

# PHH 3400: Modern Philosophy (syllabus v1.0)

Spring 2025 / MWF 10:40–11:30am / FLG 285

**Instructor:** Dr. Chuck Goldhaber      **Contact:** [cgoldhaber@ufl.edu](mailto:cgoldhaber@ufl.edu), (352) 392-2084

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 1:00–3:00pm, or by appointment, in FLO 320.

## Course Description

The early modern era was an exciting time in the history of European thought. Sudden developments in the natural sciences overturned ancient theories of nature and our place in it, calling for radically new approaches. The intellectual atmosphere was full of optimism about rejecting authority and prejudice, and about thinking through things for oneself. Carried by this enthusiasm, philosophers developed novel and competing theories about the nature of mind, matter, morals, and much more. They did so in systematic ways, helping to reveal important links between philosophy's many topics.

This course introduces you to the history of early modern European philosophy, focusing especially, though not exclusively, on four philosophers from that era: René Descartes, Mary Astell, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. The selection of readings balances exposure to the traditional philosophical canon with a new narratives approach, highlighting underrepresented women philosophers and topics in social and practical philosophy. Through interpretation of historical texts, you will develop your writing and argumentative skills, as well as form and defend views on central philosophical topics.

## Course Goals

By the end of the term, you will be able to...

- share, explain, and defend your ideas in group discussion.
- argue and write clearly, succinctly, and persuasively.
- understand the role of history in shaping early modern ideas, as well as our own.
- think both abstractly and concretely about central philosophical topics, including the nature of mind and body, knowledge and skepticism, the origin of morality, prejudice, social life, and feminism.

## Course Requirements

### % of course grade

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| – Up to 50 pages per week of dense philosophical reading        |          |
| – Regular participation in class discussion                     | 10%      |
| – Six in-class reading quizzes (pop)                            | 20%      |
| – A short writing exercise (300–450 words)                      | 10%      |
| – Two papers (900–1200 words) on a selection of provided topics | each 20% |
| – One final exam  | 20%      |

## General Education Fulfillment

This course fulfills UF's general education requirement in Humanities (H). Accordingly, the course aims at cultivating the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture—in this case, philosophy and history. The course engages with major texts from the Western canon. For more info on the subject area objectives, see: <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>.

*A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.*

## General Education Student Learning Objectives

Consistent with the Humanities' Student Learning Objectives, students will learn to:

- identify, describe, & explain philosophy's history, underlying theory, & methodologies;
- identify and analyze the relevant factors that shape thought within philosophy;
- approach issues and problems within philosophy from multiple perspectives;
- and communicate knowledge, thoughts, and reasoning clearly and effectively.

These learning objectives will be reached and evaluated through in-class discussion, rigorous essay writing, and exams on course contents.

## Required Texts

- Lisa Shapiro and Marcy Lascano (eds.). *Early Modern Philosophy: An Anthology*. 2022. Broadview Press (ISBN: 978-1554812790). = **EMP**
  - Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Eds. Mary Gregor & Jens Timmerman. 1785/2012. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 978-1107401068). = **GW**
  - All other required texts are available on [Canvas](#). = **C**
- (Free audiobooks: Descartes's *Meditations*, Hume's *Enquiry*, Kant's *Groundwork*)

## Recommended Commentaries

- Gary Hatfield, *The Routledge Guidebook to Descartes' Meditations*. 2003. London: Routledge. (ISBN: 0415672767). [Available [online](#) through UF library]
- Jacqueline Broad, *The Philosophy of Mary Astell: An Early Modern Theory of Virtue*. 2015. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 0198716818)
- Barry Stroud, *Hume*. 1981. London: Routledge. (ISBN: 0415036879). [Available [online](#) through UF library]
- Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. 1996. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 0521499623). [= essays on Kant's moral philosophy]

## Readings

In the schedule below, readings are listed underneath the dates by which they must be read. All readings are dense and tough, and each page may take more than twice as long to read as a typical page from a non-philosophy course. The early modern style of course texts may make them take longer to read than texts from other philosophy courses. Make sure you budget enough time to read them carefully, and several times.

Please acquire the exact editions of the books listed above. Try searching by ISBN, if buying online. Reserve copies of all books are available at West Library circulation.

