

Syllabus

Modern Philosophy (PHH3400), Fall 2021

1. Course description

PHH3400 is an introduction to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European philosophy. We will focus on four prominent works of the period: René Descartes's 1641 *Meditations*, G.W. Leibniz's 1686 "Discourse on Metaphysics", John Locke's 1689 *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and David Hume's 1748 *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. We will also look, albeit more briefly, at the views of some of their contemporaries: Thomas Hobbes, Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, and Mary Shepherd. The course will focus on the philosophers' views in metaphysics and epistemology, but will also consider views in the physical sciences and in ethics.

In our discussion of these topics, we will have two main aims. The first is to come to understand some views that philosophers have had on these issues. The second is to develop your own skills in such matters as careful reading, critical thinking, and clear writing.

In a typical week you will go to three class meetings: two lectures and one discussion section. The lectures will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays, period 3 (9:35-10:25am) in CSE E119. The discussion sections will all be on Fridays. You should make sure you know which discussion section you have registered for, and where and when it meets.

2. Contact information

Instructor

Dr. Stewart Duncan

Email: sdrd@ufl.edu

Office phone: (352) 273-1808

Teaching assistant

Mr. James Wetzel

Email: james.wetzel@ufl.edu (<mailto:james.wetzel@ufl.edu>)

Details of office hours for both Dr. Duncan and Mr. Wetzel are available on the [Office hours](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/office-hours) (<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/office-hours>) page.

Outside class and office hours, email will usually be the easiest way to communicate with us. In doing so, please use your ufl.edu email address.

There is a [Canvas page \(http://ufl.instructure.com\)](http://ufl.instructure.com) for the class. This will be the place to find the syllabus, announcements, grade information, and notes. It will also be the place to submit your papers.

3. Books and other readings

I have ordered three books for the class on the UF Textbook Adoption site. They are:

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Donald A. Cress. Third edition. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993. ISBN 9780872201927. List price \$10.00.

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by R.S. Woolhouse. London: Penguin, 1998. ISBN 0140434828. List price \$17.00.

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Eric Steinberg. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993. ISBN 9780872202290. List price \$9.00.

All other readings from early modern philosophers will be available online, either posted on or linked from the class Canvas site. This includes the readings for the Leibniz section. However, if you do want a book containing the Leibniz readings, I recommend this collection of translations:

G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989. ISBN 9780872200623. List price \$25.00.

You should bring the relevant text to class with you, so you can refer to it during discussions.

In selecting editions to recommend, I have looked for ones that are modern, of high quality, and affordably priced. There are other good editions (e.g., those published by Oxford University Press or Cambridge University Press), but they are often more expensive. If you already have copies of those, feel free to use them. Not all editions and translations are equally good though.

In particular, it's usually a bad idea to use older translations of Descartes and Spinoza, and you should certainly avoid editions that just print scans of old books. If you have any questions about particular editions, just ask me.

One final set of texts is worth mentioning. These are the ones available at earlymoderntexts.com (<http://earlymoderntexts.com>), which have been translated into modern English by Jonathan Bennett. The English texts have been translated, as well as the French and Latin ones. The modifications are sometimes quite dramatic (see <https://earlymoderntexts.com/faqs/how>

(<https://earlymoderntexts.com/faqs/how>) for details) but these can be helpful aids.

The main things to read are the primary texts: the works of Descartes, Leibniz, et al that are the focus of our class. It's perfectly reasonable to approach the class by just reading these and nothing else. It may also be useful to read secondary literature, writing about those primary texts. This should not replace the reading of the primary texts, but can help. If you are going to read secondary literature, there is then a question of what to read. To begin with, you might look at the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://plato.stanford.edu> [\(https://plato.stanford.edu/\)](https://plato.stanford.edu/)) and the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://www.iep.utm.edu> [_\(http://www.iep.utm.edu\)](http://www.iep.utm.edu)). In general, the *Stanford Encyclopedia* articles are slightly more advanced, but this varies from topic to topic. If you are looking to go beyond those sources, the references they provide will be useful. You might also try the Philosophers Index, which you can access through the library website, or PhilPapers (<https://philpapers.org> [_\(https://philpapers.org/\)](https://philpapers.org/)). And don't forget that there are books in the library!

