

# Introduction to Modern Philosophy

01:730:205-001

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## Syllabus (v1)

§0: Table of Contents	(1)
§1: Basic Info	(1)
§2: Policies	(3)
§3: Assignments and Assessment	(6)
§4: Course Calendar	(7)
§5: Resources	(9)

## Basic Info

### DETAILS

- Course Format: Synchronous Online
  - Monday/Wednesday, 1:10-2:30PM
  - Platform: WebEx
    - Link: <https://rutgers.webex.com/meet/rjf164>
- Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-3:00 and weekly by appointment
  - If you plan to come to Tuesday office hours, you must email me beforehand to establish a particular time
- Course Website: [canvas.rutgers.edu](https://canvas.rutgers.edu)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The 17th and 18th centuries represent a sea-change in the history of Western philosophy. In this course we will look at key philosophical texts from the period, examining the problems they raise and the solutions they offer on issues like the existence of God, the nature of the material world, and animal minds. We will examine these texts both in dialogue with each other and with our contemporary ways of thinking. For this course we will be reading sizable selections from these authors' original texts and coming to grips with their ideas on their own terms. Grades will be primarily assigned on the basis of written work, including general reflections and argument analyses.

## **LEARNING GOALS**

This course has several goals:

- Departmental learning goals met by this course:
  - Develop the ability to accurately and fairly present others' views
  - Improve your analytical reading and writing skills
  - Improve your ability to analyze, evaluate, and construct arguments
- Other learning goals for this course:
  - Introduce you to classic texts and questions in the history of Western philosophy
  - Cultivate your own thinking about central problems in philosophy, especially as those issues bear on your own life
  - Develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- All course readings will be made available through Canvas.

## **CLASS FORMAT**

- We will have one synchronous and one asynchronous 'session' per week
- You will be assigned to the 'Monday' group or the 'Wednesday' group
- Each of these will meet on WebEx during the regularly scheduled class time (Monday/Wednesday, 1:10-2:30PM)
- You are required (and expected) to attend your session only

- Recordings from these sessions will be shared only in extenuating circumstances
- Each week, an hour-long 'Reading Video' covering the *next* week's reading will become available on by noon on Wednesday
  - So, for example, on Wednesday, 03 Feb (during Week #3), the video covering the reading for Week #4 will become available
  - You are expected to watch that video before your class meeting the subsequent week
- Your other activities for each week (forum question, forum response, quiz) will have deadlines based on which day group you are in
  - Quizzes and the forum question must be submitted before your class session, the forum response by the end of the subsequent day
    - i.e., if you're in the Monday session, your forum question (about the material to be covered on Monday) and quiz for the week is due Monday before noon, and your forum response must be done by the end of the day Tuesday
- We'll meet all-together on the first and last days of class (Wednesday, January 20th, and Monday, May 3rd)

## Policies

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

- You must uphold standards of academic integrity
  - Plagiarism (of words or ideas) is unacceptable
  - Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in earning 0% on the offending assignment, and potentially automatic failure of the course
- Familiarize yourself with what plagiarism and academic dishonesty are, and Rutgers's policies:
  - <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>
  - [https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid\\_plagiarism](https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism)
  - <https://wp.rutgers.edu/academics/undergraduate/plagiarism>

### PERSONAL CONDUCT

- You are responsible for treating your classmates with courtesy and respect
  - At a minimum, this means respecting their time and effort by putting in time and effort yourself
  - Just as your classmates owe you careful attention and engagement, you owe those things to your classmates as well

- Be mindful of how topics under discussion may impact different members of the class differently
- This course adheres to the Philosophy Departments policy on norms of discourse: <https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/about-us/discourse>