Always bring the week's required reading to class. That will usually mean bringing the textbook ('EMP'). Some optional readings are available on [Canvas](#), and are marked 'C'. The recommended commentaries (see above) are not on [Canvas](#), but copies are available at the library (online or physical). Optional readings are clearly marked 'Optional'.

## Participation

Attendance is mandatory (details below), but it alone will not secure you a good participation grade. Regular verbal participation in group discussions is required for that. This can take the form of asking a question, answering a question, sharing what you find interesting or strange about a text or topic, responding to a classmate, or reading a passage out loud. Over time, you will need to put forward, explain, and defend your own viewpoints on philosophical issues and your own readings of course texts. Doing so is crucial for developing philosophical reasoning skills, which are very closely related to conversational and debate skills. If you are feeling shy in class, come to office hours, and let's start talking there. Now is the time to confront any shyness and get comfortable taking part in the enjoyable, collaborative process of thinking together as a group.

## Quizzes

Six pop quizzes will be given during the semester at unannounced times. Each quiz will test reading comprehension and be in open-note/text, short answer format. However, you may not use computers, tablets, or phones during quizzes.

Quizzes will often be at the beginning of class, so be sure to come to class on time. *Missed quizzes cannot be made up later.* But, as a courtesy, the lowest two quiz grades of the six will be dropped. The remaining quizzes will be graded out of 5, and will each account for 5% of your course grade.

## Writing Assignments

The short writing exercise (300–450 words) and two papers (900–1200 words) are due 1/27, 2/24, and 4/14 by 9:00pm sharp. They must be uploaded *as PDF files* through the course's [Canvas](#) site. Each writing assignment must address one of several provided

topics concerning the course texts. These will be distributed by 1/22, 2/7, and 3/26. You may write on your own topic for the papers, but only if you submit the topic to me for approval at least a week in advance of the deadline *and* get my written approval.

Papers will be evaluated with regard to their accuracy, clarity, concision, rigor, and persuasiveness. They must use quotes and citations when presenting the views or arguments from the course readings. Each paper must evaluate these views or arguments through use of objections and replies. More details to follow when papers are assigned.

I encourage everyone to take advantage of UF's Writing Studio (2215 Turlington Hall), which offers students help with all parts of the writing process. You can make an appointment with a writing consultant online, or come for a drop-in consultation 2–4pm most weekdays. For more information, see: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

## Final Exam

The final exam (5/1, 12:30–2:30pm) will be a combination of true/false and essay questions. Essay questions will be graded according to accuracy, cogency, and persuasiveness. Possible essay questions will be provided in advance (by 3/31).

The final exam will be open note/text. You can bring the course books, printouts of materials from the course [Canvas](#) site, and any physical notes *handwritten* (not printed) by you. You will *not* have access to any electronic devices during the exam.

## Grading Scale

Papers will receive letter grades, while quizzes and exams will receive numerical grades, according to the following equivalences:

		87–89%	B+	77–79%	C+	67–69%	D+	<60	E
93–100%	A	83–86%	B	73–76%	C	63–66%	D		
90–92%	A–	80–82%	B–	70–72%	C–	60–62%	D–		

For more information, including GPA equivalents, see UF's Grades and Grading Policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

## Attendance and Late Policies

Course requirements for class attendance and make-up work are consistent with UF's policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/> Students who are late to class should check in with me immediately after class.

Late work will drop a third of a letter grade per each 24 hours late (e.g., A– to B+). *No pop quizzes can be made up.* But, as an accommodation for any unavoidable absences, the two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

I understand that extenuating circumstances may arise. If you need an extension for a valid (e.g., medical) reason, please reach out at least 48 hours before the deadline.

## Accommodations

UF is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and provides equitable access to students with disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability related to mental health, chronic health, neurological state, and/or physical condition—please contact the Disability Resource Center (in person in Reid Hall or online at <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>). It is never too late to request accommodations—our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. All inquiries are handled in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use these accommodations in this course should share their accommodation letter with me *as soon as possible*. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

## Academic Integrity

You may not use ChatGPT or any other AI tools for this course. Any form of cheating, including plagiarism or use of AI tools, will result in a failing grade for the course. You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism or cheating. Please consult UF's Student Honor Code: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>

To ensure a safe and constructive learning environment for all, please join me in the commitment to respect everyone's identities and rights, regardless of difference.

