

Descartes, Locke, and the 17th Century

01:730:307-001

Dr. Richard Fry

richard.fry@rutgers.edu

Syllabus (v1)

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Basic Info

DETAILS

- **Course Format:** In person
 - Monday/Wednesday, 5:00-6:20PM
 - Room: Tillett 264 (Livingston)
- **Office Hours:** virtual, Tuesday, 2:00-3:00
 - URL: <https://rutgers.webex.com/meet/rjf164>
 - *If you plan to come to Tuesday office hours, you must email me at richard.fry@rutgers.edu beforehand to coordinate a particular time*
 - Also available in person and virtually by appointment
 - In Person: College Ave, Miller 107
- **Course Website:** <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The 17th century represents a sea-change in the history of Western thought. Philosophers like Hobbes and Descartes presented both new and adapted ways of thinking about the human understanding and what lies within its grasp. Philosophers like Cavendish, Leibniz, and Locke offered rebuttals and refinements of those views, expanding the scope of solutions—and problems—under consideration. In this course we will look at key philosophical texts from the period, examining both the problems raised and the solutions offered. We will examine these texts singly and in dialogue with one another. This course is reading-intensive and emphasizes philosophical writing, so you will be expected to write regularly and well.

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

- Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch, ISBN: 978-0521358125
- Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Winkler, ISBN: 978-0872202160
- Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. Remnant and Bennett, ISBN: 978-0521576604
- Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. Ariew and Garber, ISBN: 978-0872200623
- Other course readings will be made available through Canvas.

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://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*)

ACCOMMODATIONS

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

GRADES

LATE WORK

- Written work 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 piece of written work can earn at most 70%.)

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:

F	D	C	C+	B	B+	A
<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

MAJOR PAPERS - 2 X 29% EA. - 58% TOTAL

- A 1500-2000 word paper wherein you will (1) explain some philosophical or textual difficulty with the text, (2) argue for a solution, and then (3) defend that solution against an alternative or an objection
- These will be due on October 22nd and at the end of the semester
- More information about these papers and a detailed rubric will be distributed shortly

WEEKLY QUESTIONS - 13 X 1% EA. - ONE DROPPED - 12% TOTAL

- After class each Wednesday, you'll submit a lingering question you have about that week's material through Canvas
- I'll use that question to structure the recap at the beginning of the subsequent week
- There will be 13 opportunities, but only 12 will count for your final grade
 - (Your worst score will be dropped)

SEGMENT REFLECTIONS - 5 X 6% EA. - 30% TOTAL

- Answer and reflect on one of the published questions from the previous segment of the course
- These will be due on:
 - 27 Sep (covering 08-22 Sept)
 - 25 Oct (covering 27 Sep-18 Oct)
 - 08 Nov (covering 20 Oct-03 Nov)
 - 29 Nov (covering 08 Nov-22 Nov)
 - 13 Dec (covering 29 Nov-08 Dec)
- More information on this assignment will be available shortly

Course Calendar

§0: INTRODUCTIONS

September 1st - Welcome to the Course

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

§1: DESCARTES AND RESPONSES

September 8th - 22nd: Descartes's Meditations

- 08 Sep - Descartes, *Meditations* 1
- 13 Sep - Descartes, *Meditations* 2
- 15 Sep - Descartes, *Meditations* 3
- 20 Sep - Descartes, *Meditations* 4 & 5
- 22 Sep - Descartes, *Meditations* 6

September 27th - October 18th: Responses and Alternatives

- 27 Sep - Elizabeth of Bohemia, Descartes, Correspondence (to 01 July 1643)
- 29 Sep - Hobbes, Descartes, *Meditations*: Objections and Replies III (excerpt)
- 04 Oct - Gassendi, Descartes, *Meditations*: Objections and Replies V (excerpt)
- 06 Oct - Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters* (excerpt)
- 11 Oct - Leibniz, *New Essays*, I.i (Leibniz's description of his system, ~p.70-73)
Leibniz, "Monadology" through §17
- 13 Oct - Leibniz, "Monadology" through §49
- 18 Oct - Leibniz, "Monadology" through §90

§2: WOMEN IN SOCIETY

October 20th - November 3rd: 'The Woman Question'

- 20 Oct - de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* (selections)

Paper #1 due 22 Oct

- 25 Oct - Gournay, "The Equality of Men and Women"
- 27 Oct - Tarabotti, *Paternal Tyranny* (selections)
- 01 Nov - Suchon, "On the Celibate Life Freely Chosen"
- 03 Nov - Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (selections)

§3: EMPIRICISM AND RESPONSES

November 8th - 22nd: Ideas

- 08 Nov - Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* I.ii.1-16, 24-28
- 10 Nov - Locke, *Essay* I.iv.1-19, 21-25
- 15 Nov - Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* I.ii.1-10
(~p.70-80); I.iii all (~p.101-108)

- 17 Nov - Locke, *Essay* II.i.1-9
Leibniz, *New Essays* II.i.1-2 (p.109-111)
22 Nov - Locke, *Essay* II.viii,
Leibniz, *New Essays* II.viii (~p.130-133)

November 29th - December 8th: Judgement, Substances, Words

- 29 Nov - Locke, *Essay* II.ix
Leibniz, *New Essays* II.ix (~p.134-139)
01 Dec - Locke, *Essay* II.xxiii.1-12, 14
Leibniz, *New Essays* II.xxiii.1-12 (~p.217-219)
06 Dec - Locke, *Essay* II.xi.8-9; III.i-iii
08 Dec - Leibniz, *New Essays* III.i-iii (~p.273-296)

§0: FAREWELLS

December 13th - Farewell to the Course

13 Dec - *no new reading*

Paper #2 due at the time scheduled for the final exam

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.