## **COURSE PARTICIPATION**

- Students are expected to participate regularly in course discussions
  - Participation also facilitates and maintains the feeling of shared engagement with course material
  - Having recourse to the intuitions, brainpower and hard work of your classmates will improve your learning (and *vice versa*)
- In a synchronous, online class, participation means:
  - **Participating verbally and on-camera** (when possible)
  - **Using the chat-box** when appropriate (contributing resources, seconding questions, *etc.*)
  - **Not stepping away** for extended periods
  - **Actively giving feedback**, especially when solicited
- In order to fully participate in this class, you must have and use:
  - A **webcam**
  - A pair of **headphones**/earbuds
    - Headphones really are quite important: using them prevents audio feedback and other issues
  - A **microphone**
  - A **stable internet connection**
  - A (relatively) **quiet space**
    - And the ability to mute yourself when not speaking

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

- Students needing accommodations should follow the procedures available at <https://ods.rutgers.edu>

## **GRADES**

### **LATE WORK**

- There are three types of assignment in this course
  - **Short Papers** will be assessed a -3% penalty per day late, up to ten days late, at which point the penalty stops accruing.
    - (After 10 days, a paper can earn at most 70%.)

- **Forum Activities** may be completed late, but will be assessed at 1/2 credit, up to one week later. After one week, they cannot be completed for credit.
- **Quizzes** cannot be completed late, though under extenuating circumstances, they may be excused

### **EXTENSIONS**

- If you need an extension for a paper, email me with a brief description of your situation
  - If I approve an extension, we will work out an appropriate timeline
- Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the paper is due
- There are many very good reasons for extensions: illness, illness in the family, unexpected child care responsibilities, *etc.*
  - Having too much work for other courses is *not* a good reason to request an extension
  - Extension requests citing this reason will not be granted

### **ANONYMOUS GRADING**

- The papers for this course will be graded anonymously
- Papers submitted through Canvas should not have your name in the text or the filename
- Failure to properly anonymize your submission will result in a -10% penalty to the grade for the paper

### **GRADE APPEALS**

- If you believe your work deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration.
  - Submit this request within one week but no sooner than one day after your work is returned to you.
- Your written request must explain why you believe the work deserves a different grade.
- Please note that if a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

### **GRADE SCALE**

- Letter grades will be awarded based on percentage credit earned, according to the following scale:

<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>A</b>
<60%	60 - 69.49%	69.5 - 74.49%	74.5 - 79.49%	79.5 - 84.49%	84.5 - 89.49%	>89.5%

### **CHANGES**

- I may need to change any part of this syllabus at any time

- A new, numbered version of the syllabus will be posted to Canvas
- Changes will be announced and explained in course correspondence

## Assignments and Assessment

### MISREADING PAPERS - BEST 3 X 25% EA. - 75% TOTAL

- A 1000-1500 word paper wherein you will explain why some 'obvious' or 'plain' reading of a text is incorrect
- You will reproduce a passage, give a plausible reading of it, and then, by way of an argument deploying close reading and background about the text/author, convince your reader that a different reading is actually correct
- You will thus argue for a new or different understanding based on your close reading
- Each should be turned in within one week of our discussion of the text you're writing about
  - That is, if you're writing about, e.g., Spinoza's "Letter to Oldenburg," which we'll discuss in Week #5 (Feb 15 and 17), you must turn in your paper in by the end of the following week, Week #6 (that is, by 11:59PM Wednesday, Feb 24th)
- You *must* write one paper in at least *three different* sections of the course (Interactionism, Personal Identity, Externality, Animals)
  - You *can* write one in all four of those sections
  - The best three will count for your final grade
- More information about these papers and a detailed rubric will be distributed shortly

### FORUM QUESTIONS/RESPONSES - 13 X 1% EA. - 13% TOTAL

- Each week will have a forum associated with it
- By one hour before your weekly synchronous class meeting, you should post a reading response question to that week's forum
  - In this post, you will ask a question about the reading for the upcoming class meeting
  - You should spend 200 or so words explaining *why* the question is a question, that is, explaining what you take the author to have said that has raised this question for you

- This will involve explaining a bit of what you take the author to be arguing for, and what in the text makes you think they are arguing that
- Before the end of the next day after your class meeting, you should answer one of your classmate's questions
  - (That is if you're in the Weds. synchronous class, you should answer one of your classmate's questions by the end of the day Thurs.)
- In a post of 100-200 words, answer their question and explain what import the answer has for understanding the author more generally

### **WEEKLY QUIZZES - 12 X 1% EA. - 12% TOTAL**

- There will be 13 weekly quizzes to be completed after watching the 'Reading' video and *before* your class session (for weeks #2-#14)
- The best 12 of these will count for your final grade

## **Course Calendar**

### **§0: INTRODUCTIONS**

#### ***Week #1 (Jan 20th)***

Concepción, "Reading as a Philosopher"  
Bailey, "But How Do I Participate?"

