

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
SPRING 2011
PHIL 214 HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY
TUES. & THURS. 17:00 – 18:15 NICELY 321

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Office Hours: 12:30 – 1:30, after class, and by appointment.

Course Description: This course serves as an introduction to the Modern period in philosophy (17th to 18th centuries) and fulfills a humanities requirement. We will focus on the epistemology and metaphysics (theories of knowledge and reality) of four key figures: Descartes, Hume, and Kant. We will also examine the politics of Church & State in John Locke, and arguments for God's existence and nature in David Hume. After a brief introduction to the main themes of this period, we will grapple intensely with its main philosophical concerns: the principles of knowledge through reason and experience, the nature of mind, matter, God, and causality. Along the way, we shall not neglect the period's chief ethical and political concerns. The main objective of the course will be to get you to understand what is at stake in this fascinating material, and to extend your capacity for philosophical thinking about everyday stuff. You can expect short but interesting and difficult readings; two short papers, some short quizzes on the readings, a longer final paper. If you are looking for an easy course, this is not it. Some background in philosophy is desirable, but not required.

This course mainly emphasizes philosophical thinking, which I take to mean the slow, careful, reflective reading and analysis of texts and concepts. Classes will be discussion-driven and centered on student written responses to the assigned readings. Lectures will be minimal. My goal is not only to introduce this vital period of philosophy and western cultural history, but to develop the habit of reading and thinking philosophically.

Essential: Read this syllabus carefully. By taking this class, you agree to understand and comply with this syllabus. By 'syllabus' I mean the following documents: (1) this document (2) Calculating and Estimating Your Course Grade; (3) Documentation Guidelines. To maintain organization and fairness, I must maintain the policies stated herein. If I make any changes to the syllabus, I will inform you. If you do not understand or agree with the policies, feel free to discuss it with me. I am always happy to talk about anything. But if it is in the syllabus, you can never say, "oh, I didn't know."

Required Texts: Texts are available at the AUB Bookstore. Other selections will be posted on Moodle as PDF files.

- Descartes, René. *Principles of Philosophy*, SMK Books (2009)
- Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ed. James Tully, Hackett 1983
- Hume, David. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hackett Pub Co; 2nd edition.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, Revised, James W. Ellington, Hackett 1977.
- Additional secondary source reading

Course Requirements:

- Two short midterm-ish papers: the first worth 20%, the second worth 25% of course grade
- Several quizzes, dispersed throughout the semester, 15%.
- Final research paper, 40% of course grade

Papers— Details in the coming week.

Alternative: Written Dialogue: This assignment is designed to promote the idea that philosophy is done best in active dialogue with others. At the 5th week of the semester, you will choose a class partner with whom you will begin written discussions over e-mail (at least once per week) pertaining to any issue raised by the readings, class discussions, or response papers. By the 10th week or so, you should decide on a specific topic on which you and your partner will together compose a 15 page written dialogue. You will refine your dialogic discussion during finals week and submit it on the Final Exam date. In its final, refined form, you and your partner will take opposing positions on a

specific issue. Each of you will demonstrate a strong understanding of the issue, recognition of its problems and complexities, logical development of the dialogue, and clear writing. The dialogue will be similar in form to the dialogues we will be reading all semester. Additional grading criteria are similar to those of the Response papers: engagement, thoughtfulness, clarity, and mechanics. Each person, however, is to do his or her own work and will be graded independently.

Attendance: Class attendance and participation are vital components of this course and will affect your grade both directly and indirectly. If you do not arrive by the time I take attendance, or if you leave the classroom for more than five minutes, you will be marked absent. If you are late, you must tell me after class to mark you present; however, 3 late markings = 1 absence. In addition, for every unexcused absence over three, your course points will be reduced by 3. If you accumulate more than eight unexcused absences, *you automatically fail the course*. I accept excuses *only for extreme circumstances that you must discuss with me in person and provide documentation*—no exceptions. Also, do not ask me if you missed anything in class the day you were absent—you did! Any important notices will be posted on Moodle. **Bonus for good attendance:** if you have no unexcused absences throughout the semester, 4 points will be added to your course grade; only one absence, 3 points; two absences, 2 points. **Note:** You will not be excused for missing class due to special sessions, make-ups, or scheduling conflicts in other classes. If a teacher in another class schedules you for anything that conflicts with this class time, you must tell that teacher that by order of the Dean of FAS he/she must schedule you at a time you can make it. In other words, no scheduling conflicts are allowed. But it is your responsibility to inform your professors of this policy.

