

History of Philosophy II

Course Description

This is an introduction to philosophy through the examination of major figures and ideas in the history of philosophy from the 13th through the 18th century in western Europe. We will analyze, dissect, and discuss the works of major philosophers with special focus on their views about philosophical method, the nature of reality, the foundations and extent of knowledge, and the foundations of science. We will attempt to place the ideas of these thinkers as much as time allows in the historical and scientific context that produced them.

Texts

Most readings are available at <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/> I will post the rest to CourseWorks.

Course Goals

Learn what philosophy is by analyzing what it has been.

Develop critical and analytical reading and writing skills.

Explore fundamental philosophical questions.

Stretch our philosophical imaginations.

Delight ourselves with the sometimes bizarre but always fascinating ideas of brilliant thinkers in our period.

Assignments

Three one-page, single-spaced papers (30% of final grade)

One five-page double-spaced paper (20% of final grade)

Mid-term and final examinations (20% and 30% of final grade, respectively)

Preliminary Schedule

This schedule is likely to change before the start of the semester. It also doesn't yet specify the readings.

Week 1: Introduction to course; Aquinas' *Principles of Nature*

Conceptions of the history of philosophy; the problem with "modern" philosophy; what is metaphysics? introduction to Aquinas; Aquinas' conception of nature; form, matter, and the causes of things.

Week 2 The Aristotelian Renaissance: Its method, principles, and concerns

Aquinas on matter, change, and causation; Aristotle's legacy and its transformation within Christian theology; the problem of God.

Week 3: Renaissance Philosophy and Early Modern Science

Renaissance skepticism, anti-Aristotelianism, humanism, and reformed theology; Erasmus; Luther; Montaigne; Marie de Gournay; the middle way of Gassendi and Bacon.

Week 4: "Divine Madness": The Mathematical Science or How to Create the World

Mathematics, reading God's mind, and how to create the world; Galileo's *The Assayer* - the fundamental reality of (much of) modern science; the distinction between primary and secondary qualities; the mechanical philosophy.

Week 5: Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*

The importance of the work as a meditation; the skeptical method and the goals of the first meditation; the cogito argument and its implications; Descartes' meditation on wax and what it tells us about our knowledge of bodies; clearness and distinctness as a criterion of truth; that God exists and is not a deceiver; problems and implications with the argument for the existence of God in Med. 3; how we make mistakes.

Week 6: Descartes' Science and Dualism; Elisabeth of Bohemia's Critique

How we know the essence of bodies; the role that God plays in the acquisition of knowledge; the ontological argument for the existence of God; what we really are and how we exist in the world of material objects.

Week 7: Conclusions & Review

Elisabeth, Cartesianism, and Knowledge. Mid-term examination.

Week 8: Reactions to Cartesianism: Conway's Vitalism

Three kinds of substances; creatures as modes; moral and metaphysical hierarchy.

Week 9: Spring Break

Party like it's 1699.

Week 10: Spinoza's Simple Monism

Spinoza on substance, cause, attributes, modes

Week 11: Leibniz's Infinitely Complex Monism

Leibniz's Preestablished Harmony, substance, theories of truth and causation.

Week 12: More Reactions to Cartesianism

Berkeley's phenomenalism: that all qualities are sensible qualities, i.e. ideas; that to be is to be perceived; that there is no material substance or substratum; the revival of common sense; Berkeley's conception of science and God.

Week 13: Hume's Response

Hume's philosophical concerns; his distinction between impressions and ideas; the laws of human thought; matters of fact versus relations of ideas, matter of fact reasoning; causation, probability, and necessity.

Week 14: Hume's Conclusions and Kant's Enlightenment

Hume's skeptical conclusions and Kant's Dogmatic Slumber: the state of metaphysics, Kant's method, what metaphysics as a science depends upon; that metaphysics is possible only if there are a priori synthetic judgments.

Week 15: How is metaphysics possible? Kant and Critique

How pure mathematics is possible; how pure science of nature is possible; how metaphysics is possible.