

Schedule of Lecture Topics, Associated Readings, Dates for Papers, Exercises and Exams

Note: if a reading is listed for a particular date, that's the date on which you must have the reading done!

<u>Week</u>	<u>Session Topics (Associated Readings) & Assignments</u>
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Intro Week

Aug. 21 Introduction: (a) syllabus, broad overview of how philosophers in the Early Modern period planned to solve the so-called “problem of knowledge” (No readings—**History Handout**, **Early Modern Philosophers Handout**)

Week #1

Aug. 24 What is the “Problem of Knowledge”, exactly, and how do Early Modern philosophers hope to solve it *continued*? What is the value in solving this problem?

Aug. 26 Framework of the *Meditations* and the Background to which Descartes was responding: (1) mechanism vs. teleology; (2) Geometry of Matter vs. Rich Phenomenal Life World (READING: Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Preface to the Reader, and Synopsis) (**Advisory Study Guide/Worksheet #1; due in Canvas by class time this day**)

Aug. 28 Framework and Background of the *Meditations cont’d*. Discussion of the issues they raise.

PART I: RATIONALISM

Week #2

Aug. 31 Meditation 1: The quest for certainty, methodological skepticism, and the critique of common sense. (READING: Descartes’ Meditation I; OBJREP.ZIP 63-67; **In-Class Reading Quiz #1 on Meditation 1 (5-10 minutes)** (**Advisory Study Guide/Worksheet #2; due in Canvas by class time this day**); **Group #1 Reading Report Due in Class on This Reading**)

Sept. 2 Meditation 1 *cont’d*: *plus* first section of Meditation 2: The Cogito and the Nature of the Ego. What establishes the Cogito Belief as secure against the Evil Demon Hypothesis?. (READING: Descartes’ *Meditations*, Meditation 2)

Sept. 4 Med. 2 *cont’d*: The wax discussion, how Descartes’ truth criterion is derived, and the role of rational intuition (=‘the natural light’) in applying it.

Week #3

Sept. 7 Labor Day (No Classes)

Sept. 9 Background for Meditation 3: Descartes’ taxonomy of ideas, the distinction between objective and formal reality, and the Great Chain (and grades of) Being. (READING: Meditation III; OBJREP.ZIP 78-89; Handout #1. (**Advisory Study Guide/Worksheet #3; due in Canvas by class time this day**); **Group #2 Reading Report (on today’s reading. In-Class Reading Quiz #2 (on today’s reading) (5-10 minutes)**)

Sept. 11 Meditation 3 *cont’d*. Stepping through Descartes’s proof of God’s existence from the nature of ideas. Stepping through the proof. (Handouts #2 & #2suppl), then Criticisms of the Med. 3 proof + the second proof of God’s existence (no new readings)

Week #4

Sept. 14 Review of *Meditations* so far. (No New Readings)

Sept. 16 Meditation 4: The First Problem of Error and its Solution: Why God isn’t a deceiver; The Second Problem of Error and its Solution: how error is possible, yet compatible with God’s infinite perfections. (READING: Meditation IV; OBJREP.ZIP 90-94)

Sept. 18 Meditation 4 *cont’d*. Two more Problems of Error and *Their* Solutions, then the Cartesian Circle. (no new readings).

Week #5

Sept. 21 Meditation 5: The nature of the external world, Descartes’s Med. 5 “ontological” proof for God’s existence, and the role of Med. 5 in preparing for Med. 6’s proof for the existence of an External World (EW). (READING: Meditation V; OBJREP.ZIP 95-106)

Sept. 23 Meditation 6: Two Proofs establishing our knowledge of the existence of the external world. (READING: Meditation VI; OBJREP.ZIP 107-115) **In-Class Reading Quiz #3 (on Today’s Reading) (5-10 minutes)** **Group #3 Reading Report (on Meditation 6) (Advisory Study Guide/Worksheet #4 due in Canvas by the end of this week, i.e., 9/25/2026 @ 11:59 p.m.)**

Sept. 25 Meditation 6 *cont’d*: After defeating the EDH challenge to beliefs based on sense perception, two remaining problems: (a) the mind-body problem, and (b) the final solution to the Dream Problem. (READINGS: Meditation VI; OBJREP.ZIP 107-115)