

History of Modern Philosophy
PHIL 1170 | M/W 5:15-6:15 | Cohen Hall 402

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Office hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30, Cohen Hall 463

Teaching Assistants:

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A. Course Information

Course texts: Available at the Penn Bookstore and on course reserves at Van Pelt:

- Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge) (ISBN: 9780521358125)
- Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader* (Princeton) (ISBN-13: 9780691000671)
- Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford) (ISBN-13: 978-0199549900)
- Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (Hackett) (ISBN-13: 978-1603846738)
- Kant, *Prolegomena to Future Metaphysics* (Cambridge) (9780521535359)
- Optional, will also be made available on Canvas: Amo, *Philosophical Dissertations on Mind and Body* (trans. Stephen Menn and Justin E. H. Smith, Oxford) (9780197668016)
- Optional: Allen Wood, *Kant* (Wiley) (9780631232827)

All other required texts will be available on Canvas.

Description: This course is an introduction to central philosophical themes in the 17th and 18th centuries and to the crucial thinkers who addressed them. We will reflect on the relation between mind and reality, the existence and role of God, the nature of freedom and self-determination, the self and society, the connection between philosophy and science, affect and passion, gender, and inequality. Specific figures we will discuss will include the following: René Descartes, Benedict de Spinoza, Gabrielle Suchon, Anton Wilhelm Amo, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant.

Course requirements:

- 1) Participation and attendance: 15%
- 2) Short paper (1200 words), due February 13th: 25%
- 3) Op-ed assignment (1000 words), due March 22nd: 25%
- 4) Final paper (2000 words), due May 1st: 35%

Please upload all assignments as Word or PDF files to their submission page on Canvas. Topics and instructions for specific assignments will be made available prior to assignment deadlines.

B. Course Policies

Academic integrity: You must submit your own work, and only your own work. Plagiarism (taking ideas or words from others without crediting them) will result in a failing grade on the assignment or paper, as well as other potential disciplinary actions. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult **Penn's Code of Academic Integrity** and contact me with any questions.

Accommodations: Please contact me as soon as possible to arrange any necessary accommodations. Students in need of accommodations are also encouraged to connect with Penn's **Student Disability Services**.

Covid-19: This is a large class and, as I write this, new variants continue to emerge that could prove to be very serious. We are currently on the verge of a new possible covid wave. Masks are therefore **strongly encouraged** in class for all students; for accessibility reasons, and as long as conditions allow it, I will refrain from wearing a mask while lecturing. If you have symptoms, please do not come to class. I will continue to assess these policies over the course of the semester as conditions change. Public health guidance on campus can also be monitored at **Penn's Public Health Guidance** (and *get your bivalent booster shots*; they're important against these new variants).

Extensions: If you require an extension due to an excusable unforeseen adverse event (such as a medical emergency accompanied by a doctor's note), please get in touch with your course TAs as soon as possible. In the absence of an excused extension, late assignments or papers will be subject to daily two-point penalty deductions. Any late papers or assignments will be graded according to the limited availability of the course instructors.

Electronic devices: Almost all of our course materials are available in book form, so there is no need to use electronic devices in class. Taking notes by hand on paper allows for much better memory retention than on an electronic screen. However, if you opt to use a laptop or other device in class, please use it *only* as a word processor to take and read notes, or as a reader to consult assigned course materials online or saved on your hard drive. *Do not use your laptop for any other purpose than to take notes and read course materials (including emailing, chatting, texting, shopping, surfing, social media, or anything else).* Doing so is distracting to your fellow students and makes it more difficult for everyone else in the room to follow. If you are distracted in class by what's going on on screens in your field of vision, please let one of the instructors know. Failure to abide by these rules may result in deductions from your participation grade.

Discussion sections: There are four sections of the course: two will be taught by Afton Greco and two by Yosef Washington. Every student should have been assigned or have signed up for a section. You may only transfer into an alternative section with permission of the instructor of the section. Weekly attendance of sections is mandatory. *No sections will meet in Week 1; sections will begin in Week 2.*

Participation: Please be prepared to participate actively in section, where 'active participation' means: showing mindful attention to fellow students, demonstrating active listening, and being thoughtful to the discussion as a whole. Thus: regular contributions in section are requisite, but please try not to *dominate* the discussion, and do not interrupt or disrespect others in section. Failure to do so may—just as much as a lack of active participation—adversely impact your participation grade.