4. Assessment

Graded assignments are described below. In addition, there is a **syllabus quiz** on Canvas, due by 5pm on Tuesday 8/31. This will not itself be worth any points towards your final grade. However, if you do not take the syllabus quiz, you will not receive a grade for any other assignment.

4.1 Papers (60%)

There will be two paper assignments. Each paper should be between 1400 and 1600 words long. The papers together will count for 60% of your grade for the course (each counting for 30%).

Topics will be made available two weeks before papers are due. All papers must be submitted as pdf files on Canvas.

Any papers submitted late without a good excuse will be penalized. Papers submitted on the deadline day, but after the appropriate time, and papers submitted the next day, will be penalized three points (on a 100-point scale). Papers submitted after that will be penalized a further three points for each extra day they're late.

The first paper is due on Thursday 9/30 and the second on Thursday 11/4. In each case, papers are due by the start of class at 9:35am. For detailed instructions, see the [Assignments](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/assignments) [_\(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/assignments\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/assignments) section.

No papers will be accepted after the end of classes (more precisely, after 5:00pm on Wednesday 10/3). If you fail to submit a paper, you will receive a grade of "F" for that paper.

12/8). If you fail to submit a paper, you will receive a grade of zero for it.

Information on the standards for grading papers is available on the Canvas site: [Paper grading guide \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/paper-grading-guide\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/paper-grading-guide).

4.2 Final exam (30%)

The final exam for this class will be on Monday 12/13 from 10:00am to 12:00pm in our usual classroom.

The final exam will count for 30% of your grade for the class. Makeup final exams will only be given in those few circumstances that merit the awarding of an incomplete grade for the class.

The final exam will include both short answer and essay questions. Short answer questions may ask about any material covered during the semester. Essay questions will be drawn from longer lists of possible questions, which will be made available by Thursday 12/2.

4.3 Quizzes (10%)

There will be 12-15 short quizzes in class during the semester. Their dates will not be announced in advance. Quizzes may be given in lectures, or in discussion sections. A quiz might, for example, ask you to write a short paragraph in response to a reading, or to answer a couple of multiple choice questions.

Each quiz will count equally towards your overall quiz grade, except that I will drop your two lowest quiz grades. Makeup quizzes will only be given if you have good excuses. In appropriate cases (which is most of them) these reasons should be documented in writing. I will excuse absences only for the acceptable reasons stated in the UF attendance policy (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>)).

If you arrive too late for a quiz, you may not take it. If you leave class before the end, but after the quiz, you will receive a grade of zero for that quiz.

4.4 Numerical grades and letter grades

All assignments will be given a numerical grade. At the end of the semester, your overall numerical grade will be calculated, based on your grades for and the relative weights of the assignments. This numerical grade will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale.

Numerical grade (n)	Letter grade	GPA*
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$90.0 \leq n \leq 100$	A	4.0
$86.7 \leq n < 90.0$	A-	3.67
$83.3 \leq n < 86.7$	B+	3.33
$80.0 \leq n < 83.3$	B	3.0
$76.7 \leq n < 80.0$	B-	2.67
$73.3 \leq n < 76.7$	C+	2.33
$70.00 \leq n < 73.3$	C	2.0
$66.7 \leq n < 70.0$	C-	1.67
$63.3 \leq n < 66.7$	D+	1.33
$60.0 \leq n < 63.3$	D	1.0
$56.7 \leq n < 60.0$	D-	0.67
$0 \leq n < 56.7$	E	0

* Current UF policies for assigning grade points may be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

4.5 Incomplete grades

Grades of I (Incomplete) may only be assigned in certain special circumstances. These are described in the CLAS Incomplete Grade Contract, which can be found at <https://www.advising.ufl.edu/academicinfo/clas-policiesprocedures/incomplete-grades/>

[\(https://www.advising.ufl.edu/academicinfo/clas-policiesprocedures/incomplete-grades/\)](https://www.advising.ufl.edu/academicinfo/clas-policiesprocedures/incomplete-grades/).

5. Academic honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states,

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/> [_ \(https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/\)](https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/)) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment). All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. Repeat offenders may be penalized by suspension or expulsion from the university.

You should already have a good idea of what constitutes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. I will also review this when handing out paper assignments. If you have any questions about this, ask me before it's too late.