Participation and class conduct: Participation is strongly encouraged. In order to participate well, you must read and do the Responses before class, and *always bring the assigned text to class*. Ask questions, make comments, and respond (respectfully) to other students. No question or comment is too silly or off-base. Everyone has questions, and surely others have the same questions. Occasionally, I may call on you unexpectedly. A philosophy class is one of the very few places where you will have the opportunity to express and examine opinions. But (1) you should expect to have your opinions challenged; (2) you are expected to listen to and to think about the opinions of your classmates. Therefore, **ONLY ONE PERSON MAY SPEAK AT A TIME, AND NO ONE MAY TALK IN THE BACKGROUND**. For breaching this rule, either you will be marked absent, or points will be taken off your final grade.

ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES MUST BE TURNED OFF and PUT AWAY COMPLETELY OUT OF SIGHT. I reserve the right to take your “Crackberry” until class is over. You will be marked absent or have points taken off your final grade for the following behaviors I consider disrespectful: Cell phones going off; text messaging in class; leaving the room to make or answer phone calls; playing games or reading non-class material during class. During class discussions, be respectful of me and others by listening to what is going on, rather than talking among yourselves. Also, as a courtesy to me, *do not make preparations to leave class until I say class is over*.

Grades: Criteria and Calculation: I want you to understand how your grades are assigned and calculated, so that you can know better what I expect and so that you can exercise more control over your own progress. There are two main parts to the grading process: Criteria and Calculation. Above, I have indicated the criteria I consider when grading your Response and Final papers. Additional grading criteria are posted on Moodle. For Calculation, see the document titled “Calculating and Estimating Your Grades.” This will show you completely explicitly how all calculations are made, so that you can do them yourself. But here is a brief explanation: All grades are recorded on Moodle’s “Gradebook,” (as well as on the assignments themselves), so you can view them as soon as I have put them up. To estimate your grade at any point in the semester, simply figure your average, and multiply it by the “weighted” amount; then sum the weighted amounts (see “Calculating and Estimating. . .”). Be sure to drop your lowest Response score when figuring your average.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the intentional or careless use of someone else’s writing or ideas as if they were your own. I consider it equivalent to stealing, lying, and cheating, and no amount of it will be tolerated in my class. Plagiarism is wrong for another reason: The general objective of college is to become a better writer, thinker, learner, and person. Plagiarizing severely undermines that objective and harms, not only you, but all students, professors, the university, and society in general. If you

plagiarize, you fail to learn how to write and think. You represent yourself as having skills and knowledge that you in fact do not have. Also, *I despise plagiarism and plagiarists*. I take your work and my work seriously. If you plagiarize, then my work is a pointless waste of time. I also hate wasting time tracking down bogus papers. I hate wasting time, because I wish to fill my life with meaning and accomplishments. Nor do I wish to have false relationships. When I read and respond to your work, I consider myself as engaged in a mutual relationship of trust, respect, truth, care, and progress. If I am reading your plagiarized work, then I am having a false relationship with you. I despise false relationships because they destroy the substance of life. **Therefore, if you plagiarize anything in this class, you will automatically fail the course and be reported to the Dean. It will go on your record and you could be dismissed from the university.** This includes any submitted work whatsoever (including essay drafts, single sentences and ideas, using dictionary definitions, encyclopedia entries, or any part thereof, paraphrasing, whether from books, internet, magazines, friends, wherever). You must also discourage plagiarism by not giving your paper to someone else to copy. Unfortunately, I catch plagiarizers *every semester*, and they are *very unhappy*. I am an experienced reader and can usually tell, simply by reading, when a student has plagiarized. I can tell because the writing does not match the assignment, because the text has an internet feel, or because it uses awkward wording in an attempt to disguise the source. I also use Google and other resources.

You can, of course, easily avoid plagiarism simply by *citing your sources properly*. If you are unsure of how to cite sources properly, check the documentation guidelines posted on Moodle, or consult the MLA guide in the library. But *you are responsible for any plagiarism*. If you are struggling with an assignment, or with your English, please come and talk to me. I am here to help.

Turnitin. Unfortunately, due to a few people's insidious attempts to plagiarize, I must force everyone to submit all assignments to Turnitin.com, *in addition* to submitting a hard copy to me. Failure to submit your work to Turnitin results in an automatic 0 for the assignment. Here is how it works: As their website says, "Every paper submitted is returned in the form of a Originality Report. Results are based on searches of billions of pages from current and archived instances of the Internet, millions of student papers submitted to Turnitin, and commercial databases of journal articles and periodicals" (http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_solutions.html). NOTE that Turnitin only submits a "similarity" report, not a plagiarism report. The similarity report shows the percentage of your text that is similar or identical to another text, and therefore helps me determine whether you have plagiarized. Some similarity is fine and to be expected. But identical similarity or paraphrased similarity is plagiarism. NOTE: Writing papers and responses does not consist of using a source and changing a few words here and there. Nor does paraphrasing a source consist of changing a few words here and there. It means making a compact summary of the main point of a paragraph, for purposes of clarification for the reader. All paraphrasing must be cited.

