

**PHIL 2200 - Modern Philosophy**

**MR 12:30–1:50, ACE 218**

**Christopher P. Noble, Ph.D.**

**Office: PME 221**

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**Office Hours: TBD and by appointment**

**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to major philosophical developments in Early Modern Europe, with emphases on the modern philosophical and scientific conception of nature, as well as the contributions of women philosophers in the period. We will examine themes including the development of mechanical conceptions of nature, ethics, and politics; the emergence of new forms of empirical and experimental knowledge; the relationship between philosophy and religion; and the relations between European and non-European peoples.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

Develop an understanding of major trends in Modern European Philosophy

Develop an understanding of methods and modes of argumentation employed by philosophers in the Modern period.

Hone ability to analyze philosophical arguments and conduct original research in the history of philosophy/history of Modern Philosophy

Students may use any existing language skills in Latin/French to read primary sources and conduct research.

**Course Evaluation Criteria**

Expectations for a “satisfactory” evaluation include regular attendance (no more than 3 absences during the semester), exhibition of an understanding of course material, participation in class discussion, and on-time completion of assignments.

**Assignments:**

Short written reflections upon reading material (one per week).

Students are expected to lead a brief class discussion on a topic of their choice from the reading once during the semester.

1 short paper (5-6 pages) thoroughly analyzing an argument or textual passage

1 longer research paper (roughly 3,000 words) that engages secondary literature and defends an interpretation of a particular philosopher or text. Students will develop their projects on the basis of feedback from both peers and the instructor.

**Disability Services:**

New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its student body. Students are welcome to privately discuss any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. I highly encourage students with accommodations to meet with me as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may contact the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) in order to request official accommodation(s). Students may contact SDS in-person (HCL3), at 941-487-4496 OR [disabilityservices@ncf.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@ncf.edu). Additional information regarding SDS can be accessed here: <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/>

**Academic Dishonesty Policy:**

Students are expected to be familiar with the college's academic dishonesty policy, as described in the General Catalog. Any violation of this policy may result in academic sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the college.

**Required Books:**

Ariew and Watkins. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
Atherton. *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*

Additional course materials will be posted in PDF form on the course Canvas page.

**Schedule of Readings (Tentative)**

Monday 1/28 Introductions, Syllabus Review

**Skeptical Beginnings and the Growth of Knowledge:**

Thursday 1/31 Michel de Montaigne: Selections from *Apology for Raymond Sebond* (MP, 4- 15); Francis Bacon: Selections from *New Organon* (MP, 16-20)

Monday 2/4 René Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Bk I-II (MP, 35-47)

Thursday 2/7 René Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Bk III-IV (MP, 47-58)

Monday 2/11 René Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Bk V-VI (MP, 58-68)

Thursday 2/14 René Descartes *Selections from Objections and Replies* (MP, 76-92);  
Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia: Selections from her Correspondence with  
Descartes (WP, 11-21)

**Mechanism, Ethics, and Politics**

Monday 2/18 Margaret Cavendish: *Philosophical Letters* (WP, 24-45)

Thursday 2/21 Thomas Hobbes: Selections from *Leviathan* (MP, 114–36)

Monday 2/25 Baruch Spinoza: Selections from the Letters (MP, 137–43)

Thursday 2/28 Baruch Spinoza: *Ethics* I (MP, 144–64)

Monday 3/4 Baruch Spinoza: *Ethics* II (MP, 164–87)

Thursday 3/7 Baruch Spinoza: *Ethics* V (MP, 188–95)

Monday 3/11 Anne Conway: *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (WP, 46–76)

Thursday 3/14 Conway Continued/Review

### **First Paper due Friday 3/15**

### **3/18-3/22: Spring Break**

#### **Leibniz**

Monday 3/25 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics* (MP, 224–48)

Thursday 3/28 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Selections from the Letters to Arnauld* (MP, 248–64); *Primary Truths* (MP, 265–68)

Monday 4/1 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *A New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances, and of the Union of Soul and Body* (MP, 269–274); Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham: Selections from her Correspondence with Leibniz (WP, 77–95)

Thursday 4/4 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Preface to the Novissima Sinica* (On Canvas); *Principles of Philosophy, or the Monadology* (MP, 275–83)

#### **Empiricism and Knowledge**

Monday 4/8 Robert Boyle, “Of the Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular or Mechanical Philosophy” (MP, 308–15); Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. I Ch. I-II, Bk. II Ch I-II (MP, 316–29).

Thursday 4/11 Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. I, Ch. XXI “Of Power” (MP, 348–356); *Second Treatise on Government*, Ch. V “Property” (Posted on Canvas)

Monday 4/15 Pierre Bayle: *Dictionary*, “Pyrrho,” Note B (MP, 512–16); David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, I-V (MP, 533–55)

Thursday 4/18 David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, VI-IX (MP, 555–76)

Monday 4/22 No Class – Baccalaureate/Reading Days

Thursday 4/25 David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, X-XII (MP, 577–600)

### **The Critique of Metaphysics**

Monday 4/29 Immanuel Kant: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Preface-§13 (MP, 661–79)

Thursday 5/2 Immanuel Kant: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* §14-§56 (MP, 679–706)

Monday 5/6 Immanuel Kant: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Conclusion (MP, 706–16)

**Final Paper Due Wednesday of Exam Week (5/15)**

### **Resources/Further Reading**

#### ***Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy***

Features thorough entries with bibliographies on many of the philosophers and philosophical themes that we will study in this course: [plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu)

#### ***Rules for Studying the History of Philosophy:***

Guidelines on how to read/conduct research in the history of philosophy from Peter Adamson, host of the History of Philosophy Podcast (“History of Philosophy without any Gaps”): <https://historyofphilosophy.net/rules-history-philosophy>.

#### ***Philpapers.org:***

Helpful database of published articles in philosophy.