

Jason Potter

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Web Site: <http://philophizer.com/index.html> (Please note: all handouts, along with lecture notes, reading and lecture plan and this syllabus are available at this web site or on the Canvas site.)

Office Hours: 2:00–3:15 P.M. T-Th, in HLMS 164B (or by appointment)

Course Description

A survey of seminal European philosophical works of the 17th and 18th centuries, including writings by Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Berkeley, and Kant. This will take us from Rationalism, through Empiricism to Idealism, and then on to Kant's Transcendental Idealist cure for the shortcomings he found in each of these traditions. Overall, we will concentrate on three central issues: the nature of reality; the nature of mind; and the nature of knowledge. This will lead us into various more specific topics, such as: appearance vs. reality; substance and attribute; the metaphysics of God; causality; self-consciousness, consciousness, and personal identity; the nature of mental representation (ideas); the mind-body problem; experience vs. reason; idealism vs. realism; and skepticism vs. certainty.

Course Objectives

There are many reasons to study early modern philosophy. At the very least, the philosophical works you will read in this course form key links in the chain of thought which led to the modern, western, scientific account of the world and its fundamentally secular approach to human life. While there are many high ambitions lurking, I do have a set of "least" ambitions for our time and efforts here:

1. That you learn to identify arguments, the chief tool of philosophical work.
2. That you learn to express your thoughts clearly.
3. That you make progress in the fine art of comprehending and then assessing, analyzing and criticizing philosophical texts.
4. That you leave here knowing a) what, generally speaking, the thinkers from Descartes to Kant were trying to accomplish; b) some of the tools they invented for the task; and c) why otherwise normal people like myself would boldly claim we cannot understand the modern, specifically western world if we do not understand what Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Berkeley and Kant thought about the questions and problems we will study together in this course.

Required Texts

1. Rene Descartes, *Meditations, Objections and Replies* (available in Canvas and Course Website).
2. Gottlieb Leibniz, *Monadology*, translated by Simon Sparks (available in Canvas and Course Website).
3. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Abridged/Edited with Introduction by Kenneth Winkler.
4. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Second Edition, Eric Steinberg editor.
5. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, edited by Robert M. Adams.
6. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Marcus Weigelt, Penguin Classics.

Reading assignments are available online through the *Readings and Lectures* page schedule on the website (and in Canvas), along with daily lecture topics and assignment dates.

Supplementary Packet (available on the website and in Canvas), containing:

- (i) helpful hints for writing philosophy papers,
- (ii) a list of abbreviations used in grading papers,
- (iii) a model history-of-philosophy paper, and
- (iv) a very brief but amazingly informative survey of informal logic.

Course Requirements & Percentage of Final Grade

(1) Attendance/Class Participation ¹	10%
(2) 10 Online Quizzes (1.5% each) and 1 Group Reading Report ² (5%)	20%
(3) First Paper	25%
(4) Second Paper	25%
(5) Final Exam	20%

Extremely Generous Rewrite Option:

¹Not everyone is amenable to public speaking and discussion. Since you have all taken at least two philosophy courses before, you know that philosophy is a discussion sport. If you can bring yourself to speak in class, you will find it easier to understand the issues and arguments, largely because we often do not know what we think until we try to say it or write it. It is also much more likely that I will detect and retain an awareness of your development as a student of philosophy, and as a thinking being, if you express yourself in person. However, I will not consciously use class participation to decide a grade. Class attendance does count, and reaps an easy reward. Those who attend all but 2 classes or less get an automatic 100 for this 10% of the course. If you miss *any* classes beyond 2, this part of your overall grade begins to drop from 100 by 5 points for every classed missed until you reach an F grade for that 10%.

² To be explained in class on the first day.

You may rewrite your first paper, using criticisms and suggestions on the graded paper as a guide, and then turn it in at the final exam date for the course; the grade you receive on the revised paper will replace the grade you originally received. Never *assume* that just because you make changes to the original paper, I will necessarily raise your grade. I may notice deficiencies I missed in the first reading. Therefore, if you choose to revise the paper, make a serious stab at those recommended revisions!

Notes on Course Requirements:

(1) The first paper will be on one of a list of assigned possible topics drawn from our readings in Descartes, Locke and Leibniz. The second paper will be on topics drawn from our readings in Hume, Berkeley and Kant. Paper topics will be available on the website well in advance of their due dates. All papers must be typed and then stored in MS Word word processing format (if you use Pages, *export to Word* before you upload the paper!), and turned in by 11:59 p.m. on the due date through paper's assignment item in Canvas. Late papers, other things being equal, are a Really Bad Thing.

