

Science and Morality in Modernity

Instructor: Augie Faller
Location: Dalton Hall 212A
Time: MoWe 1:10PM–2:30PM
Office: Old Library 122
Office Hours: Mo 3–4PM and Th 2–3pm, or by appointment
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Course Description

The philosophical and scientific revolutions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, what we now call the “early modern” period, had a huge effect on the questions and methods that still dominate Western philosophy. This course will explore some of the early modern period’s debates within the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, political philosophy, and ethics. Key questions include: What is the source of knowledge? Do we have free will? What is the relationship between mind and body? What gives the state the right to rule? Why be moral? We will focus on figures that have come to leave the most significant mark on Western philosophy, including René Descartes, Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, John Locke, and David Hume. We will also do a close analysis of Mary Astell’s and Mary Wollstonecraft’s less commonly read proto-feminist works. We will read these works alongside short critical responses by important contemporaries and near-contemporaries like Hobbes, Gassendi, Arnauld, Elisabeth of Bohemia, Clarke, Conway, Masham, Rousseau, Reid, Shepherd, Campbell, and Kant.

Course Goals

The course is designed to offer students an opportunity to understand, in context, some of the most influential ideas and arguments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is also designed to provide students with an opportunity to develop their own philosophical ideas and capacities through discussion, careful analysis, and evaluation of those writings. It is reading intensive, but the students will be assisted through weekly discussion questions and discussion leaders.

Texts for Course

I suggest you buy these texts (they are inexpensive!), but they will also be available online:
René Descartes, *Meditations, Objections, and Replies* (Roger Ariew and Donald Cress, eds.)
Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, *Ethics* (Edwin Curley, ed.)
John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Kenneth P. Winkler, ed.)
John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (C.B. Macpherson, ed.)
Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (Patricia Springborg, ed.)
David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Eric Steinberg, ed.)
David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (J.B. Schneewind, ed.)
[Various authors], *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period* (Margaret Atherton, ed.)
[EMP]

Note: Spinoza's *Ethics* is published by Penguin, and Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* by Broadview Press. The other texts are all published by Hackett.

Course Website

The course Moodle will contain the syllabus, readings not contained in required texts, focus questions for reading and discussion, and other materials. It will also have course announcements and individual access to recorded grades.

Two good online reference resources are The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (open access) and Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (access through the library).

Course Requirements

Short Papers: Four short papers are required. I will provide prompts, but you may also design your own with approval.

Paper one will mostly focus on summary. Papers two and three should defend a substantive philosophical thesis concerning an argument by an author or a dispute between two historical philosophers as expressed in course readings. For helpful advice on writing a philosophy paper, see:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/philosophy/>

In-class assignments: Throughout the semester there will be in-class assignments that assess student learning and spark conversations. These will be graded on completion. If the student misses class then they can't be made up unless the student has an excused absence.

Contributions in class: Students are expected to attend class and make contributions to the discussion. Each student will have two "freebie" unexcused absences, but please send me an email letting me know you won't be in class.

Grading

Grades are ultimately a way for me to hold you accountable to yourself. **Please communicate with me about extenuating circumstances you encounter during the semester.** I want every student perform to the best of their ability in this course!

- Extensions will be granted if asked for before the assignment due date with no penalty.
- Late assignments without an extension will be docked 1/3 a letter grade for each day they are late.
- Grades will be rounded at the end of the semester to the nearest whole value.

Grade breakdown:

Paper 1: 10%

Papers 2–4: Lowest grade worth 15%, middle 25%, highest 30%

Contributions to class (including participation): 20%

Grade	Grade Points	Percentage Range
A	4.0	94–100%
A-	3.7	90–93%
B+	3.3	87–89%
B	3.0	83–86%
B-	2.7	80–82%
C+	2.3	77–79%
C	2.0	73–76%
C-	1.7	70–72%
D	1.0	60–69%
F	0	0–59%

Notes on Academic Integrity

I regard plagiarism as a very serious matter. In this class, plagiarism consists of work taken partially or entirely from an uncited source (online content, a peer, a published article, etc.) and assumed as your own. If I have reasons to suspect plagiarizing, I will ask that you report yourself to the Bryn Mawr Honor Board. See the Bryn Mawr Honor Code and Honor Board Hearing Process in the Student Handbook for more information.

Students with a Disability

Students with Disabilities: Your access in this course is important. I encourage any students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a learning difference to meet with me early in the semester. Students who attend Bryn Mawr should also contact Access Services Coordinator Deborah Alder at dalder@brynmawr.edu or 610-526-7351 as soon as possible, to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Haverford Students should contact the Office of Disabilities Services at 610-896-1324 or hc-ads@haverford.edu.

