Basic information

PHH3400 is an introduction to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European philosophy. The course will focus on philosophers’ views in metaphysics and epistemology, but will also consider views in the physical sciences and in ethics. A central aim of the class is that you come to understand some important views, discussions, and arguments of prominent philosophers of this period.

The class meets on Tuesdays, 3:00-4:55pm, and Thursdays, 4:05-4:55pm, in 120 Pugh Hall.

The best way to contact me (outside class and office hours) is by email at sdrd@ufl.edu. I will have office hours on Tuesdays from 1:30 to 2:30pm, and on Thursdays from 2:30 to 3:30pm, in 330A Griffin-Floyd Hall. If you can’t meet at these times, you can arrange an appointment: please email me to do this. You can also call my office at 352-273-1808.

This syllabus, and other class resources, will be available on the class e-Learning site. You can access this by going to https://lss.at.ufl.edu and clicking on ‘e-Learning Login’. Note that the class is using Sakai/e-Learning, not Canvas.

Topics and schedule

This schedule is subject to change as we go along, but changes will still follow the same basic structure. Due dates of assignments will not be changed unless some extreme (and highly unlikely) thing happens.

Detailed descriptions of reading assignments are given below for the first two sections of the course. More general descriptions of the texts we will read and discuss are given for the later sections. Further detail will be available during the semester. In all cases, you should read the relevant texts in full before the class.

T 8/26. Introductory class.

Section 1. René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy

We will read and discuss Descartes’s Meditations. We will discuss the different parts as follows.


T 9/2. Descartes, Meditations 2-3.


Section 2. Some critics of Descartes

R 9/11. Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes’s Objections to the *Meditations*, and Descartes’s Replies. This is the Third Set of Objections to the Meditations.

T 9/16. Descartes’s correspondence with Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia. The reading will be extracts from this correspondence, in the edition edited and translated by Lisa Shapiro. These extracts will be posted on Sakai.

R 9/18. Margaret Cavendish’s *Philosophical Letters*. The reading will be extracts from part 1 of Cavendish’s book. These extracts will be posted on Sakai. PAPER 1 TOPICS AND GRADING GUIDE AVAILABLE.

T 9/23. Benedict Spinoza and the one substance view. Read part 1 of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, as far as proposition 15.

R 9/25. Nicolas Malebranche and occasionalism. Read the extract from Malebranche’s *Search After Truth* in AW (see below).

Section 3. G.W. Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics

The central reading will be Leibniz’s *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

T 9/30. Leibniz.

R 10/2. Leibniz. DEADLINE FOR PAPER 1.

T 10/7. Leibniz.


Section 4. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

We will read extracts from Locke’s *Essay*. (Some, but not all, of the extracts in AW.)

T 10/14. Locke.

R 10/16. Locke.


R 10/23. Locke.
Section 5. David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

Hume’s Enquiry is in AW. There is also a good, free, electronic edition at http://davidhume.org/texts/chu.html.


R 10/30. MIDTERM EXAM

T 11/4. Hume. PAPER 2 TOPICS AVAILABLE.

R 11/6. No Class (research travel).

T 11/11. No Class (Veterans’ Day).


Section 6. Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics

We will read the extracts from Immanuel Kant’s Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics in AW.

R 11/20. Kant. SECOND PAPER DUE.


R 11/27. No class (Thanksgiving).

T 12/2. Kant.


Final exam

T 12/9. Review class for final exam.

W 12/17. The final exam will be on Wednesday 12/17, from 12:30 to 2:30pm. It is described below.

Texts

The required readings for the class will be primary texts: the writings of early modern philosophers. The easiest way to get almost all the readings in a book is to use Ariew and Watkins (ed.), Modern Philosophy, second edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009) [AW]. This is the book listed for the class at textadoption.ufl.edu.
Many of those readings are also available in the Past Masters database to which UF subscribes (http://library.nlx.com/xtf/search?browse-collections=true). To access Past Masters, you must be on the campus network. If you’re off campus, you’ll need to use the UF VPN. If you don’t know about this, please see https://connect.ufl.edu/it/wiki/Pages/glvpn.aspx. There are other online texts available, of varying quality. The only other ones I’d strongly recommend are the Hume texts at davidhume.org.

Some readings are neither in the Ariew and Watkins anthology, nor on Past Masters. In those cases, I will make the readings available on the class Sakai site.

There are many other published editions of most of the texts we will discuss. The Ariew and Watkins anthology is of good quality, and relatively cheap. Most of the best alternative editions are various books published by Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press. These are good, if you have them, but are more expensive. If you have questions about other editions, please ask me. Be particularly careful about editions printed from freely available ebooks or scans of old editions: these are not worth the money.

