

# PHL 211/211H: Modern Philosophy

spring semester 2011, TTh 10:20–11:40  
 NAT SCI 204  
 office hours: Wednesdays 3:30-4:30  
 381-4494 (home landline, 7 a.m.–6 p.m.)

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<<http://loncapa.msu.edu>>

## Required texts (*always bring your book to class*):

## short form:

Anthony Weston, <i>A Rulebook for Arguments</i> , 4 <sup>th</sup> edition, Hackett 2009.	
René Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy In Which The Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body are Demonstrated</i> [1641], <i>Objections, and Replies</i> , edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Donald Cress, Hackett 2006.	<i>Meditations</i>
Baruch Spinoza, <i>The Ethics Proved in Geometrical Order</i> [1677], 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, translated by Samuel Shirley, edited by Seymour Feldman, Hackett 1992.	<i>Ethics</i>
Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> [1686], in <i>Discourse on Metaphysics &amp; Other Essays</i> , edited by Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew, Hackett 1991.	<i>Discourse</i>
John Locke, <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> [1690], edited by Roger Woolhouse, Penguin 1997.	<i>Essay</i>
George Berkeley, <i>A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge</i> [1710], Hackett, 1982.	<i>Principles</i>
Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, <i>Monadology</i> [1714], in <i>Discourse on Metaphysics &amp; Other Essays</i> , edited by Daniel Garber and Roger Ariew, Hackett 1991.	
David Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> [1748], abridged on LON-CAPA.	<i>Enquiry</i>
David Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> [1775], 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by Richard H. Popkin, Hackett 1998.	<i>Dialogues</i>
Immanuel Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [1785], 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by James W. Ellington, Hackett 1993.	<i>Grounding</i>

## Course description and goals:

Together, we will survey one of the richest periods in the history of philosophy in the West, examining such labyrinthine issues as the mind-body problem, the nature of substance, innate ideas, modes of apprehension, the possibility of certainty, and freedom of the will. Students are expected to attend class regularly, to prepare assignments carefully, and to participate actively in class discussion. Clarity of thought and expression (verbal and written), as well as understanding the positions of the philosophers in relation to one another, are goals for the course. I will introduce major figures and issues, help out with particularly knotty philosophical topics, report on important debates in the secondary literature, and point out key connections among the philosophers we study and other central movements and figures in the discipline. We should have fun with these mind-boggling and persistent philosophical problems.

## Schedule of readings and assignments to be completed *before* class:

1/10	Introduction to the course, to the scientific background of 17 <sup>th</sup> c. philosophy, and to Descartes.	Tutoring begins Monday 23 January 5:00-7:00 p.m. in South Kedzie 530.
1/12	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : Synopsis and Meditations 1–2 (i.e., §§12–34).	
1/17	—, Meditation 3 (i.e., §§34–52).	
1/19	—, Mersenne's Third Objection (§§124–25, pp. 72–73) with Descartes' Reply (§§140–42, pp. 82–4); Hobbes' Objection II (§§172–4) with Descartes' Reply (§§174–6); and Arnauld's "only remaining concern" (§214) with Descartes' Reply (§§245–7).	
1/24	Bring the Weston text to class, having read it through carefully; and, from LON-CAPA, bring RUBBER STAMPS and Guidelines for Written Work (on this syllabus). <b>Writing workshop: writing assignment 1 (WA1—Descartes) due; bring two copies to class for peer review (graded), final copy due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment (rtf, doc, or docx only).</b>	
1/26	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> : Introduction §§I–II (pp. 1–9), Translator's Preface (pp. 21–9), and E 1d1–1a7.	
1/31	—, E 1p1–1p36.	

