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Course Description

Early modern philosophy spans roughly from 1600-1800, and during this period philosophy underwent major conceptual innovations in metaphysics, epistemology, and political thought. Such philosophical changes rode atop religious and political upheavals that threatened the authority of old institutions as well as scientific advancements that changed our understanding of humanity's place in nature. In this course we will identify and assess arguments as well as puzzle through broader theoretical motivations for some of the key views of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Hobbes. Work for the course will be in the form of writing assignments and class participation.

Course Goals

- Have a familiarity with some of the ideas of influential early modern thinkers
- Practice identifying and assessing arguments for those ideas
- Practice presenting and discussing those ideas in small group and large group settings
- Become a better writer

Course Requirements

- Class attendance and participation (25% of grade)
- Reading responses (25% of grade)
- Three short papers, 2-3 pages (10% of grade each)
- A final paper, 4-5 pages (20% of grade)
- No tests or final exam

Attendance and Participation

The best way to learn philosophy is to do philosophy, so you'll do philosophy. This will not be a lecture course. Classes will focus on small group discussions as well as instructor guided discussion amongst the whole class. You cannot participate positively unless you have done the reading and thought about it. You will be graded on how often you participate and how helpful your contributions are. This doesn't mean you need to talk constantly – it's often helpful to let others have conversational space. Basically, just make an effort.

Laptops and phones will not be allowed.

Reading Responses

The readings will not be long, but you'll need to carefully work through them multiple times.

For each class, you'll be required to submit one response to a prompt and one original response. The original response can be an interpretative question about the reading or an assessment of a claim or argument. Each response should be 1-3 paragraphs, and they should total half a page to a page. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis, but putting some effort into these will help you in class discussion. They'll be due when you show up to class.

Papers

You'll be asked to write three short papers and one long paper. Papers must be submitted blinded – they should not contain your name and should be double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font. The paper should be submitted as a PDF, and as a separate PDF document you should submit a title page where you include your name and the title of your paper. The short papers will focus on reconstructing arguments from a text, while the latter will ask you to both reconstruct an argument as well as to provide your own assessment of it.

Unless there is some serious circumstance, no extensions will be granted. Drafts of papers will be due on the day of the essay workshop, and the final versions will be due a few class sessions after. Drafts will not be graded, but they must be turned in on time or it will result in a failing grade for the paper. Final versions will also not be accepted if they are late.

Other resources

Don't cheat: You should be familiar with Rutgers' policy on academic integrity, which can be found at academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy

Accommodations: If you need special accommodations, have the Office of Disability Services contact me. Their office can be found at ods.rutgers.edu

Seek help: If you are struggling, please seek out help from CAPS at health.rutgers.edu.

Readings

All readings except one are open source and available on Jonathan Bennett's excellent site: earlymoderntexts.com. I'll electronically distribute the one that's not on this site.

Schedule

This schedule is tentative and open for revision. We might move through texts faster than expected or slower than expected depending on how the discussions go.

1. 9/4/2018 – Introduction

The earliest early modern – Descartes

2. 9/7/2018 – Descartes *Meditations* 1
3. 9/11/2018 – Descartes *Meditations* 2
4. 9/14/2018 – Descartes *Meditations* 3
5. 9/18/2018 – Descartes *Meditations* 4
6. 9/21/2018 – Descartes *Meditations* 5
7. 9/25/2018 – Descartes *Meditations* 6
8. 9/28/2018 – 3rd set of objections from Hobbes and Descartes' replies; Elisabeth's objections in Letters 6.v.1643, 21.v.1643, 10.vi.1643, 28.vi.1643; Essay 1 Distributed
9. 10/2/2018 – Essay 1 workshop

Empiricism – Locke and Hume

10. 10/5/2018 – Locke *Essay*, Bk. 1 ch. 2, Bk. 2, chs. 1-3, 5-7; Essay 1 Due
11. 10/9/2018 – Locke *Essay* Bk. 2 ch. 23 secs. 1-22, Bk. 2 ch. 31, Bk. 3 ch.3 secs. 15-16
12. 10/16/2018 – Locke *Essay* Bk. 2 ch. 27; Essay 1 due
13. 10/19/2018 – Hume *Treatise* Bk. 1 part 4 ch. 6
14. 10/23/2018 – Hume, *Enquiry* secs. 4, 5, 7; Essay 2 distributed
15. 10/30/2018 – Essay 2 workshop

Rationalism – Spinoza

16. 11/2/2018 – Spinoza, *Ethics* Part 1, Definitions, Axioms, Props. 1-20; Essay 2 due
17. 11/9/2018 – Spinoza, *Ethics* Part 1, Propositions 21-36, Appendix
18. 11/13/2018 – Spinoza, *Ethics* Part 2, Definitions, Axioms, Props. 1-13
19. 11/16/2018 – Spinoza, *Ethics* Part 3, Preface, Props. 1-10; Essay 3 distributed
20. 11/21/2018 – Essay 3 workshop

Political Philosophy – Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza

21. 11/27/2018 – Hobbes *Leviathan* Part 1 chs. 13-15, Part 2 chs. 17, 18, and 21; Essay 3 Due
22. 11/30/2018 – Locke *Second Treatise* chs. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9
23. 12/4/2018 – Locke *Second Treatise* chs. 5, 18, 19
24. 12/7/2018 – Spinoza *Theological-Political Treatise* ch. 16 (up to endnote on p. 128), *Political Treatise* chs. 1-4; Final Essay distributed
25. 12/11/2018 – Final Essay workshop