Assessment

Your grade for the course will be determined by your grades on four assignments, two papers and two exams.

Papers

Each paper assignment will ask you to write a paper of about 1500 words on one of two assigned topics. Each paper will count for 25% of your grade for the course. Paper due dates are in the schedule above.

All paper submission will be done on e-Learning. Any papers submitted late without a good excuse will be penalized two points (on a hundred-point scale) for every day they’re late. No papers will be accepted after the end of classes (more precisely, after 11:55pm on Wednesday 12/10.). If you fail to submit a paper, you will receive a grade of zero for it.

A guide to paper grading will be made available on e-Learning at the same time as the paper questions.

Exams

The midterm exam will count for 20% of your grade for the course, and the final will count for 30%. The midterm exam will be held at the usual class time, and the final exam during the scheduled final exam week. Dates of both exams are in the schedule above. Both exams will be held in our usual classroom.

Make-up midterm exams will only be given if you have a good, documented excuse. No makeup midterms will be given after the last day of classes, 12/10. Make-up final exams will only be permitted in those few situations that justify the awarding of an incomplete grade for the class. Anyone who does not take an exam will receive a grade of zero for it.
Topics of papers and exams

Detailed descriptions of paper assignments will be made available during the semester – two weeks before the due date, in each case.

The midterm exam will focus on Leibniz and Locke. The exam will have two sections: a short answer section and an essay one. We will spend time reviewing for the exam in class, but questions will not be made available in advance.

The final exam will have three sections: one on Descartes, his critics, and Leibniz; one on Locke and Hume, and one on Kant. In each section, you will have to answer one of two questions. The questions in each section will be drawn from a longer list of review questions, which will be distributed in the final class.

Grades

All assignments will be given a numerical grade. At the end of the semester, your overall numerical grade will be calculated, based on your grades for and the relative weights of the assignments. This numerical grade will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale.

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Information on the relationship between letter grades and grade points can be found at https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx.

Academic honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states:

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”
The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of E for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida’s Student Honor Code as follows:

A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

All paper assignments will be automatically submitted to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism service to which UF subscribes. You will be able to see its report on your paper.

Further policies

Attendance and classroom behavior

You are expect to attend all class meetings, arriving on time and not leave early. Failing to do so will affect your ability to perform well in the class.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx.

Please remember that it is not enough to be merely physically present. You are expected to do all assigned reading in advance – which is not to say you should not revisit it again afterwards. You should also be paying attention, taking notes as appropriate, and participating in class discussions. My aim is to have a classroom atmosphere that is both serious and relaxed. Things will go well if you (i) come to class prepared, (ii) avoid behavior that is rude or distracts others, (iii) remember to treat others with respect in classroom discussions.

You may use laptops and other electronic devices for purposes immediately related to the class – taking notes would be the obvious example. Unrelated use of laptops, phones, etc. is a distraction to you and those around you, and is not allowed. I may ask those using electronic devices in this way to switch them off, or in extreme cases to leave the classroom, or to cease using those devices for the rest of the semester.
Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Online course evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on ten criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results.

Further information

- Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575
- University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

PHH3400 and the philosophy major

PHH3400 meets requirements for the Philosophy major. It is particularly related to five of the Strategic Learning Outcomes for the major (see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/liberalarts/alc/philosophy.aspx).

- Identify, describe and explain the major questions addressed, the range of answers offered and the methods employed in the history of Western philosophy.
- Discern the structure of arguments, to represent them fairly and clearly and to evaluate them for cogency.
- Formulate original arguments, anticipating objections and responding in a conscientious fashion.
- Read and discuss complex philosophical texts from both historical sources and contemporary works.
- Speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.

These themes will be present throughout the course. The first is particularly important as this class, together with PHH3100 Ancient Greek Philosophy, constitutes the undergraduate sequence in the history of Western philosophy. Progress towards these outcomes will be assessed by the papers and exams described above.

PHH3400 and general education

PHH3400 also counts towards the Humanities (H) and International (N) general education requirements (see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-program.aspx).
Humanities courses provide instruction in the key themes, principles and terminology of a humanities discipline. These courses focus on the history, theory and methodologies used within that discipline, enabling you to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

International courses provide instruction in the values, attitudes and norms that constitute the culture of countries outside the United States. These courses lead you to understand how geographic location and socioeconomic factors affect these cultures and the lives of citizens in other countries. Through analysis and evaluation of your own cultural norms and values in relation to those held by the citizens of other countries, you will develop a cross-cultural understanding of the rest of the world.

Student Learning Outcomes for general education classes are as follows:

- **Content**: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline.
- **Communication**: Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline.
- **Critical Thinking**: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

We will address these themes throughout the course. The outcomes will be assessed by the papers and exams described above.