All papers submitted for the course will be checked using turnitin.com [_ \(http://turnitin.com\)](http://turnitin.com).

6. Schedule

See the separate [Schedule \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/schedule\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/schedule) page.

7. Other policies and information

7.1 Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> [_ \(https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/\)](https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

7.2 Classroom behavior

Please remember that it is not enough to be merely physically present in class. You are expected to do all assigned reading in advance—which is not to say you should not revisit it again afterwards. You should also be paying attention, taking notes as appropriate, and participating in class discussions.

My aim is to have a classroom atmosphere that is both serious and relaxed. Things will go well if you come to class prepared, avoid behavior that is rude or distracts others, and remember to treat others with respect in classroom discussions.

7.3 Use of electronic devices

Use of laptops, phones, and other electronic devices in class is only allowed in two circumstances.

- You may use an electronic device to make a permitted recording. If you plan to do this, be sure to review the information about UF policy (and related law) on the [Permitted recording](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/permitted-recording) (<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/permitted-recording>) page.
- You may only use electronic devices for other purposes if you have my explicit written permission. If you believe that I ought to allow you to use a laptop in class for purposes other than recording (e.g., to take notes) please contact me.

Anyone violating this policy may be asked to leave class.

7.4 Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available

at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/> (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_ufl.bluera.com_ufl_&d=DwMFAg&c=sJ6xIWYx-zLMB3EPkvcnVg&r=y2HjEMjRMHJhfdvLrqJZIYczRsfp5e4TfQjHuc5rVHg&m=WXko6OK_Ha6T00ZVAsEaS_h99qRXHOgMNFRywCoehRho&s=itVU46DDJnlg4CW6efJOOLgPjdzsPvCghyfzJoFONs&e=)).

Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students

at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/> (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>).

7.5 The Academic Learning Compact for the Philosophy major

PHH3400 is related to several of the Strategic Learning Outcomes of the Philosophy major, as described in the Academic Learning Compact. For more information, please see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/liberalarts/alc/philosophy.aspx> (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/liberalarts/alc/philosophy.aspx>).

7.6 General education

PHH3400 meets the Humanities General Education requirements. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

The **subject area objectives** (<http://undergrad.ua.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>) for Humanities courses are:

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

This class focuses on part of the history of philosophy. We will examine a variety of answers given to prominent philosophical questions, and attempt to analyze the reasons and arguments given for (and against) those answers.

The **associated student learning outcomes** (<http://undergrad.ua.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-courses/structure-of-gen-ed-courses/slos-and-performance-indicators/student-learning-outcomes/>) in content, critical thinking, and communication are:

Content: Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used.

Critical thinking: Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives.

Communication: Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively.

These learning outcomes will be assessed by the papers and final exam for the class.

7.7 Other contact information

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu> (<https://counseling.ufl.edu>), 392-

1575

University Police Department: 392-1111, or 911 for emergencies.

Schedule

For each class, you should read the relevant texts in advance.

Week 1. An introduction to the class, and to Descartes

Tuesday 8/24. Introduction to the class.

Thursday 8/26. Lecture: Descartes's projects, and his use of skepticism. Reading: Descartes, Meditation 1

Friday 8/27. Discussion section 1.

Week 2. Descartes: intellectual perception and the existence of God.

Tuesday 8/31. Lecture: The *cogito* and the initial uses of intellectual perception. Reading: Meditations 2-3. The **syllabus quiz** is due on Canvas at 5:00pm.

Thursday 9/2. Lecture: Descartes arguing for the existence of God. Reading: Meditation 3, again, Hobbes's Objections, and Descartes's Replies. To access those objections and replies, see the [Hobbes reading \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/hobbes-reading\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/hobbes-reading) page.

Friday 9/3. Discussion section 2.

Week 3. Descartes: truth, true and immutable natures, and another argument for God's existence.

Tuesday 9/7. Lecture: Truth and error, the will and the intellect. Reading: Descartes, Meditation 4

Thursday 9/9. Lecture: True and immutable natures, and the ontological argument for God's existence. Reading: Descartes, Meditation 5

Friday 9/10. Discussion section 3.

Week 4. Descartes: mind, body, and their union.

