

Philosophy 202-002

The History of Modern Philosophy: Rationalism, Empiricism, and Beyond

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Office Hours: By appointment



This course is designed to briefly introduce students to some of the main philosophical ideas and texts that have shaped Western culture and understanding since the 16th century. We will explore the debate that raged between rationalists and empiricists, Kant's famous synthesis and resolution to this debate, and also the subsequent 19th century existentialist rejection of the framework within which the debate took place. Not ignoring the more contemporary debates, we will weave into each unit examples of how the classic

texts have been taken up in or influenced the philosophical dialogue of the 20th century. Along the way, students will become basically familiar with major ideas and positions in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Required Texts:

- Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources Ed. Roger Ariew

All other texts will be available online

Grading:

40% Participation:

- 30% Reading (5% per unit)
- 10% Small Group Participation

24% Argument analysis/evaluation papers (6% each)

36% Final Paper

Participation:

Philosophy requires philosophizing, which is hopefully much more than blowing hot air. Unlike some other disciplines, it requires you to engage. Unfortunately, we'll not be able to don our togas, grab a bottle of wine, and join Socrates at the Gymnasium. However, I take the need for engagement in the course very seriously and have even built in some extracurricular activities. Since the quality of both our classroom discussions and your learning will parallel the quality of your preparation and classroom participation—and emphatically not how well you can answer multiple choice or short answer questions—the quality of your grade will as well. I take very seriously my role to prepare “general” students for the rest of their educational experience, and to prepare philosophy students to continue in the discipline. The best thing I can do to improve both is to try and help you learn how to carefully, analytically read difficult, substantive texts. This will benefit you no matter what it is you go on to do, and will also be of tremendous benefit to the rest of society (especially when it comes time for you to do things like vote). Consequently, I will grade you heavily on your reading, not just because it's assigned and because it's necessary to really participate in philosophy, but because I take your learning how to read as a major *raison d'être* for this class. I will help you toward this end by occasionally providing handouts or study guides.

At the end of each unit I will ask you to **report on a certain selection of readings from that unit**. If you read all of the texts in question (i.e., those I ask you about), you will get full reading points for that unit. If you did not read them all, you will get no points. If, however, you backtrack and read all of those texts you were previously asked to report on by the end of the next unit, you will get half of the points. For example, at the end of Unit I, I may pick 3 of the assigned texts and ask you to report on whether you read them all. If so, full points. If not, (say, you read 2 of the 3) you'll have until the end of Unit II to

backtrack and read those 3 assignments (i.e., read any you didn't get to), at which point you'll receive half the points. These reading assignments will count for over 1/3 of your total grade for the semester.

I am also putting you into **small groups**. You and two of your classmates will then be required to meet once each week for at least a half hour in order to discuss that week's readings (and whatever else you find relevant to philosophy). I encourage you to take full advantage of this opportunity to engage one another and further explore the world you're immersed in. I trust you'll find no shortage of things to discuss: questions from the readings, clarifying the readings, evaluating the readings, related news stories, policies, pressing issues, movies, anecdotes, etc. You will be graded based on attendance (**you must make at least 10 of these meetings to receive credit**) and you will also assign yourself a grade, based on your participation vis-à-vis the other students. **You will need to keep a log throughout the semester of your attendance with the exact date and time and a sentence on the content of the meetings.**

Argument Analysis/Evaluation Papers:

The second most important thing I can begin to teach you is how to write, or help you to improve your writing. Consequently, all other assignments for this course are writing assignments. You will receive four analysis/evaluation paper assignments during the course of the semester (see below; more details are available on blackboard). These will be approximately 1–2 page papers (as assigned).

Final Paper:

There will be no midterm or final in this course. Taking the place of the final will be the final paper. This is what you will be working up to all semester long—learning how to properly understand major philosophical ideas and explicate arguments, and then evaluate them. Note:

1. This final paper will be around 2500 words.
2. You will write and hand in a first paragraph (5% of the grade)
3. You will write and hand in your main argument(s) (6% of the grade)
4. You will respond to your peers intro paragraphs and arguments (5% of the grade)

Since it takes the place of the final, it will be due at the same time the final would normally be due. Do not fail to email me your final paper on time; if you do, you will receive at best a D in the course.

Course Policies:

1. **All assignments are due at 11:59pm** on the listed date unless otherwise stated. Late assignments are automatically reduced to a B (or an equivalent point reduction)

and late comments will not be counted. Note: because submissions are electronic, I can tell if your submission is even 1 minute late. I recommend you set a personal deadline of one 10:59pm.

2. My intentions are to make this a tech-savvy course, but one that respects the need for face to face, unconnected discussion. Consequently, **ALL ELECTRONICS ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED IN CLASS**, unless I call for them. This includes using your laptop to take notes. **THIS ALSO INCLUDES USING YOUR SMART PHONE UNDER THE TABLE.** You are welcome, however, to bring your laptop/pad with the readings on it, and when I ask students to turn to the text you may open up an electronic version.
3. Eating and drinking are welcome, but **YOU MAY NOT HAVE DISPOSABLE FOOD PACKAGING OR DRINK CONTAINERS IN CLASS.**
4. In the happy event of a campus closure (e.g., on account of snow) or other cancellation, we will still have class. During such events I will put a Lecture Capture up on Blackboard which you can view at your own convenience and then submit written feedback on the course blog.

