

SYLLABUS

Course Title: Modern Philosophy
Course Number: Phil. 202
Ticket Number: 13496
Time/Location: Monday/Wednesday 2-3.15PM/ SH 190

Prerequisites: Prerequisite: EPT score of 151 or higher, or credit in Developmental Writing 098, or completion of GE Section A.1 (Composition). Philosophy 201 is not a prerequisite.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: Dr. Weimin Sun
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Office Hours: Mon. Wed. 11.30AM -1.00 PM

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

A critical examination of topics in modern philosophic thought, selected from the writings of such figures as Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume and Kant. (Available for General Education, Humanities.)

INSTRUCTOR'S DESCRIPTION:

This course features a critical examination of five representative thinkers of the modern period - Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant. The course aims to provide a systematic introduction to modern philosophy with attention to its historical background, and with an eye to contemporary philosophical concerns. You are expected to learn how to better read, understand, and think philosophically, and to develop your ability in philosophical writing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES and STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will:

1. develop critical skills in reading and understanding primary texts;
2. develop skills in philosophical thinking;
3. develop skills in philosophical writing;
4. gain adequate knowledge about key ideas and arguments in Modern Philosophy;
5. gain better understanding of philosophical topics in general.

TEXTBOOKS:

Required:

[A&W] Ariew & Watkins (eds.): *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary*

Resources, 2nd edition (Note its edition)
ISBN-10: 0872209784 ; **ISBN-13:** 978-0872209787 (Hackett)

Recommended:

Descartes: A Study Of His Philosophy by Anthony Kenny
Publisher: St. Augustines Press; 1 edition (July 10, 2009)
ISBN-10: 1890318132
ISBN-13: 978-1890318130

Learning from Six Philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Volume 2 by Jonathan Bennett
Publisher: Oxford University Press (December 11, 2003)
ISBN-10: 0199266298
ISBN-13: 978-0199266296

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to:

1. attend every class meeting ON TIME;
2. participate actively in class discussions;
3. study the course materials diligently and regularly;
4. finish all the required assignments.

EVALUATION:

- Attendance and Participation -- 15%
- Reading notes -- 15%
- Short writing assignments -- 35%
- Term Paper -- 35%

1. Participation: Discussion is the life-blood of philosophy, so I hope we will create in our classroom a lively Socratic environment. You are ALL welcome to jump in with your own thoughts whenever they arise. Do not assume that your ideas are trivial, and do not treat your disagreements with others as disrespect to anyone. I will hold your brave behavior of raising objections as the highest respect for all of us in the world of philosophy.
 - Be prepared to answer to the questions related to the assigned readings;
2. Reading Notes: you are required to submit your reading notes once a week. Normally the students with an odd-numbered student ID submit their reading notes by 12PM each Monday, and the students with an even-numbered student ID submit theirs by 12PM each Wednesday.
 - What should be on the reading notes? Two things:
 - Find out the main concerns/issues of the assigned reading, and the main ideas or the main arguments in it;
 - Your *questions* or *comments*. Questions can include anything in the texts that you do not quite understand, such as a concept, a

- The purpose of assigning reading notes is to make sure you have read and thought about the assigned readings before you come to class, which is crucial to your clear and deep understanding of these classical texts.
 - Each reading notes need not be very long. It is often good enough to be one-page long.
 - It is graded more on effort than on competence.
 - You can either email your reading notes to me or hand it to me in person in my office.
- Example: the first batch of reading notes is due on Monday, Jan. 25th, and the assigned reading is Descartes’s First Meditation. You need to address the following issues in your reading notes:
 - What did Descartes try to do in this part of reading? What was his main concern? What was his conclusion, and how did he argue for it?
 - Do you have any questions regarding any part of the reading?
- 3. Short Writing Assignments: There are going to be 6-8 short writing assignments assigned during the semester.
 - These assignments will focus on specific issues related with the readings and discussions.
 - The assignments are often very specific and focused. They do require that you understand the relevant materials thoroughly.
 - Each short writing assignment will be posted online (at Moodle) one week before its due time, and be announced in class.
 - Your work needs to be typed and to be submitted in class.
 - For example, I may ask you to recap Descartes’s Cogito argument as clearly as you can.
- 4. Term Paper: A Final/Term paper is required. In the process of writing a final paper, you will have a chance to develop/practice skills in philosophical writing.
- 5. Your final grade will be the weighted average of all the above grade components (rounded to the first decimal). The plus/minus system will be used. The scale is:

Final %	≥92	90-91.9	88-89.9	82-87.9	80-81.9	78-79.9	72-77.9	70-71.9	68-69.9	62-67.9	60-61.9	<60
Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

ONLINE PLATFORM:

