

17TH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY (PHIL-3150)

FALL 2019

Instructor:	Dr. Zita Toth	Office:	Cocke Hall, 207
Time:	TR, 8:00–9:15	Office hrs:	MW, 3:30–5 & <i>by appt.</i>
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Required Texts. There are three required books for the course: two of them are collections of primary texts and one is a secondary source on the philosophical aspects of the Scientific Revolution.

- A. P. Martinich, Fritz Alhoff, and Anand Jayprakash Vaidya (eds). *Early Modern Philosophy: Essential Readings with Commentary*. Blackwell, 2007. ISBN: 1-4051-3567-0. (= EMP)
- Margaret Atherton (ed.). *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*. Hackett, 1994. ISBN: 0-87220-259-3. (= WP)
- Peter Dear. *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge in Transition, 1500–1700*. Third Edition. Princeton University Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-691-19434-9. (= RS)

Course Description. In this course, we will look at one of the most fascinating periods in the history of philosophy, the 17th century, which is often regarded as the period when Modern Philosophy was born. We will pay special attention to the scientific problems of the period, which motivated many of the philosophical questions that we will be discussing.

Expectations and Assignments. Here is a breakdown of your final grade in this course.

Attendance and in-class participation, 15%: Conversation is essential to Philosophy. Everyone, even if they are bored or shy or anxious is expected to participate in class. Make sure you answer to your peers' suggestion according to the best interpretation you can give them, and that your criticism is directed towards the idea instead of the person. Be willing to change your mind if the evidence so dictates. **To prepare for class participation:** readings in philosophy tend to be difficult, and the Early Modern period is no exception. When you do the assigned readings, make notes about: (1) the main thesis or idea of the reading; (2) the main argument (if any); (3) the main examples the reading uses to illustrate the point; and any questions or remarks you have about the reading.

Notecards, 15%: The notecards require that you show that you put effort into the readings and are prepared to participate well. After completing the readings for each class, write down *either* a short summary of the reading *or* at least two or three

major questions that the authors of the texts are attempting to answer or problems that you see in the readings. You will hand these to me on a 3×5 notecard that you will put on my desk before the beginning of class. Strive to be clear and to ask challenging, puzzling questions. Notecards are graded on a \times (D), \checkmark - (C), \checkmark (B), \checkmark + (A) scale. A \checkmark + is reserved for incisive, well-articulated summaries and questions. Because notecards are part of the preparatory work for class discussions, notecards cannot be turned in late. If you have an excused absence, that day will simply not count toward your average.

Argument rehearsal paper, 20%: A short paper reconstructing an argument in a reading of your choice from the first half of the semester. Detailed prompt will follow. *This assignment can be rewritten once.*

Final paper, 40%: A research paper on a topic of your choice. Detailed prompt will follow.

Final exam, 10%: In class test.

Course Policies.

Attendance: Attendance in class is mandatory, and every unexcused absence will affect your notecards grade as explained above. You also must come on time; I will not accept notecards from habitually tardy people.

Analog classroom: Electronic devices are not allowed in class. They can be very distracting, and new research shows that even when computers are used solely for taking notes, learning is impaired, because the keyboard encourages taking verbatim notes while the pen requires you to process as you take notes. Everyone is expected to leave their devices (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) at home or keep them turned off and out of sight during class time. If you need special accommodation, or have any special concerns about this policy, please ask me directly.

E-mail: There may be some official communication via e-mail, and everyone is expected to check their e-mail accounts regularly and read their e-mails carefully. You can expect me to read and answer my e-mails within 24 hours; please do not send me e-mails at midnight expecting a response before the morning.

Outside resources: With the exception of the final paper, you will not have to do outside research beyond the assigned books. If you feel you must read more than what is assigned, please do not rely on wikipedia (which tends to be rather unreliable in philosophy). Instead, I recommend the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: plato.stanford.edu. An up-to-date, reliable catalogue of philosophy papers can be found at philpapers.org (but please note that they do not store the papers; you will still have to find them in the library).

Plagiarism: If you use or copy a source without properly citing it, whether this act is intentional or not, you commit plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of stealing. It is very easy to detect, and will result in your automatic failure of the course.

Lateness: Late assignments will not be considered unless for very serious reasons. If you have such reasons, please let them know as soon as you can. I will not accept excuses related to technology (“my e-mail address wasn’t working,” “it remained in

my Draft folder,” etc.) unless it is a major technical issue that affects the campus. Assignments for other courses also do not count as very serious reasons.

Special Accommodations: Students with special needs requiring accommodations should please (the sooner the better!) coordinate with the Student Disability Access Center (SDAC: 243-5180/5181) and follow up with me.

Tentative Schedule of Readings. The schedule is tentative, which means it might change at any point during the semester. I will post any changes and will call your attention to it in advance. For the abbreviations, see the book list at the beginning of the syllabus.

The Scientific Revolution and Its Philosophical Questions		
Aug 28	Introduction	Garber (on Collab.)
Sep 2	Some background	RS, Intro & ch. 1
4	Montaigne	EMP, ch. 1
9	Philosophy and practice	RS, ch. 3
11	Bacon	EMP, ch. 2
16	Galileo	EMP, ch. 3
18	Descartes, scientist	EMP, ch. 4
23	Hobbes	EMP, ch. 5
25	Cavendish	WP, ch. 2
30	Newton	EMP, ch. 6
Descartes		
Oct 2	Cartesians and Newtonians	RS, ch. 8
9	Meditations I–II	EMP, ch. 7
14	Meditations III–IV	EMP, ch. 7
16	Meditations V–VI	EMP, ch. 7; DUE: First paper
21	Objections: Elizabeth	WP, ch. 1
23	Objections: Mersenne	EMP, ch. 8
28	Objections: Hobbes	EMP, ch. 9
30	Objections: Arnauld and Gassendi	EMP, chs. 10–11
Rationalism after Descartes		
Nov 4	Pascal	EMP, ch. 13
6	Spinoza, I	EMP, ch. 14 (158–179)
11	Spinoza, II	EMP, ch. 14 (180–204)
13	Conway	WP, ch. 3
18	Malebranche	EMP, ch. 15
20	Leibniz, I	EMP, ch. 16
25	Leibniz, II	EMP, ch. 18
Dec 2	Cudworth	WP, ch. 4
4	Review	RS, ch. 8; DUE: Final paper