2/2	—, E Ap.
2/7	No class today; I will be at Northwestern University today, giving a seminar.
2/9	—, E 2d1–2p13s.
2/14	Wrap-up of Spinoza. Bring Weston, RUBBER STAMPS, and Guidelines for Written Work (on this syllabus) to class. <b>WA2—Spinoza due; bring two copies to class for peer review (graded), final copy due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment (rtf, doc, or docx only).</b>
2/16	No class today; I will be at the American Philosophical Association meeting in Chicago.
2/21	Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> §§8–9.
2/23	Locke, <i>Essay</i> , II.i.1–8 (pp. 109–12), and 24–25 (pp. 120–21).
2/28	—, II.xxvii.1–29 (pp. 296–314). <b>WA3—Locke due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment (rtf, doc, or docx only).</b>
3/1	<b>In-class test:</b> Bring WA1 and WA2, perfected and typed <i>on a single sheet</i> ; in each case where you developed your thesis statement as part of a team or used someone else's idea with permission, <i>give credit</i> in a footnote. The test will have two parts: (1) a thesis statement selected at random for you to develop your argument; (2) short-answer questions about the <i>other</i> philosophies (Leibniz included, Locke excluded).
<b>HAPPY SPRING BREAK!</b>	
3/13	Berkeley, <i>Principles</i> , Introduction §§1–25.
3/15	—, Part I, §§1–84, 91, 97–99.
3/20	—, Part I, §§91, 97–99, 151–56. <b>WA4—Berkeley due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment. (rtf, doc, or docx only)</b>
3/22	Leibniz, <i>Monadology</i> 1–21. In-class quiz on monads.
3/27	—, 22–61.
3/29	—, 62–90. <b>WA5—Leibniz due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment (rtf, doc, or docx only).</b>
4/3	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> IV–VII.
4/5	—, <i>Dialogues</i> through VI.
4/10	—, VII–XII. <b>WA6—Hume due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment (rtf, doc, or docx only).</b>
4/12	Kant, <i>Grounding</i> , Preface and First Section [387–405].
4/17	—, Second Section [406–445].
4/19	—, Third Section [446–463].
4/24	—, <i>Grounding</i> , objections and replies. <b>WA7—Kant due by 11:59 p.m. by email attachment (rtf, doc, or docx only).</b>
4/26	Review for the final exam.

**Final Exam** (*Monday* 30 April 7:45-9:45 a.m. in the regular classroom): There will be two parts worth 50% each: (1) all 7 thesis statements, perfected and typed in advance on a single sheet, from which one thesis statement will be chosen at random (omitting the one on which the in-class test was written) on which you will compose a full argument; and (2) a set of short-answer questions about issues from throughout the entire semester, linking philosophers and their views on a wide variety of topics covered in class and in the readings.

**Evaluation:** Your grade in the course will have the following components:

sec. 001		sec. 002
—	6 tutorials	25%
15%	<i>ad hoc</i> assignments, in-class exercises, unannounced quizzes (drop 1)	} 75%
15%	in-class test	
40%	best 4 of 7 writing assignments	
30%	comprehensive final exam	
100%	TOTAL	100%

### Thesis statements

Learning to write a thesis statement that accurately communicates what it should takes thought and practice; and writing one implies having a thesis to begin with. There is detailed information on LON-CAPA on finding a topic to write about

but, for the time being, keep in mind the first rule of writing philosophy: know clearly in advance what you want to argue *for* or *against* and *why*. What do you support? What do you oppose? All your potential philosophical arguments in this course begin with thesis statements. A proper thesis statement is a single sentence in present tense that tells what you argue, and how or why, identifying the author, text, and passage(s) appropriately.

*On the in-class test and final exam*, you will write a complete philosophical *argument* that begins with exactly the thesis statement *you* have devised, followed by a development and defense of it. Each argument must have a second paragraph that defends a plausible objection or alternative to your thesis (or some aspect of it), enabling you, in a third paragraph, either to refine your original claim in light of the alternative or objection, or (less often) to defend your thesis against the alternative or objection. You may keep improving your statements right up to the date of the final exam; and you can get help with the other parts of your argument as soon as your thesis statement itself is error-free (see below). For each philosopher, I will provide a “stand-in” thesis for students to use if they don’t want to use their own.

## Getting Help

*Help from Weston:* The Weston text is *all about* writing arguments and several of the RUBBER STAMPS refer to Weston.

*Help from departmental tutors:* The tutors have been helpful to students in our survey courses; they are upper-division philosophy majors who are good at helping you to clarify your thinking so you can find a thesis; most have considerable experience writing thesis statements and developing sound arguments.

*Help from LON-CAPA:* There are LON-CAPA files and links to help you with the content of the readings for the course. Two files in the *Mechanics of the Course* folder may be helpful during the thinking and writing process: (1) RUBBER STAMPS is coded to help you improve your thesis statements when I return them with comments, but students in past classes have often said they wished they had looked through it *before* writing their first assignments. (2) *Writing Philosophy* is longer and has lots of pointers, including more examples and a sample paper, though the sample is written for sending to me as an attachment, not under exam conditions, so it has citations you would not use in an exam. You may also be interested in (3) Everything about Grades.

*Help from me.* When you have a proper thesis statement (not merely some thoughts toward one, for which office hours are available), you may send it as an e-mail *attachment* for feedback—with a limit of one e-mail per student per day (until 11:59 p.m. two days before the due-date—e.g., 11:59 p.m. Monday for something due any time on Wednesday). E-mails are answered in the order in which they arrive. Later, when your thesis statement is error-free and polished, you may *then* send your objection as an attachment; when the objection has been approved and is error-free, I am willing to read and make suggestions about a whole paper (*if* you send it to me as an attachment, up to a maximum of 400 words). That way, you can get substantial feedback before the exams.