Academic Integrity

I care a great deal about increasing your intellectual capacities and general knowledge base and am concerned overall with helping you to flourish as a human being. That means I also care very much about your academic integrity and very little about how the grade you receive in this one class impacts your future. Hence I won't hesitate to fail students caught plagiarizing on their papers and will not tolerate dishonesty in any form. I highly encourage students to review Georgetown's Honor System policies (found at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/>), and want you to note that plagiarism can be unintentional. We will discuss this more in class. If you have any questions please visit with me or the Writing Center.

CAMPUS RESOURCES:

Academic Resource Center (<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>): Students seeking tutoring, study tips, helps with writing, concerns over what constitutes plagiarism, or students requiring services on account of disabilities or athletic or other sponsored activity accommodation should visit ARC. In particular, all students might benefit from the academic skills workshops offered (schedule available on-line).

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS: <http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/mental-health>): Your mental health is just as real and important as your physical health. And just as in the normal course of things several of you will likely benefit from our medical services this semester, so also some of you will likely benefit from our psychiatric services. There is a wide range of services offered, from group to individual care, including types of care for those who cannot afford normal counseling services. Please take advantage of these as needed to maintain your optimal health.

Title IX: Rape and other forms of sexual misconduct are tragically common in our society. Please note that there are services available for students who have been exploited in any way (<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/crisis-counseling/sexual->

[assault-relationship-violence](#)). Also, please note that I am required by federal law to report any indication I receive of sexual misconduct to Georgetown’s Title IX coordinator. If you are looking for confidential guidance I recommend contacting Jen Schweer (Associate Director, Health Education Services, Sexual Assault Response and Prevention) at jls242@georgetown.edu or 202.687.0323.

For additional services related to health and well-being of any kind on campus, please see “GU Safety Net Contacts” under “Documents” on Blackboard.

COURSE CONTENT:

Date	Required Reading	Assignments/Notes
January 5	Introduction	Explain ‘philosophy’ to a friend
January 7	UNIT I: Rationalism 1. Bacon New Organon (MP 4–8) 2. Taylor Secular Age pgs 30–41, 61–89 (recommended: 90–99)	Receive assignment for first argument analysis paper: Descartes’ proof of God in Meditation 5
January 12	Rationalism Descartes: Meditations 1–3 (MP 22–40)	
January 14	Rationalism Descartes: Meditations 4–6 (MP 40–55)	First Argument Analysis Paper Due
January 19	Rationalism Spinoza: The Ethics Part I: Definitions, Axioms, Propositions 1–17, 25–27, 29, 32–36 (recommended: Appendix)	
January 21	Rationalism Leibniz Monondology (MP 235–243)	Unit I Readings due Receive AA Paper 2 assignment @ 8pm: Review & Pressing Issues get together
January 26	Horst “The Computational Theory of Mind” (at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/computational-mind/)	
January 28	UNIT II: Empiricism Locke Essay Concerning Human Understanding (MP 270–290)	
February 2	Empiricism Locke Essay (MP 339–365)	Second AA Paper Due
February 4	Empiricism Berkeley Three Dialogues (MP 413–433)	

February 9	Empiricism Berkeley Three Dialogues (MP 433–453)	
February 11	Empiricism Hume An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding Section I–V (MP 491–512)	
February 16	No Class!	
February 18	Empiricism Hume An Inquiry Section VI–VIII (MP 512–532)	Unit II Readings due
February 23	20 th Dennett “Intentional Systems”	
February 25	UNIT III: The Synthesis Kant Prolegomena Preface–§13 (MP 579–596)	
March 2	The Synthesis Kant Prolegomena §14–34, 40–45 (MP 597–607, 612–615 recommended §46–55)	Unit III Readings due
March 4	20 th Perceptual Experience”	
March 9	UNIT IV: Ethics 1. Mill Utilitarianism Ch 2 & 4 (not 1&3!) 2. Harris “The Survival Lottery”	Receive first Argument Evaluation assignment Also, read the Woodhouse essay!
March 11	Ethics 1. Kant Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals First Section 2. Thompson “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem” 3. Woodhouse “Writing Philosophy”	
March 16	Ethics 1. Singer “Rich and Poor” 2. O’Neill “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”	First AE Paper Due @ 7:30pm: Film (Seven Pounds) & discussion!
March 18	Ethics Hursthouse On Virtue Intro & Ch 1, selection from Ch 9	Unit IV Readings due
March 23	UNIT V: Existentialism Kierkegaard Fear and Trembling 41–82	

March 25	Existentialism Kierkegaard Fear and Trembling 83–95 (recommended: read to the end)	
March 30	Existentialism Nietzsche The Gay Science (Preface §1–4, §1–2, 11, 12, 14, 26–27, 37, 50, 56,58, 76, 108–112, 115, 122, 124, 125, 132, 143)	Receive second AE paper assignment
April 1	Existentialism Nietzsche The Gay Science (§276, 283, 285–291, 295, 299, 302, 307, 319, 328, 335, 343, 344–345, 347, 349, 354, 356, 357, 371, 374, 375, 377, 382, 383)	
April 6	Existentialism Dostoevsky “Rebellion;” “The Grand Inquisitor;” and “Conversations and Exhortations of Father Zossima” (68–80)	Unit V Readings due Second AE paper due
April 8	20 th Taylor “Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger”	Thurs April 8 @ 7:30: bonfire at Big Springs Park
April 13	20 th Haugeland “Intentionality All-Stars”	Receive Final Paper topics
April 15	Haugeland “Intentionality All-Stars” and wrap-up	Unit VI readings due