II, chap. 3, elucidation 15, chap. 9 (CW). Nadler, chapters by Garber, O'Neill, Watson, Kulstad (Reserve). Schmaltz, *passim* (Reserve).

Week 6. Spinoza.

Readings: *Ethics*, Part I, Defns. and Axioms, Props. 16-18, 28, 29, 32, 33, Appendix; Part II, Defns. and Axioms, Props. 7, 48. (References to the Propositions include the Proofs and (where they exist) the Scholia, Corollaries, and Explications.) (All CW and Reserve)

Week 7. Leibniz.

Readings: *Primary Truths*: AG, pp. 30-33. *Discourse on Metaphysics* (AG), secs. 13, 14, 19, 22, 30, 33. *New System of Nature*: AG, pp.142-144. Letter to Basnage de Beauval: AG, pp. 147-149. (All CW or Reserve)

Week 8. Hume.

Readings: *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. I, part 3, secs. 1-4, 12, 14-15 (CW). *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, secs. 2-8.

Week 9 . Spring Break: March 12-20

PAPER II due Wednesday, March 23.

Weeks 10. Hume, cont.

Weeks 11-12. Kant.

Readings: *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Analytic, Bk. I, Chap. I, Sec. III.10 (Categories); Bk. II, Sec. III. 3 (Second Analogy of Experience) (CW). Watkins, *passim* (Reserve).

Week 13. Contemporary accounts of causation. Counterfactuals.

Readings: Articles by selected authors: Davidson, Lewis, Kim, Bennett, Collins (CW and Reserve).

PAPER III due Wednesday, April 20.

Weeks 14-15. Modern accounts of causation, cont.

Last day of class: April 27

Reading Period, May 3-5.

SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY (not on Reserve)

Collins, J., N. Hall, L. A. Paul, eds. *Causation and Counterfactuals* (MIT Press, 2004).