

Syllabus

Modern Philosophy 1 (PHH5405)

Basic information

- Instructor: Dr. Stewart Duncan
- Office: 330A Griffin-Floyd
- Phone: 352-273-1808
- Email: sdrd@ufl.edu; (<mailto:sdrd@ufl.edu>) Outside class and office hours, this will be the best way to contact me. Please remember to use your ufl.edu email address for all correspondence.
- Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00pm, and by appointment
- Canvas: There is a Canvas site for the class. This hosts the syllabus and schedule. It is where you will submit your papers, and where you will find information about grades. I may also use the announcements section to post additional information about the class.

Course objectives

In this class, we will have two main aims. One aim is historical: that you come to understand some of the views and arguments of the four philosophers we are reading. The second is more skill-focused: to work on reading and understanding unfamiliar texts from an unfamiliar context.

These aims will both be in view throughout the semester, and your achievements in the two areas will be assessed by your papers and the final exam.

Schedule

See the separate [Schedule \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/459199/pages/schedule\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/459199/pages/schedule) page.

Books and reading

We will read the work of four philosophers: Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Leibniz. You need to have access, before and during class, to high quality translations of the relevant works.

For Descartes's *Meditations*, use either the translation of Cress (published by Hackett) or that of Cottingham (published by Cambridge University Press). An electronic text of Cottingham's translation is available in the Continental Rationalists section of the Past Masters database, to which UF subscribes.

For Malebranche, use the volume of *Philosophical Selections* that is edited by Steven Nadler and published by Hackett. This is the one book listed as 'required' on the text adoption site.

For Spinoza's *Ethics*, there are three good modern translations to choose from: that of Curley (published by Princeton University Press and Penguin), that of Shirley (published by Hackett) and that of Silverthorne and Kisner (published by Cambridge University Press). Curley's translation is available in the Continental Rationalists section of the Past Masters database.

For Leibniz, use the translations of the relevant essays in the Hackett volume of *Philosophical Essays* edited by Ariew and Garber. These again are available in the Continental Rationalists section of the Past Masters database.

Graded work

There are three pieces of graded work for the class.

The **first assignment** is a paper of between 1500 and 2000 words. This will be due by 3:00pm (the start of class) on Tuesday 10/4 (meeting 6). Topics will be available two weeks in advance. This paper will be worth 20% of your grade for the class.

The **second assignment** is a paper of between 3500 and 4000 words. This will be due by 3:00pm (the start of class) on Tuesday 11/22 (meeting 13). You may choose your own topic. This should be agreed with me no later than Tuesday 11/8. This paper will be worth 45% of your grade for the class.

Papers are to be submitted both in class and on Canvas. A description of the standards for paper grading will be made available on Canvas. Any papers submitted late without a good excuse will be penalized three points (on a hundred-point scale) for every day they're late. No papers will be accepted after the end of classes (more precisely, after 5:00pm on Wednesday 12/7). If you fail to submit a paper, you will receive a grade of zero for it. All papers will be submitted to Turnitin.

The **third assignment** is a final exam, which is worth 35% of your grade for the class. This will be two-hour exam. The officially scheduled final exam time for this class is on Thursday 12/15, from 3:00 to 5:00pm. You may take the exam at that time, or during any two-hour period earlier that week. The exam questions will be made available on Canvas, starting at 9:00am on Monday 12/12, and you will have two hours to submit your response after you access them. This is an individual assignment. If you take the exam before the officially scheduled time, you may not discuss the questions or your responses to them with anyone in the class who has not yet taken the exam.

Expectations

- You are expected to attend all classes, arriving on time and not leaving early.
- You should be properly prepared for each class. This will involve, at a minimum, doing all the required reading for each day. When asked in class, you should be able to explain questions you have about the reading, or things that puzzled you about it.
- This is a small seminar, which depends on class discussion. Everyone is expected to participate constructively in that discussion.

Grading policies

- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with [university policies](https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/) (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>).
- 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 table below.
- 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>).

Grade conversions

Numerical grade (n)	Letter grade	GPA
$90.0 \leq n \leq 100$	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

76.7	C+	2.33
70.00 ≤ n < 73.3	C	2.0
66.7 ≤ n < 70.0	C-	1.67
63.3 ≤ n < 66.7	D+	1.33
60.0 ≤ n < 63.3	D	1.0
56.7 ≤ n < 60.0	D-	0.67
0 ≤ n < 56.7	E	0

Course 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://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/> (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>).

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](https://disability.ufl.edu/) (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>).

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.

Schedule

For the meetings on Descartes, read the relevant meditations closely and carefully before class. Detailed reading assignments for later weeks will be posted nearer the time.

Meeting 1. Tuesday 8/30/22. Introduction

Meeting 2. Tuesday 9/6/22. Descartes, Meditations 1–2

Meeting 3. Tuesday 9/13/22. Descartes, Meditation 3

Meeting 4. Tuesday 9/20/22. Descartes, Meditations 4–5

- Paper 1 topics available

Meeting 5. Tuesday 9/27/22. Descartes, Meditation 6

Meeting 6. Tuesday 10/4/22. Malebranche: occasionalism

- Paper 1 due

Meeting 7. Tuesday 10/11/22. Malebranche: the vision in God

Meeting 8. Tuesday 10/18/22. Malebranche: minds and bodies

Meeting 9. Tuesday 10/25/22. Spinoza: monism

Meeting 10. Tuesday 11/1/22. Spinoza: necessitarianism

Meeting 11. Tuesday 11/8/22. Spinoza: parallelism

- Paper 2 topics must be agreed.

Meeting 12. Tuesday 11/15/22. Leibniz: against Descartes, Malebranche, and Spinoza

Meeting 13. Tuesday 11/22/22. Leibniz: God and the world

- Paper 2 due

Meeting 14. Tuesday 11/29/22. Leibniz: truth and causation

Meeting 15. Tuesday 12/6/22. Leibniz: mills, mirrors, and minds

Final exam

- The last time at which you may take the exam is the officially scheduled exam time, 3:00–5:00pm on Thursday 12/15. The exam will be available on Canvas from 9:00am on Monday 12/12.