

Syllabus

Basic information

Instructor: Dr Stewart Duncan

- Office: 330A Griffin-Floyd
- Phone: 352-273-1808
- Email: sdrd@ufl.edu
- Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30–4:30pm, in 330A Griffin-Floyd, and by appointment

The class meets twice a week, in 116 Matherly. On Tuesdays we meet for periods 5 and 6 (11:45am to 1:40pm). On Thursdays we meet for period 6 (12:50 to 1:40pm).

There is a Canvas page for the class. This syllabus and some of the assigned readings are posted there. It is where you will submit your papers, and where you will find paper comments and information about grades. I will post my notes there after each class. Additional information about the class may be posted in the announcements section.

Outside class and office hours, email will be the best way to contact me. Please remember to use your ufl.edu email address for all correspondence. You may also send messages using the Canvas Inbox system.

Goals, objectives, and general education

Course goals and objectives. 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, including 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.

PHH3400 is a humanities (H) subject area course in the UF general education program.

- 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. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.
- This course will achieve those objectives by introducing and discussing a series of important issues in the history of seventeenth-century European philosophy. We will examine a variety of views and arguments in the field, aiming both to understand and to critically discuss them.
- Humanities general education classes share three learning outcomes.
 - 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.
- All three outcomes will be assessed through the three main assignments described below. These will be supplemented by in-class quizzes, which will emphasize the first outcome.

Books

There are three required books for the class.

- 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.

Other assigned reading will be posted on or linked from Canvas.

Assessment: Three main assignments (90%)

There are three main assignments, each covering approximately one third of the class. These are each worth 30% of your grade for the class.

1. A 1500 word paper on the Descartes or Leibniz, due by the start of class on Tuesday 2/21. Topics will be made available two weeks before the paper is due.
2. A take-home exam on the Locke section, taken during the week after spring break. The exam will be available at 9:00am on Monday 3/20/23, and will be due by 9:00pm on Friday 3/24/23. This assignment will ask you to write a shorter essay, and to answer several short-answer questions.
3. Another 1500 word paper on the Hume and his critics section, due by 5pm on Monday 5/1, the Monday of final exam week. Topics will be made available two weeks before the paper is due.

All papers and exams must be submitted as pdf files on Canvas.

For grading criteria, see the [Paper grading guide](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/paper-grading-guide?wrap=1) (<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/paper-grading-guide?wrap=1>).

Late submission policy

- Any late submission for the first paper assignment will be penalized three points per day, using the automated lateness penalty feature on Canvas.
- Take-home exams will not be accepted after the submission deadline, unless you have an agreed extension, or in some urgent circumstance that justifies an extension.
- Any late submission for the final paper assignment will be penalized three points per day, using the automated lateness penalty feature on Canvas. In addition, no paper that is more than 72 hours late will be accepted.

Assessment: Quizzes (10%)

There will be 12-15 short quizzes in class during the semester. Their dates will not be announced in advance. 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> )

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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.

General grading policies

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> .

(<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>).

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 table below.

Grade conversion table

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
$70.00 \leq n < 73.3$	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).

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/).

Electronic devices

Use of laptops, phones, and other electronic devices during class meetings 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) at

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/code-change-faq/>

[_](https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/code-change-faq/).

- You may only use electronic devices for other purposes if you have my explicit written

permission. If you believe that you ought to be allowed to use a laptop or tablet in class for

permission. If you believe that you ought to be allowed to use a laptop or tablet in class for purposes other than recording (e.g., to take notes) please email me about this.

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/students/get-started/>  (<https://disability.ufl.edu/students/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.

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 honor and integrity by abiding by the 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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

You should expect that, if you are found to have plagiarized or otherwise cheated in this class, you will receive a grade of E for the course (not just the assignment involved).

Schedule

See the [Schedule \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/schedule?wrap=1\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/schedule?wrap=1) page.

Paper grading guide

Several related criteria are used to evaluate your paper.

- **Topic.** Most basically, you must answer the question, including all parts of the question. Beyond this, you need to show good judgment in choosing what material to include and what to exclude.
- **Structure.** Your paper overall should have a structure that is clear and easy to follow. Moreover, there should be clear and appropriate connections between the parts, including the parts of arguments.
- **Accuracy.** When explaining the views of others, you should do so accurately. When one might reasonably disagree over what interpretation to offer, you will present an interpretation that is plausible and supported by relevant evidence.
- **Creativity.** Ideally you will present and discuss the material in a way that shows a contribution of your own, beyond the material in the classes and readings. (This, like all other criteria, should be understood in a way appropriate to the level of the class.)
- **Evidence and argument.** You should offer good reasons for the claims you make. This includes citing relevant texts as evidence and arguing in a way that is logically well-structured.
- **Fairness.** Your paper should represent other views fairly, and try to understand what the best reasons for those views are, even if you disagree strongly with them.
- **Language.** Your paper should contain no errors of grammar or spelling. The sentences themselves should be clear to read, and relate to each other in sensible ways. The paper should be divided appropriately into paragraphs (and may also be divided into sections with headings).