## Observations, advice, and policies:

1. *I keep office hours* from long practice, warning you in advance if I anticipate some unusual commitment that will keep me away; but I *enjoy* my office hours when students visit, so please don’t hesitate to *drop in*. If the posted hours are inconvenient, please make an appointment with me by email.
2. *Do your own work cooperatively:* Do not submit for credit in this course any work completed for another course; and do not submit work that is not your own—ever. Be sure you understand this in relation to submitting thesis statements. You are strongly encouraged to study, discuss, and dispute with others everything we do in this course. Over the years, the students who performed best were those who met together outside of class and shared their ideas and written work with one another.
3. *Why there are no make-ups:* It is the student’s responsibility to find out whether *ad hoc* assignments were made during missed classes; in-class exercises cannot be made up because the circumstances cannot be reconfigured in a vacuum. There are no make-ups on the assignments because they can be sent by email attachment (in rtf, doc or docx) even when you are too ill to attend class; *almost anything is better than a zero*. However, if *serious illness or an emergency* prevents your turning in an assignment by the time the class meets, you have 48 hours from the time of your recovery to submit it for full credit (I do *not* want to see documentation of the cause of the late paper).
4. *Academic Freedom and Integrity.* Article 2.3.3 of the *Academic Freedom Report* states that “the student shares with

the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” The Department of Philosophy adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in *General Student Regulations* 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, and in the All-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades, included in *Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide*. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or in the course.

5. *Accommodation for Students with Disabilities*. Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodation. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY).

### Guidelines for Written Work

**Thesis Statements 1–7:** Each of your thesis statements is potentially a philosophical argument. One will become actual on the test, and another on the final exam, so each must be as much like the *beginning* of an actual philosophy paper as possible. Of the requirements below, applicable to philosophical arguments generally, each of your thesis statement assignments must conform to the first set (I). Before you begin, figure out what you support and what you oppose. Before you finish, be sure you know what and how you will argue, what objection or alternative you will offer, and how you will meet the objection or incorporate the alternative.

#### I. Philosophy writing assignments

*For help, try consulting:*

- (1) begin with a philosophical thesis statement that
  - (a) is word-processed in rtf, doc, or docx only;<sup>1</sup>
  - (b) is a single, grammatical sentence in formal prose;
  - (c) is clearly and concisely written in present tense;
  - (d) is on a *philosophically* controversial issue in or raised by the *text*;
  - (e) tells the reader *what* you argue,
  - (f) and *how* or *why*; and
  - (g) correctly identifies the author, text, and passage that it supports or opposes.<sup>2</sup>

RUBBER STAMPS  
ThS CFX

UG AWK  
RED REP WO  
Writing Philosophy

C? CFX

- (2) have your name at the top right
- (3) have no title
- (4) be 1- or 1.5-spaced to fit on one side of *one page*
- (5) have margins of 1 inch,
- (6) 12-point type,
- (7) a straight left, and a ragged right margin, and
- (8) follow the principles laid down in Weston 2009.



*sample paper in*  
Writing Philosophy

- (9) When submitted as an attachment, your name must be embedded in the *filename* you assign.

#### II. A Philosophy Argument (or Exam) Paper:

- (10) remains *text-based*, and cites the text appropriately,
- (11) uses supportive reasons and/or evidence,
- (12) supports the thesis as written,
- (13) states clearly and *defends* an objection or alternative,
- (14) replies to the objection or alternative,
- (15) has indented paragraphs, but does not skip lines between paragraphs, and
- (16) is exactly 375–400 words.<sup>3</sup>

REL C? CFX CX IQ  
Weston rules 5, 30, 31 REA EV DG  
Weston chapters II-VIII  
Weston rules 11, 32, 33, 37 OO OP

WO TL

<sup>1</sup> Comments are made in track-changes mode, which cannot always be read in other types of files.

<sup>2</sup> Under exam conditions, *only* your thesis statement will have a full and *exact* citation, and you'll have that with you (so there's no need to memorize it); however, you remain obliged to cite authors' names and works generally. The sample paper in Writing Philosophy is written as *if* it were being sent for advance review.

<sup>3</sup> This applies *only* when you have already perfected your thesis statement and your objection and want me to check your argument in advance of the exam. In the actual exam, no particular word limit applies, and words should *not* be counted.