We will adopt Moodle (<http://moodle.csun.edu/>) for this course. I have not used Moodle before (though I have used WebCT many times), but I expect it to be a convenient online learning tool for all students. I will post assignments, lecture notes, and relevant materials online. To save paper, later assignments may be posted only online. We can also have lively discussions online at Moodle.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Topics	Date	Reading Assignments (Readings must be done before the class meeting)
Week 1-5 Rene Descartes:	1/20	Introduction to the Course; No Reading Assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to Modern Philosophy • A little bit of Logic
<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	1/25	Meditation I: the Great Doubt Read A&W pp.40-43; Recommended: historical background to <i>Meditations</i> (A&W pp. 1-3, 35-40)
	1/27	Meditation II: the mind, which is distinct from the body, exists. Read A&W pp.43-47;
	2/1	Meditation III: the Proof of God's existence Read A&W pp.47-54;
	2/3	Meditation IV: the Problem of False Judgment Read A&W pp.54-58;
	2/8	Meditation V: the Nature of Material Things; the Second Proof of God; Read A&W pp.58-61;
	2/10	Meditation VI: The Duality of Mind and Body Read A&W pp.61-68;
	2/15	Objections and Replies (Third Set) Read A&W pp.76-82;
	2/17	Objections and Replies (Fourth Set) Read A&W pp.83-92;
Week 6-8: John Locke:	2/22	Locke: Introduction to the <i>Essay</i> ; the debate on innate ideas Read: A&W pp.316-322 (<u>Book I.Ch. 1-2;</u>) Recommended: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/
<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	2/24	Of Ideas in General: Read A&W pp.322-328 Read: A&W pp.422-426 (Leibniz's Critique of Locke)
	3/1	Of Simple Ideas: Book II, Ch II-Ch. VIII Recommended: A&W pp.308-315 (Boyle: Corpuscular Philosophy)
	3/3	The Operations of the Mind and Complex Ideas Read: A&W pp.337-342; Recommended: A&W pp. 342-356 [Ch. XIII (space), Ch. XIV (time/duration), and Ch. XXI (the idea of power)].

	3/8	Berkeley's Critique of Abstract Ideas Read: A&W pp. 439-446 – (Berkeley, <i>Principles</i> , <u>Introduction</u> , #6-25)
	3/10	Of the Idea of Substance Read A&W pp.359-367; (Ch. XXIII)
Week 9-10 George Berkeley: <i>Three Dialogues</i>	3/15	Introduction and First Dialogue (the concession of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities) Read A&W pp.454-464
	3/17	First Dialogue (continued) Read A&W pp.466-474
	3/22	Second Dialogue (Refutation of Substance Materialism) Read A&W pp.475-484
	3/24	Third Dialogue (Clarifications on Berkeley's Idealism: Objections and Replies) Read A&W pp.484-503 (pay less attentions to religious concerns)
Break	3/29	Furlough Day; No Class
	3/31	Cesar Chavez Holiday; No Class.
	4/5-10	Spring Break; No Class.
Week 11-12: David Hume <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>	4/12	Hume on Ideas (Section II, III); Skeptical Doubts (Section IV-Part I) Read A& W pp. 538-545
	4/14	Hume on Causation: Skeptical Doubts and Skeptical Solution to Them Read A& W pp. 545-555
	4/19	Of the Idea of Necessary Connection (Section VII) Read A&W pp.556-564
	4/21	Of Skeptical Philosophy (Section XII) Read A& W pp. 593-600 Recommended: Bayle on Pyrrhoism: A& W pp. 512-516
Week 13: Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i>	4/26	Introduction; Hume's Problem; A priori synthetic judgment Read A&W pp. 661-672
	4/28	How are pure mathematics and natural sciences possible? Read A&W pp. 673-690
Week 14: Furlough	5/3	Furlough Day; No Class
	5/5	Furlough Day; No Class
Term Paper	5/10	Term Paper Due

Note: the above schedule is tentative and is up to change. All changes will be announced in class and online.

Cheating and plagiarism:

Academic dishonesty is a very serious issue.

For information on what constitutes academic dishonesty and on the possible repercussions of and penalties for acts of academic dishonesty, consult the CSUN Student Conduct Code in the University Catalog or at

<http://www.csun.edu/a&r/soc/studentconduct.html>.

For more details on what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, see

http://library.csun.edu/Research_Assistance/plagiarism.html.

Information Regarding the Furlough

- 1) For the past 10 years the CSU system has suffered chronic under-funding. This year, because of the state economic crisis, the budget cuts are draconian, \$584 million, the worst ever in decades. The CSU administration is attempting to manage these cuts by dramatically increasing student fees and by furloughing almost all University employees, including faculty, staff, and administrators. A furlough means mandatory ***un-paid days*** off for employees; there are 18 of these this year for the faculty, nine per semester.
- 2) For students this means that on some days the campus will be closed. The library will have shorter hours and many campus support services will be decreased or eliminated. It will, for example, be more difficult to get signatures to meet deadlines. Additionally, many classes you need have been cut from the class schedule or are full. These cuts have consequences, especially for you.
- 3) As a professor, the days (3 classes in total) when I'm forced to cancel class because of the furloughs are marked on your syllabus above. These days off are not holidays; they are a very concrete example of how budget cuts have consequences for education.