An A paper will score highly on all of these criteria.

A B paper will typically score well on most of these criteria, but not all of them. So it will answer all of the question, offer reasons for its claims, and be clearly written. Often, however, it will be less creative or original in its claims, and offer weaker reasons for them (such as less relevant textual evidence, or less well constructed arguments).

A C paper may fail more dramatically at one of the criteria (say by not answering all of the question) or be weaker all round. D and E papers will have the same problems to a higher degree.

Schedule

Section 1. Descartes and Leibniz. Weeks 1–5.

- Tuesday 1/10/23. An introduction to the class, and to Descartes's projects
- Thursday 1/12/23. Descartes: Meditation 1
- Tuesday 1/17/23. Descartes: Meditations 2 and 3
- Thursday 1/19/23. Descartes: Meditation 4
- Tuesday 1/24/23. Descartes: Meditations 5 and 6
- Thursday 1/26/23. Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, a critic of Descartes. Reading: [Elizabeth reading \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/elizabeth-reading?wrap=1\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/elizabeth-reading?wrap=1)
- Tuesday 1/31/23. Leibniz against Descartes, and Leibniz on God and the world. Reading: two letters of Leibniz's, and Discourse on Metaphysics (DM), 1-7. To access these, and all the other readings in the Leibniz section, see the [Leibniz reading \(https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/leibniz-reading?wrap=1\)](https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/leibniz-reading?wrap=1) page.
- Thursday 2/2/23. Leibniz on truth and complete concepts. Reading: DM, 8-9 and "Primary Truths".
- Tuesday 2/7/23. Leibniz on causation, harmony and freedom. Reading: DM, 10-22. Topics for the first paper will be available.
- Thursday 2/9/23. "Leibniz's New System of Nature".

Section 3. Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Weeks 6–10.

Readings for this section are all taken from Locke's *Essay*, and are described using book and chapter numbers. (Thus, for example, 2.21 refers to book 2, chapter 21.)

- Tuesday 2/14/23. Against innate principles and ideas (*Essay* 1.1–1.4, especially 1.2)
- Thursday 2/16/23. Against Descartes; what ideas are; where simple ideas come from (*Essay* 2.1–2.8, especially 2.1)
- Tuesday 2/21/23. Substance, mind, body, and identity (*Essay* 2.22, 2.23 and 2.27). The **first paper** is due by the start of class.
- Thursday 2/23/23. Morality in book 2 (*Essay* 2.20, 2.22, 2.28)
- Tuesday 2/28/23. Power and freedom (*Essay* 2.21)
- Thursday 3/2/23. Knowledge (*Essay* 4.1–4.4)
- Tuesday 3/7/23. God (*Essay* 4.10)
- Thursday 3/9/23. Faith, reason, enthusiasm (*Essay* 4.17–19)

- Spring break is the week of Monday 3/13/23.
- Week 10 (Tuesday 3/21/23 and Thursday 3/23/23) will be the last week of the Locke section. This will also be the week of the **take-home exam** on the Locke section, which will be made available at 9:00am on Monday 3/20/23, and will be due by 9:00pm on Friday 3/24/23.

Section 4. Hume and his critics. Weeks 11–15

The initial readings are sections of Hume's *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (EHU). The later readings will be provided on Canvas.

- Tuesday 3/28/23. Ideas and reason. EHU 1–4.
- Thursday 3/30/23. Custom and habit. EHU 5–6.
- Tuesday 4/4/23. Causation, necessity, and liberty. EHU 7–9.
- Thursday 4/6/23. Miracles. EHU 10.
- Tuesday 4/11/23. Providence. EHU 11.
- Thursday 4/13/23. Skepticism. EHU 12.
- Monday 4/17/23. Topics of the final paper will be made available on Canvas.
- Tuesday 4/18/23. Lady Mary Shepherd, a critic of Hume. Reading: **Shepherd reading** (<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/470957/pages/shepherd-reading?wrap=1>)
- Thursday 4/20/23. Critics of Hume
- Tuesday 4/25/23. Critics of Hume
- The **final paper** for the class is due by 5pm on Monday May 1st, the Monday of final exam week