Contact and office hours policy: *Please read through the whole syllabus before contacting one of us.* Please seek out your TAs for help first: my office hours will be shared with another course for which I am the sole instructor. Please also feel free to ask me short questions before class.

Email policy: I may only respond to emails once per day on weekdays (often between 10 am and 1 pm), and do not typically check email on weekends, so please plan ahead. If you have not heard back from me within 48 hours during weekdays, please follow up.

C. Course Schedule (readings subject to change)

Week 1 – Course introduction

1. Wednesday, January 11: no reading; syllabus will be presented in class.

Week 2 – Descartes I

2. *No class on Monday, Jan 16 (MLK Day).*
3. Wednesday, January 18: René Descartes, Meditation I

Week 3 - Descartes II

4. Monday, January 23: Descartes, Meditation II
5. Wednesday, January 25: Descartes, Meditation III

Week 4 - Descartes III

6. Monday, January 30: Descartes, Meditations IV-V
7. Wednesday, February 1: **no class** due to job talk in the philosophy department

Week 5 - Descartes IV & Spinoza I

8. Monday, February 6: Descartes, Meditation VI. Wrap up Descartes.
9. Wednesday, February 8: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Pt I, Definitions, Axioms, Propositions 1-20; pp. 85-100.

Week 6 - Spinoza II

10. Monday, February 13: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Pt I, Propositions 21-36 + Appendix; pp. 100-115.

**** First paper due at 5 pm on Monday, February 13th ****

11. Wednesday, February 15: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Pt II, Definitions, Axioms, Propositions 1-7, pp. 115-120; Pt III, Preface, Definitions, Postulates, Propositions 1-11, pp. 152-161

Week 7 - Spinoza III

12. Monday, February 20: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Pt III, Propositions 12-47, pp. 161-178. *Drop deadline.*
13. Wednesday, February 22: Spinoza, *Ethics*, Pt III, Propositions 48-59, Definitions, pp. 179-197.

Week 8 - Suchon I

14. Monday, February 27: **no class** due to instructor conference travel

15. Wednesday, March 1: Gabrielle Suchon, *On the Celibate Life Freely Chosen* (Canvas), Bk I, Ch I-II, pp. 242-251; Ch VII, pp. 255-258; Ch XIII, pp. 259-62; Ch XIV, pp. 262-263

Spring Break, March 6-10. No class.

Week 9 - Suchon II & Amo

16. Monday, March 13: Suchon, *Celibate Life* (Canvas), Bk I, Ch XXIII, pp. 263-266; Bk II, Ch XVII, pp. 272-279 [on study]; Ch. XXII, pp. 279-285 [on friendship]; Bk III, Ch XIV, pp. 286-290 [on solitude]
17. Wednesday, March 15: Anton Wilhelm Amo, "On the Impassivity of the Human Mind", pp. 155-197 [also on Canvas]

Week 10 - Hume I

18. Monday, March 20: David Hume, *Enquiry*, §§II-III, pp. 12-17, §IV, 18-29
19. Wednesday, March 22: Hume, *Enquiry*, §V, 30-40; §VII, 44-50

**** Op-ed assignment due at 5 pm on Wednesday, March 22nd ****

Week 11 - Hume II & Rousseau I

20. Monday, March 27: Hume, *Enquiry*, §VII cntd, 51-57; §VIII [on freedom], Pt I: 58-69
21. Wednesday, March 29: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Pt. I, pp. 45-60

Week 12 - Rousseau II

22. Monday, April 3: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Pt. I cntd, pp. 60-69; Pt. II, pp. 69-76
23. Wednesday, April 5: **no class** due to instructor conference travel

Week 13 - Kant I

24. Monday, April 10: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Pt. II cntd, pp. 76-92
25. Wednesday, April 12: Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena*, Preface (noted in the margins of your text: 4:255-4:264, or pp. 5-14)

Week 14 - Kant II

26. Monday, April 17: Kant, *Prolegomena*, Preamble and General Questions, 4:265-4:280 (pp. 15-31)
27. Wednesday, April 19: Kant, *Prolegomena*, First Part ("How Is Pure Mathematics Possible?"), 4:280-4:294 (pp. 32-45)

Week 15 - Kant III

28. Monday, April 24: Kant, *Prolegomena*, "General Note to the Transcendental Ideas" and Conclusion ("On the Determination of the Bounds of Pure Reason"), 4:349-4:365 (pp. 100-115)
29. Wednesday, April 26: Wrap up. Work on your papers!

**** Final papers due on Canvas on Monday, May 1 at 5 pm. ****