

# Introduction to Modern Philosophy

## Syllabus (v1)

### Course Info

**Course Name & Number:** Introduction to Modern Philosophy (01:730:205)

**Instructor:** Richard Fry, richard.fry@rutgers.edu

**Meeting Time:** M/W, 1:10-2:30, Frelinghuysen Hall, Rm. B2 (College Ave.)

**Office Hours:** M/W 4:20-5:20PM, Miller Hall 108 (College Ave), and by appointment

**Course Website:** available through <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.
  - You are required to bring these readings to class.

# Policies

## Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

- You are expected and required to uphold standards of academic honesty.
- Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable.
- Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.
- Familiarize yourself plagiarism is and academic dishonesty 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 respect and courtesy.
  - Treating your classmates with respect entails arriving on time and being prepared.
  - Being prepared means reading before class and bringing the assigned material to class
    - Laptops/tablets will only be permitted when readings are distributed electronically.
  - Being prepared is evidenced by participating actively—both asking and answering questions—in discussion.
- Students are expected to attend all classes
  - If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. This system will automatically email me.
- *You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.*
  - This course adheres to the Philosophy Department's policy on norms of discourse, available at <https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/about-us/discourse>

## Accommodations

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

## Grades

- **LATE WORK:** For each 24 hours late after the due date for a piece of written work is submitted, 3% will be subtracted from whatever grade it earns.
  - All work more than a week late will receive an F.
- **EXTENSIONS:** If you need an extension, email me with a brief description of your situation.
  - If I approve an extension, we will work out an appropriate timeframe.
  - Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.
- **ANONYMOUS GRADING:** The papers for this course will be graded anonymously.

- Work 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 your grade.
- **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 work is returned.
  - 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.

## Changes

- I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time.
- Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Canvas.

# Assignments and Assessment

*More details about these assignments will be distributed online and in class throughout the semester.*

## Weekly Reading Engagements - 20% total

- Each week you will turn in a short (200-400 word) reflection paper
- These papers will have three, numbered parts:
  - (1) Reconstructing an argument based on what we discussed in class the previous class period (100-200 words)
  - (2) Addressing the readings we will be talking about later that day (100-200 words)
  - (3) Asking an explicit question about the material
- Your worst two attempts will not count toward your final grade
- Upload your reflection as a .doc, .docx, .pdf or .rtf file to Canvas **before 10:00AM each Wednesday**, starting January 29th

## Midterm and Final Exam - 15% ea. - 30% total

- Two take-home essay and short-answer exams
- Each exam will ask you to report on views and arguments we have examined
- Exams will be distributed several days before they are due
- Exams will be due via Canvas Monday, **March 2nd** and Saturday, **April 25th**

## Short Papers - 3x - 50% total

- Three short (1000-1500 word) writing assignments asking you to explain arguments in depth and consider objections
- These papers build on the skills from the reading engagement papers and help you develop your philosophical writing skills, enhancing your ability to interpret and engage with texts
- The best of these papers will count for 20% of your final grade, the other two for 15% each
- These papers are due **February 19th, March 25th, and May 4th**

# Calendar with Topics and Readings

You are expected to read this material before the class-day it is listed under.

## 0: Introductions and History

22 Jan - Intro to the Course

*No reading*

## 1: Interactionism

27 Jan - Skepticism - Descartes

*Meditations 1*

29 Jan - Cogito - Descartes

*Meditations 2*

02 Feb - Objection - Elizabeth of Bohemia

*Correspondence with Descartes* through 01 July 1643

05 Feb - Reformulation - Descartes

*Passions of the Soul*, pt.1

10 Feb - Monism - Spinoza

Letter to Oldenburg ("The Worm in the Blood")  
*Short Treatise*, 2nd App. ("On the Human Soul")  
*Ethics* I.p14-l.p15s

12 Feb - Idealism - Malebranche

*Search After Truth* 3-2-6 and 6-3-2

17 Feb - Monads - Leibniz

"Monadology"

## 2: Personal Identity

19 Feb - Basics on Empiricism - Locke

*Essay* I.ii

**Short Paper #1 due before 11:59PM Feb. 19th**

24 Feb - Inventing Personal Identity - Locke

*Essay* II.xxvii

## 2: Personal Identity (cont.)

26 Feb - Defending Locke - Cockburn

*Defense...* (selections)

02 Mar - Basics of Humean Empiricism - Hume

*Treatise* 1.1

**Exam #1 due before 11:59PM Mar. 2nd**

04 Mar - Against the Self - Hume

*Treatise* 1.4.6.1-4

06 Mar - Against Identity - Hume

*Treatise* 1.4.6 (all)

11 Mar - Common Sense - Reid

*Essays on the Intellectual Powers* 3.4

## 3: Externality and Molyneux

23 Mar - Molyneux's Problem - various

Molyneux, "The Molyneux Problem"  
Locke, *Essay* II.ix

25 Mar - Response to Locke - Leibniz

*New Essays* II.ix

**Short Paper #2 due before 11:59PM Mar. 25th**

30 Mar - Vision - Berkeley

*New Theory of Vision* XL-L

01 Apr - Natural Appearances - Smith

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

06 Apr - Against Externality, Generally - Hume

*Treatise* 1.2.6

08 Apr - Externality Vindicated - Shepherd

*Academic or Sceptical Philosophy* Ch.I-II (excerpt)

## 4: Animals

### 13 Apr - Credulity - Montaigne

*Apology for Raymond Sebond* (excerpt)

### 15 Apr - Skepticism - Descartes

*Discourse V* (excerpt)

### 20 Apr - Conflict - Bayle

*Dictionary*, 'Rorarius' (excerpts)

### 22 Apr - Limits and Abstraction - Locke

*Essay II.ix-xi*

### **Exam #2 due before 11:59PM April 25th**

### 27 Apr - Limits and 'Reason' - Leibniz

*New Essays II.ix-xi*

### 29 Apr - Learning and Reasoning - Hume

*Enquiry IX*

## 5: Wrap Up

### 04 May - Wrap Up

*no new reading*

### **Short Paper #3 due before 11:59PM May 4th**

# Resources

## Philosophical Resources

### Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu>

### Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.iep.utm.edu>

### Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper

<http://goo.gl/iDzgFb>

## Academic Resources

### Disability Services (ODS)

<https://ods.rutgers.edu>

(848) 445-6800

Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway

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

17 Senior Street, New Brunswick

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

3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick

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.