## Prohibitions

I strongly discourage (but do not prohibit) the use of laptop and tablets in class. If you plan to use a laptop or tablet in class, please discuss your reasons with me. Please disconnect from the internet and other potential distractions, if you do opt to use them.

Cell phones must be silenced for the duration of class. *Absolutely no cell phones may be used in the classroom, even before/after class.* Let's make the classroom a space to 'disconnect' from external pressures, distractions, and noise—a rare privilege these days!

No eating or chewing gum is allowed in the classroom.

## 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/>.

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

## Course Schedule

### Meeting 1 (1/13) – Introduction

- No reading

### Meeting 2 (1/15) – Doubting everything

- Biography of René Descartes EMP, 85–86
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Letter of Dedication C
- Descartes, First Meditation EMP, 97–100
- Optional: Hatfield, Ch. 3

### Meeting 3 (1/17) – Undeniably a thinking thing

- Descartes, Second Meditation EMP, 100–104
- Optional: Hatfield, Ch. 4

\*\*\*1/20 – MLK Day, no class\*\*\*

### Meeting 4 (1/22) – Review and discussion

- Reread first two meditations

### Meeting 5 (1/24) – Searching within for the outside

- Descartes, Synopsis of the Six Following Meditations EMP, 95–97
- Descartes, Third Meditation EMP, 104–12

### Meeting 6 (1/27) – We know God better than we know body

- Reread Third Meditation
- Optional: Hatfield, Ch. 5

\*\*\*1/27 – Short writing exercise due at 9pm\*\*\*

### Meeting 7 (1/29) – Error is our fault, not God's

- Descartes, Fourth Meditation EMP, 112–16
- Optional: Hatfield, Ch. 6

**Meeting 8 (1/31) – What we *do* understand about the material world**

- Descartes, Fifth Meditation **EMP**, 116–19
- Optional: Hatfield, Ch. 7

**Meeting 9 (2/3) – A thinking thing... with a body?**

- Descartes, Sixth Meditation **EMP**, 120–27
- Optional: Hatfield, Ch. 8
- Optional: Alison Simmons, “Re-Humanizing Descartes” **C**

**Meeting 10 (2/5) – Letters on mind-body interaction**

- Elisabeth of Bohemia, 1643 correspondences with Descartes **EMP**, 168–175

**Meeting 11 (2/7) – Does happiness depend on the will alone?**

- Elisabeth of Bohemia, 1645 correspondences with Descartes **EMP**, 175–90
- Optional: Lisa Shapiro, “Princess Elizabeth and Descartes: The Union of Soul and Body and the Practice of Philosophy” **C**

**Meeting 12 (2/10) – Review and discussion**

- Reread Sixth Meditation and Elisabeth-Descartes correspondences

**Meeting 13 (2/12) – Cartesian feminism: “The mind has no sex”**

- François Poulain de la Barre, *A Physical and Moral Discourse concerning the Equality of Both the Sexes* **EMP**, 551–62
- Optional: Amy Schmitter, “Cartesian prejudice: Gender, education and authority in Poulain de la Barre” **C**

**Meeting 14 (2/14) – Reasons for a women’s college**

- Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Part I, Part II: Ch. I **EMP**, 605–10
- Optional: Broad, Ch. 1

**Meeting 15 (2/17) – How to cure prejudice**

- Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, Part II: Ch. II **EMP**, 610–15

**Meeting 16 (2/19) – Review and discussion**

- Reread Astell through Part II: Ch. II

**Meeting 17 (2/21) – How to find things out**

- Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, Part II: Ch. III **EMP**, 615–20
- Optional: Broad, Ch. 2

**Meeting 18 (2/24) – How to govern yourself**

- Astell, *A Serious Proposal*, Part II: Ch. IV **EMP**, 620–24
- Optional: Broad, Ch. 5

**\*\*\*2/24 – First paper due at 9pm\*\*\***

**Meeting 19 (2/26) – The evils of marriage**

- Astell, *Some Reflections upon Marriage* **EMP**, 623–33
- Optional: Broad, Ch. 7
- Optional: Karen Detlefsen, “Custom, Freedom, and Equality: Mary Astell on Marriage and Women’s Education” **C**