Schedule of Topics and Readings**Week 1:****M:** Introduction to the Course**W:** Doubt, Certainty, and Self

René Descartes (1596-1650), *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Dedication, Preface, Synopsis, and Meditations One and Two [1-19]

Week 2:

M: LABOR DAY

W: Replies to Descartes

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679): Third Set of Objections ("Against Meditation I" and "Against Meditation II" only), with Descartes's Replies [100-105]

Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655): *Disquisitio Metaphysica* (counter-objections, summarized by friends of Clerselier, to Descartes's original Replies to the Fifth Set of Objections, with Descartes's counter-replies, in "Letter from Descartes to Clerselier"; concerning Meditations One and Two only) [155-158]

Week 3:

M: Sense Perception and Mind-Body Dualism

René Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditation Six

René Descartes *The Passions of the Soul*, Part 1

W: Mind-Body Interaction

Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618-1680): "Correspondence with Descartes" (Selections) [EMP 9-21]

***Submit Assignment 1 between Friday and Saturday end of day ***

Week 4:

M: Monistic Pantheism

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza (1632-1677), *Ethics*, Part I: Definitions, Axioms, and Propositions 1-15 [1-13]

W: Necessitarianism

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I: Propositions 16-36 and Appendix [13-30]

Week 5:

M: Short Critical Responses

Pierre Bayle: *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, "Spinoza," Note N (Objections 1-3, as quoted by Diderot, *Encyclopédie*) [CL 1-4]

Samuel Clarke: *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More Particularly in Answer to Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza and Their Followers*, Section IX (Freedom) [CL 46-54]

W: Panpsychism

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part II: Definitions, Axioms, and Propositions 1-49 [31-68]

Week 6:

M: Activity, Passions, and the Good

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III: Preface, Definitions, Postulates, and Propositions 1-12 [68-78]

Ethics, Part IV: Preface, Definitions, Axiom, and Propositions 1-37 [113-137]

W: Finish discussion + review

Assignment 2 due between Wednesday and Friday end of day

Week 7: Fall Break

Enjoy the break!

Week 8:

M: Materialism & Nominalism

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction and Part I, chapters 1-7 [TH 3-37]

W: Materialism & Nominalism, cont.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, chapters 9, 9 (OL), 12 [TH 47-50, 63-73]

Week 9:

M: Corpuscular Philosophy

Robert Boyle (1627-1691), "On a Good and an Excellent Hypothesis" [online, 119]

Boyle, "About the Excellency and Grounds of the Mechanical Hypothesis" [online, 138-54]

W: Ideas and Qualities

John Locke (1632-1704) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: Epistle to the Reader

Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I: Chapter I [1-7]

Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II: Chapters I-XII [33-68] and Chapter XXI §§1-21 only [93-98]

Week 10:

M: Personal Identity and Other Relations

Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II: Chapters XXV-XXVIII [129-154]

W: Short Critical Responses

Catherine Cockburn Trotter (1679-1749): *A Defense of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding* (selections) [EMP 128-146]

Thomas Reid: *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Essay III, Chapter 6, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity" [CW 275-279]

Week 11:

M: Reasoning from Experience

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: Sections I-VI [1-39]

W: Causal Necessity

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: Sections VII-VIII [39-69]

Week 12:

M: Skepticism, Virtue, and Moral Sentiment

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: Section XII [102-14]

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*: Section I [13-16], Section IX [72-82], and Appendix I [82-88]

W: Proto-Feminism in the Early Modern Period

Mary Astell (1666-1731), Selections from *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, (EMP 99-125)

Assignment 3 due between Wednesday and Friday end of day

Week 13:

M: Property and the Law of Nature

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*: Preface and Chapters I-VII [5-52]

OPTIONAL:

David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, Chapter 2

W: The Social Contract and the Right of Rebellion

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*: Chapters VIII-XII [52-77] and XV-XIX [89-124]

OPTIONAL:

Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann, "The Contradictions of Racism: Locke, Slavery, and the Two Treatises"

Week 14:

M: Replies to Locke

Mary Astell: *Reflections Upon Marriage* (excerpt) [CW 7-20]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): *The Social Contract*, Chapters 4-6 [CW 39-44]

W: Locke and Indigenous Rights

James Tully, "Rediscovering America: the two treatises and aboriginal rights"

Week 15:

M: Proto-Feminism in the Early Modern Period Continued

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Selection from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (CW)

W: Review

Final Assignment due during finals week