(2) Since a philosophical essay is *not* like other kinds of essays you may have written in college (or elsewhere), it is strongly recommended that before preparing your papers, you read very carefully the helpful hints for doing philosophy papers, the list of abbreviations used in grading papers, and the model history-of-philosophy paper (all to be found in the supplementary packet on the Canvas site). I do assume that you have already learned how to write essays.

(3) The final exam will be a comprehensive exam covering the entire course. It will consist of 10 yes/no questions, 10 short-answer questions, and one long essay question (taken from four possible essay questions given to the class in advance of the final exam meeting).

Clarifications, Rules of the Road, Regrettable Necessities & Errata

(1) What your grade means:

A: Superior work

B: Good work

C: Work with some strengths, balanced against clear weaknesses

D: Work with few strengths, many weaknesses

F: Work that brings CPR to mind (and I don't mean the Critique of Pure Reason)

(2) Late papers are a Really Bad Thing. The usual excusing conditions must exist if I am to make exceptions to this rule: earthquake, civil emergency, Ebola outbreak, hospitalization, and the like.

(3) Breaches of academic honesty will receive the harshest allowable university penalty. However, I do think it is worth noting that to cheat in philosophy is to cheat yourself, since you undermine the potential development of your own mind (which *is the point of any education worth having*).

(4) You are responsible for the entire reading assignment--not just what we discuss in class.

(5) Reading assignments in philosophy tend to be both challenging and time consuming. You might want to take this into account when planning your spring semester. This course is as difficult as any technical course you take (calculus, for example). Do not assume it is a cakewalk ... you will regret that assumption later.

(6) Readings should be done prior to the class for which they are assigned. If this involves a range of days, you should have everything read by the first day in the range.

(7) Total points possible: 100.

(8) What to expect from me: prompt and honest feedback, clear lectures, sufficient contact outside class (e.g., office hours, e-mail, the web site).

(9) Since not all students wish to receive graded final exams or graded final papers, please let me know in advance if you would like detailed comments on yours (otherwise, I will only grade, not comment). Also, if you want your final paper returned to you, please be sure to check your University of Colorado email address after finals are over as that is where I will send them (or I will upload them into the Canvas assignments folder whence you got them in the first place)

(10) I am happy to discuss grades with you after assignments are returned, but please save these discussions for office hours or after class.

(11) Arrangements to extend deadlines for papers, to be excused for class absences, etc., can only be made in directly in office hours. *Do not email me about these things* except to warn me about a problem and to arrange a meeting to discuss them.

(12) This syllabus is subject to revision.

Assignment Schedule

Quizzes/Group Reports: See Schedule of Lecture Topics, Readings and Dates for Papers, Quizzes, Group Reports and Exams
First Paper: Topics available February 14 in Canvas Assignments, paper due March 23 by 11:59 p.m. in Canvas Assignments.

Second Paper: Topics available March 28 in Canvas Assignments, paper due at 11:59 p.m. April 28 in Canvas Assignments.

Final Exam: Distributed May ?? at 8 a.m. (2 days before the due date for the final exam) via Canvas Assignments due at 11:59 p.m. on May ?? in the Canvas Assignments. (Optional Revised Paper due May 5 by 11:59 p.m. in the appropriate Canvas Assignments folder).

One Last Thing

Since I find it very helpful to speak with each of you at least once, there will be required, short (10-minute) meetings during office hours the first three weeks of the semester to discuss your progress. I will bring a sign-up sheet with me to class during the first week so you can arrange a time and date that suits you. Don't put this off too long, or we will have a buffalo stampede that will make all of us grumpy.

CAMPUS-WIDE POLICIES

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the [classroom behavior](#) policy, the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

REQUIREMENTS FOR COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. CU Boulder currently requires COVID-19 vaccination and boosters for all faculty, staff and students. Students, faculty and staff must upload proof of vaccination and boosters or file for an exemption based on medical, ethical or moral grounds through the MyCUHealth portal.

The CU Boulder campus is currently mask-optional. However, if public health conditions change and masks are again required in classrooms, students who fail to adhere to masking requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. For more information, see the policy on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct. If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the "Accommodation for Disabilities" statement on this syllabus.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). {Faculty: insert your procedure here for students to alert you about absence due to illness or quarantine. Because of FERPA student privacy laws, do not require students to state the nature of their illness when alerting you. Do not require "doctor's notes" for classes missed due to illness; campus health services no longer provide "doctor's notes" or appointment verifications.}

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

PREFERRED STUDENT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

HONOR CODE

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED

RETALIATION

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination and harassment, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who believe they have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of any issues related to these policies regardless of when or where they occurred to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and resolution options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, any student religious obligations will be accommodated, but please let me know in advance when you cannot be in class or turn in an assignment due to religious observances/commitments.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.