To use Turnitin, go to Moodle and click on "Turnitin" for the current assignment.

The following is from http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_plagiarism.html

What is Plagiarism?

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. See our section on [citation](#) for more information on how to cite sources properly.

What is citation?

A "citation" is the way you tell your readers that certain material in your work came from another source. It also gives your readers the information necessary to find that source again, including:

1. information about the author
2. the title of the work
3. the name and location of the company that published your copy of the source
4. the date your copy was published
5. the page numbers of the material you are borrowing

Why should I cite sources?

Giving credit to the original author by citing sources is the only way to use other people's work without plagiarizing. But there are a number of other reasons to cite sources:

1. citations are extremely helpful to anyone who wants to find out more about your ideas and where they came from.
2. not all sources are good or right -- your own ideas may often be more accurate or interesting than those of your sources. Proper citation will keep you from taking the rap for someone else's bad ideas.
3. citing sources shows the amount of research you've done.
4. citing sources strengthens your work by lending outside support to your ideas.

Doesn't citing sources make my work seem less original?

Not at all. On the contrary, citing sources actually helps your reader distinguish your ideas from those of your sources. This will actually emphasize the originality of your own work.

When do I need to cite?

Whenever you borrow words or ideas, you need to acknowledge their source. The following situations almost always require citation:

1. whenever you use quotes
2. whenever you paraphrase
3. whenever you use an idea that someone else has already expressed
4. whenever you make specific reference to the work of another
5. whenever someone else's work has been critical in developing your own ideas.
(end of website)

Citation Mechanics: See Instructions posted on Moodle

Moodle: Here you will find course material such as the syllabus, some course readings, citation mechanics, tips on writing papers, and the Response questions. When the questions are ready, I will alert you by e-mail (via the “News Forum”) so, check your e-mail regularly. You may also post your own thoughts on the News Forum for everyone to see.

The Writing Center:

If you have writing issues that need extra attention, please take advantage of the Writing Center. Their instructors help all students, from first-year to doctoral. Keep in mind that they will *not* proofread or copy-edit your work. Walk in or make an appointment: 9 am - 5 pm, Monday – Friday. West Hall 336; Ext. 3157; E-mail: writing@aub.edu.lb

See Course Schedule, next page--

Course Schedule: This schedule is subject to change, although any changes will be announced well in advance. To be prepared for class discussions, read the assigned material *prior* to class time. *Always* bring the assigned material to class. Bring whatever is assigned for Tuesday to Thursday's class as well.

Week & Theme	Tuesday	Thursday
1. Course Introduction	15/2 Prophet's birthday, No class	17/2 Syllabus, Main Themes
2. Science, Galileo Descartes	22/2 Galileo's "Two Properties."	24/2 Geometric Method in Spinoza, Descartes, Leibniz (readings on Moodle).
3. (March)	1/3 Descartes' <i>Principles of Philosophy</i> "Principles of Human Knowledge"	3/3 Part Two: "Principles of Material Things"
4.	8/3 Parts Three & Four: Principles of the Visible World and of the Earth	10/3 Descartes' wrap-up.
5. Locke Church & State	15/3 Locke's <i>Letter Concerning Toleration</i> Paper One Due	17/3 Finish Locke Quiz 1
6. Hume Natural religion	22/3 <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> Parts I-II	24/3
7.	29/3 Part III & IV Quiz 2	31/3
8. (April)	5/4 Parts V & VI & VII & VIII	7/4
9.	12/4 Parts IX, X, XI, & XII	14/4 Quiz 3
10. Hume's Empiricism & Critique of Causation	19/4 Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , "Of the Origin of Ideas" (pp. 17-22); "Of the Ideas of Association" (23-24) "Sceptical Doubts" (pp. 25-39) (Moo) Paper Two Due	21/4 "Sceptical Solution" (pp. 40-47) "Of the Idea of Necessary Connection" (pp. 60-79) Quiz 4 Easter Vacation No class
11. Kant metaphysics & epistemology	26/4 <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> : Introduction, Preface & Preamble	28/4
12. (May)	3/5 "First Part of the Main Transcendental Question"	5/5 Quiz 5
13.	10/5 "Second Part . . ."	12/5
14.	17/5 "Third Part . . ."	19/5
15.	24/5 Conclusion and Solution Quiz 6	26/5 LAST CLASS
16. (June) FINALS TBA	31/5 Final paper due?	2/6
17.	7/6	9/6
18.	13/June, official end of semester	