### **§1: INTERACTIONISM**

#### ***Week #2 (Jan 25, 27)***

Descartes, *Meditations* 1, 2

#### ***Week #3 (Feb 01, 03)***

Elizabeth of Bohemia and Descartes, *Correspondence* through 01 July 1643

#### ***Week #4 (Feb 8, 10)***

Descartes, *Passions of the Soul* (excerpts)

#### ***Week #5 (Feb 15, 17)***

Spinoza, Letter to Oldenburg ("The Worm in the Blood"), *Short Treatise* 2nd Appendix ("On the Human Soul"), *Ethics* I.p14-I.p15s  
Malebranche, *Search After Truth* 6-3-2

**Week #6 (Feb 22, 24)**

Leibniz, "Monadology"

**§2: PERSONAL IDENTITY**

**Week #7 (Mar 01, 03)**

Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding* II.i.1-13, 20-25; II.xxvii

**Week #8 (Mar 08, 10)**

Cockburn, *Defense...* (excerpts)

Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.6.1-4

**Week #9 (Mar 22, 24)**

Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.6 (all)

Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers* 3.4

**§3: EXTERNALITY**

**Week #10 (Mar 29, 31)**

Molyneux, "The Molyneux Problem"

Locke, *Essay* II.ix

Leibniz, *New Essays concerning Human Understanding* II.ix

**Week #11 (Apr 05, 07)**

Berkeley, *New Theory of Vision* XL-L

Smith, "Of the External Senses," ms.43-74

**Week #12 (Apr 12, 14)**

Hume, *Treatise* 1.2.6

Shepherd, *Academic or Skeptical Philosophy* ch.I-II (excerpt)

**§4: ANIMALS**

**Week #13 (Apr 19, 21)**

Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond* (excerpt)

Descartes, *Discourse on Method* V (excerpt)

**Week #14 (Apr 26, 28)**

Locke, *Essay* II.ix-xi



Leibniz, *New Essays* II.ix-xi

## **Week #15 (May 03)**

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* 9

# Resources

## **ACADEMIC RESOURCES**

### **DISABILITY SERVICES (ODS)**

<https://ods.rutgers.edu>

(848) 445-6800

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

### **ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

<https://newbrunswick.rutgers.edu/academics/academic-support>

This site has links to help you find your academic advising office, understand degree requirements and your progress toward them, and links to services to help you succeed, like:

- Writing Centers (<https://wp.rutgers.edu/writingcenters/writingcenters>)
- Learning Centers (<https://rlc.rutgers.edu>)
- Program in American Language Studies, for non-native English speakers (<https://pals.rutgers.edu>)
- RU1st, for first-generation, underrepresented, and low-income students (<https://diversity.rutgers.edu/ru1st>)

### **LIBRARY TUTORIALS**

<https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/tutorials>

The library has a number of helpful tutorials to get you started with searching, understanding the difference between scholarly and popular literature, and avoiding plagiarism. Check them out!

## **STUDENT-WELLNESS SERVICES**

### **COUNSELING, ADAP & PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES (CAPS)**

*<http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu/>  
(848) 932-7884*

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **VIOLENCE PREVENTION & VICTIM ASSISTANCE (VPVA)**

*<http://vpva.rutgers.edu>  
(848) 932-1181*

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **SCARLET LISTENERS**

*<http://www.scarletlisteners.com>  
(732) 247-5555*

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

### **“JUST IN CASE” WEB APP**

*<http://codu.co/cee05e>*

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.