**Meeting 20 (2/28) – Review and discussion**

- Reread *Proposal* Chs. III–IV and *Reflections*

**Meeting 21 (3/3) – For the love of learning!**

- Biography of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz **EMP**, 572–73
- Sor Juana, *Response of the Poet to the Very Eminent Sor Filotea de la Cruz* **EMP**, 576–82
- Optional: Adriana Clavel-Vázquez and Sergio Armando Gallegos-Ordorica, “The Socratic Pedagogy of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz” **C**

**Meeting 22 (3/5) – The melancholic’s ballad**

- Sor Juana, “Let us pretend I am happy” **EMP**, 573–75
- Optional: Sor Juana, “Finjamos que soy feliz” (Spanish language) **C**
- Optional: Lisa Shapiro, “Sor Juana’s ‘Let us pretend I am happy’” **C**



**Meeting 23 (3/7) – Two kinds of philosophy**

- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §I **EMP**, 778–82
- a few more paragraphs from this section (omitted from textbook) **C**
- Optional: Stroud, Ch. 1

**Meeting 24 (3/10) – The origin of our ideas**

- Hume, *EHU*, §§II–III **EMP**, 782–85
- Optional: Stroud, Ch. 2

**Meeting 25 (3/12) – Causal reasoning is not based in reason**

- Hume, *EHU*, §IV **EMP**, 785–91
- Optional: Stroud, Ch. 3

**Meeting 26 (3/14) – Causal reasoning is based in custom**

- Hume, *EHU*, §V **EMP**, 791–98
- Optional: Stroud, Ch. 4

**\*\*\*3/15–23 – Spring Break, no class\*\*\***

**Meeting 27 (3/24) – Reasoning like animals!**

- Hume, *EHU*, §IX **EMP**, 816–18
- Reread §§IV–V

**Meeting 28 (3/26) – The idea of necessary connection**

- Hume, *EHU*, §VII **EMP**, 799–807

**Meeting 29 (3/28) – Kinds of skepticism, and what they're good for**

- Hume, *EHU*, §XII (omitted from textbook) **C**

**Meeting 30 (3/31) – Review and discussion**

- Review Hume so far, esp. §§IV–V, VII

**Meeting 31 (4/2) – Free will and responsibility**

- Hume, *EHU*, §VIII EMP, 807–16
- Optional: Stroud Ch. 7

**Meeting 32 (4/4) – Morality is a matter of feeling, not reason**

- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Appendix I EMP, 854–58
- Optional: Stroud Ch. 8

**Meeting 33 (4/7) – The good will**

- Immanuel Kant's Biography EMP, 932–33
- Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface GW, 4:387–92, pp. 3–8
- Kant, *Groundwork*, §1, on the good will GW, 4:393–96, pp. 9–12
- Optional: Editor's Introduction GW, pp. ix–xxxvi

**Meeting 34 (4/9) – Acting from duty**

- Kant, *Groundwork*, Rest of §1 GW, 4:397–405, pp. 12–20
- Optional: Korsgaard, Ch. 2

**Meeting 35 (4/11) – The supreme principle of morality**

- Kant, *Groundwork*, §2, through formula of universal law GW, 4:406–20, pp. 21–33
- Optional: Korsgaard, Ch. 3

**Meeting 36 (4/14) – How to not make an exception of oneself**

- Kant, *Groundwork*, §2, applying formula of universal law GW, 4:420–27, pp. 33–39

**\*\*\*4/14 – Second paper due at 9pm\*\*\***

**Meeting 37 (4/16) – The value of humanity**

- Kant, *Groundwork*, §2, formula of humanity, applications GW, 4:427–30, pp. 37–43
- Optional: Korsgaard, Ch. 4

**Meeting 38 (4/18) – Why there can be no other moral law**

- Kant, *Groundwork*, rest of §2, formula of autonomy      **GW**, 4:430–45, pp. 43–55

**Meeting 39 (4/21) – Freedom *is* morality**

- Kant, *Groundwork*, §3 (though focus on the first 5 pages)      **GW**, 4:446–63, pp. 56–72
- Optional: Korsgaard, Ch. 6

**Meeting 40 (4/23) – Review and discussion**

- Reread Kant, esp. §3

**\*\*\*5/1 – Final exam 12:30-2:30pm\*\*\***