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Spring 2-1-2018

PHL 262Y.01: History of Modern Philosophy

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Recommended Citation

Le Bihan, Soazig, "PHL 262Y.01: History of Modern Philosophy" (2018). *Syllabi*. 7860.
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PHL 262Y

Introduction to Modern Philosophy

Course Information

- Course Number: PHL 262Y
- Course Website on Moodle
- Credits: 3
- Class meets: TR 2:00 – 3:20 in TBA
- Instructor: Prof. Soazig Le Bihan
 - Office: LA 153
 - Office Hours: Fridays afternoons, 1:00-5:30PM (sign-up sheets are posted on office door).
 - Mailbox: LA 101
 - Email: soazig.lebihan@umontana.edu

Course Description

This course will introduce you to seven of the major figures of the 17th and 18th centuries in philosophy, i.e. Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant, with a focus on how the Enlightenment has forged most of our Western culture. The 17th and 18th centuries are centuries of radical change in the domains of philosophy, science, and politics.

That said, while studying modern philosophy, you should expect to encounter and to learn to understand worldviews that are alien to your own. Confronting radically different ways of thinking should shed new light on your own views, methods and prejudices. In analyzing competing views on a subject, you will not only learn some philosophy, but also learn to *do* philosophy.

We will focus on metaphysics (roughly concerned with the question of the nature and structure of reality) and epistemology (roughly concerned with the question of the nature and scope of knowledge), with some detours into moral and political matters. Little emphasis will be put on the historical and social contexts.

The learning goals are:

1. to learn about **the major views of the modern philosophers;**
2. to develop **critical thinking skills** (including reading philosophical texts, evaluating philosophical arguments, and exploring the relationships between different views);
3. to be able to **construct, convey, and argue for your own coherent views.**

Required Textbook

Ariew R. and Watkins, E., *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, Hackett

Tentative Schedule

Week 1	Presentation of the course, Syllabus, What is Enlightenment?
Week 2	Descartes I
Week 3	Descartes II
Week 4	Spinoza
Week 5	Leibniz
Week 6	Locke
Week 7	Berkeley
Week 8	EXAM WEEK
Week 9	Hume I
Week 10	SPRING BREAK
Week 11	Hume II
Week 12	Kant I
Week 13	Kant II; Racism in the Enlightenment
Week 14	Sexism in the Enlightenment; Speciesism in the Enlightenment
Week 15	Conclusion: the Enlightenment and Western Civilization; Review
Week 16	Final Exam: TBA

Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following:

Attendance	10%
Weekly Homework	30%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required, and necessary to succeed in the course. There will be a lot of material covered, and the material covered will be difficult.

You are allowed to miss **two classes without penalty**.

You are expected to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class. **Three late arrivals count as one absence**. If you have to leave early, please tell me at the beginning of class and sit close to the exit to minimize the disturbance to the class.

You are expected to give your full attention to the class. Cell phones or other means of communication should be silenced for the duration of class. You will be asked to leave if you are doing anything not relevant for class, e.g. reading the newspaper,

sleeping, doing work for other classes, etc. **Three offenses of this type will count as one absence.**

That said, absences may be excused in cases of **illness or other extreme circumstances**. Relevant documentation may be required in such cases. You also will be expected to work through the material covered during any classes you missed.

Participation in class will not be graded, but consistent and active participation to the class will increase your final grade by half a letter grade.

Weekly Homework

Each week, you will be given a homework assignment. Before each Sunday at 8pm, you will be required to submit a file on Moodle including:

1. Your revised answers to the study questions on the reading assignment from the week before;
2. A reflection paragraph on the material from the week before;
3. draft answers of the study questions on the reading assignment for the coming week.

You will be allowed to miss **one homework without penalty**.

In-class Exams (Midterm and Final)

All in-class exams will consist in answering short questions, which will be based on the study questions. You will be expected to express the appropriate answer in a way that is both concise and precise.

Note that the short questions asked in the exams correspond to the study questions. This means that if you do your homework regularly, and if you correct your answers after we have covered the material every week, studying for the exams should be easy.

The Midterm will consist in questions concerning the material covered since the beginning of the class for the first exam. **The final in-class exam will be comprehensive.**

All exams are closed-notes and closed-books.

The exams are mandatory to pass to course. Absences may be excused only in cases of severe illness or other extreme circumstances. Proof of extreme circumstances or severe illness is required. Make up exams will not be given unless there is proof of extreme circumstances.

Late Assignment Rules

If you encounter difficulties concerning an assignment, it is almost always possible to make arrangements before the assignment is due. No accommodation is possible

once the deadline has passed due to fairness issues. ***Come and talk to me before it is too late.***

No-tech classroom rules

On the basis of the most current research, I will forbid any laptop/tablet/cellphone in the classroom. I require that you come with pens and notebooks, and that you take notes by hand.

University Resources

Writing Center

Students from all levels can take advantage of the writing center (LA 144: drop in or by appointment)

“The Writing Center exists to help all UM students improve their writing skills as they pursue their academic and professional goals. We provide free writing instruction through one-on-one tutoring, in-class workshops, and the Writing Assistant program.” (quoted from the Writing Center website)

For more information, go the website:

http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/welcom_about.htm

Academic Misconduct

You are strictly held to the University of Montana Student Conduct Code

<http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode1.pdf>.

Unless collaborative work is specifically called for, work on assignments, quizzes, and exams is expected to be your own. **If you cheat, your assignment will receive a zero.** You may fail the class altogether depending on the circumstances. Also, I will report the case to the Dean.

I will be glad to answer questions you may have about how to document sources properly. Anytime you use a phrase or sentence that someone has used before you in the topic of interest, you must cite your source. Anytime you take an idea from someone, you must cite your source.

All exams are closed-notes and closed-books: you may not consult anything but your own mind in order to answer questions on the exam. You may not use cell-phones, or any electronic devices to aid you, nor fellow students, nor fellow students' answers on exams, etc.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, it is your responsibility to contact me and discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised I may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted Disability Services, located

in Lommasson Center 154, please do so in order to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at [\url{www.umd.edu/dss/}](http://www.umd.edu/dss/).

Additional Resources on Course Material

If you need more sources of information, in addition to the material covered in class, I would suggest that you start with two great websites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

There exist excellent editions of the original works by the authors we will cover that contain a substantial introduction in which the arguments are put in (philosophical) context, analyzed, and explained. If you are interested in reading the texts closely, I highly recommend you invest in these. They will also be on reserve at the library for your convenience.

Needless to say, there is a lot of misleading and/or inaccurate information on the web. It is your responsibility to learn how to recognize good sources of information. You may benefit from taking an information literacy course at the Mansfield library.