Tuesday 9/14. Lecture: The real distinction between mind and body. Reading: Descartes, Meditation 6

Thursday 9/16. Lecture: Mind and body (their interaction and union). Reading: extracts from

Thursday 9/16. Lecture: Mind and body (their interaction and union). Reading: extracts from the correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, which are available on the [Elizabeth reading \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/elizabeth-reading\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/elizabeth-reading) page. Paper 1 topics available.

Friday 9/17. Discussion section 4.

Week 5. Leibniz: against Descartes; the ontological argument; God's relation to the world.

Tuesday 9/21. Lecture: Leibniz against Descartes. Reading: two letters of Leibniz's. To access these, and all the other readings in the Leibniz section, see the [Leibniz reading \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/leibniz-reading\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/leibniz-reading) page.

Thursday 9/23. Lecture: Leibniz on God and the world. Reading: Discourse on Metaphysics (DM), 1-7.

Friday 9/24. Discussion section 5.

Week 6. Leibniz: truth, representation, and causation

Tuesday 9/28. Lecture: Leibniz on truth and complete concepts. Reading: DM, 8-9 and "Primary Truths".

Thursday 9/30. Lecture: Leibniz on causation, harmony and freedom. Reading: DM, 10-22.
Paper 1 due.

Friday 10/1. Discussion section 6.

Week 7. Further themes from Leibniz's Discourse on Metaphysics.

Tuesday 10/5. Lecture: Leibniz on physics and metaphysics. Reading: DM, 10-22, again.

Thursday 10/7. Lecture: Leibniz on minds and ideas. Reading: DM, 23-37.

Friday 10/8. Discussion section 7.

Week 8. Locke: against innate knowledge, and against Descartes

Tuesday 10/12. Lecture: Locke against innate knowledge. Reading: *Essay*, book 1, especially chapters 1 and 2.

Thursday 10/14. Lecture: Locke against Descartes. Reading: *Essay*, book 1, chapter 4, and book 2, chapter 1.

Friday 10/15. Discussion section 8.

Week 9. Locke: the origin of ideas in experience

Tuesday 10/19. Lecture: The origins of ideas. Reading: *Essay*, book 2, chapters 2-8.

Thursday 10/21. Lecture: Mixed modes and substances, bodies and spirits. Reading: *Essay*, book 2, chapters 22-23. Paper 2 topics available.

Friday 10/22. Discussion section 9.

Week 10. Locke: identity and knowledge

Tuesday 10/26. Lecture: Identity over time, and in particular personal identity. Reading: *Essay*, book 2, chapter 27.

Thursday 10/28. Lecture: Knowledge. Reading: *Essay*, book 4, chapters 1-4.

Friday 10/29. Discussion section 10.

Week 11. Locke on God and religion; introduction to Hume's project

Tuesday 11/2. Lecture: Locke on religious knowledge and belief. Reading: *Essay*, book 4, chapters 10, 17-19.

Thursday 11/4. Lecture: Hume's project and some basic principles of his view.
Reading: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (EHU), sections 1-3. **Paper 2 due.**

Friday 11/5. Discussion section 11.

Week 12. Hume: what reason and understanding do, and what they don't

Tuesday 11/9. Lecture: Hume's question about reason and the understanding. Reading: EHU 4-5

Thursday 11/11. No lecture (Veterans Day holiday)

Friday 11/12. Discussion section 12.

Week 13. Mary Shepherd, a critic of Hume

Tuesday 11/16. Lecture: Hume on causation. Reading: EHU 7.

Thursday 11/18. Lecture: Shepherd against Hume. Reading: [Shepherd reading](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/shepherd-reading)
(<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/433462/pages/shepherd-reading>)

Friday 11/19. Discussion section 13.

Friday 11/19. Discussion section 13.

Week 14. Hume: causation

Tuesday 11/23. Lecture: Hume on liberty and necessity. Reading: EHU 8.

Thursday 11/25 and Friday 11/26. No classes (Thanksgiving)

Week 14. Hume: liberty, necessity, and skepticism

Tuesday 11/30. Lecture: Hume's skepticism about miracles. Reading: EHU 10.

Thursday 12/2. Lecture: Hume's skepticism about other things. Reading: EHU 11-12. Final exam review questions available.

Friday 12/3. Discussion section 14.

Week 15. Review

Tuesday 12/7. Review lecture

Exam week

Monday 12/13, 10:00am-12:00pm. **Final exam**