

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
SPRING 2010
PHIL G 9221. DESCARTES. W 11-12.50. Room TBA**

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Office Hours: Tu Th 10.30-12.00**

A study of Descartes's *Meditations* and the *Objections and Replies* (I-VI), and of selected texts, from the writings of Descartes and others, that illuminate issues in the *Meditations*. After a couple of classes on the historical context of the *Meditations* and its relation to other works of Descartes, we go through *Meditations* I-VI, then follow with a study in sequence of the first six sets of Objections and Replies. 3 or 6 points.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS (E credit): Two 12-page papers (double-spacing), each worth 50%. Your choice of topic, in consultation with the instructor. Submit a one-page outline and see the instructor to discuss your proposed topic. Due dates to be decided in class.

PRESCRIBED TEXTS (paperbacks available at Book Culture, W 112 St):

The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. Vol. II. Cambridge UP. Paperback. (Abbreviated as CSM.) Vols. I-II.

Descartes and His Contemporaries: Meditations, Objections, and Replies, ed. Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene. University of Chicago Press, 1995. (Abbreviated as Ariew & Grene.)

READINGS ON RESERVE (Butler):

Ariew, Roger, John Cottingham, and Tom Sorell (eds.). *Descartes' Meditations: Background Source Materials*. Cambridge UP, 1998.

Cottingham, John (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*. Cambridge UP, 1992.

Descartes. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. 3 Vols. Cambridge UP, 1985-1991. (Abbreviated as CSM.)

Garber, Daniel and Ayers, Michael, eds. *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*. With the assistance of Roger Ariew and Alan Gabbey. 2 vols. Cambridge UP, 1998.

Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism : from Savonarola to Bayle*. OUP, 2003.

Rorty, Amélie O. (ed.). *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*. University of California Press, 1986.

NOT ON RESERVE (Butler):

Descartes, René. *Oeuvres de Descartes, publiées par Charles Adam & Paul Tannery, Nouvelle présentation, en co-édition avec le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, ed. Pierre Costabel, Joseph Beaudé, Bernard Rochot. 11 vols. Paris: Vrin, 1964-1974. Early Modern Europe Reading Room (non-circulating), 504 Butler [B1833 1996h]. Butler Stacks [B1833 1973].

TOPICS AND READINGS

Other than in the first two weeks, readings from the Reserve list will be recommended where appropriate.

Weeks 1-2. Background to the *Meditations*. Renaissance revival of Greek scepticism, its importance for Early Modern Philosophy. The Scientific Revolution and the “New Philosophy”. Descartes's scholastic education, his program in metaphysics, natural philosophy and mechanics, the ideal of a mathematical physics. Preludes to *Meditations*: objections to the *Discourse on Method*, and replies.

Readings, Prescribed Texts: Ariew & Grene: Prologue, Marion. CSM I: selections from *Regulae*, *Discourse on Method*, *Principles of Philosophy*. CSM II: Letter to the Sorbonne, Preface to the Reader.

Readings, Texts on Reserve: Garber and Ayers, especially chaps. 2, 7, 10-12, 15, 18, 19, 23-25, 28, 32, 33; Popkin, chaps. 1-4, 9-10; Ariew, Cottingham, and Sorell, especially Texts 2-4, 6, 8-10, 13.

Weeks 3-8. *Meditations*: Synopsis, Meditations I-VI.

Readings, Prescribed Texts: CSM II.

Week 9: Spring Holiday, March 13-21.

Weeks 10-15. *Objections and Replies* I-VI. Letter to Father Dinet.

Readings, Prescribed Texts: CSM II. Ariew & Grene: Verbeek, Armogathe (Meditation I). Dear, Garber (Meditation II). Sorell, Curley (Meditation III). Carraud, Nadler (Meditation IV). Osler, Lennon (Meditation V). Menn (Meditation VI).