

# History of Epistemology

## Syllabus (v1)

### Course Info

**Course Name & Number:** History of Epistemology (01:730:411)

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

**Meeting Time:** T/R, 5:35-6:55, Hickman Hall, Rm. 127 (Cook/Douglass)

**Office Hours:** T/R 2:00-3:00, 7:30-8:30PM, *location tbd.*

**Course Website:** available through <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>

### Course Description

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries represent a sea-change in the history of Western philosophy. We will look at key texts from British philosophy in that period, examining the epistemological issues they raise and the solutions they offer, particularly with regard to the mind. There is a puzzle here: the mind is how we think about the world, so if natural philosophy is to be empirical, then we must use the very tool we wish to use to examine the world to examine itself. We'll look at how Locke, Berkeley and Hume did—or didn't—address this puzzle.

### 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

- Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (Essay), ed. Nidditch
- Berkeley, *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, (Principles), ed. Winkler
- Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, (Dialogues), ed. Adams
- Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, (Treatise) ed. Norton & Norton
- Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (EHU) ed. Beauchamp

# 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.

## Reading Engagement (15%)

- A 200-300 word summary of a *single* argument from the texts assigned for that meeting
- Should also include a single, clear question about the course content for the day
- Due each Tuesday by 12:00PM (noon), starting September 10th
- You will determine which argument to address and how to best capture it
- Your worst two attempts will not count toward your final grade

## Quizzes (10%)

- Quizzes will be random and unannounced
- Each quiz will have 10 multiple choice or (very) short answer questions
  - Five questions will cover the material from the previous class
  - Five will cover the material for the class session the quiz is given
- Quizzes will be open note, open book
- There will be between two and ten of these quizzes

## Short Papers (65%)

- Three short (1200-1500 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 two of these will count for 25% of your final grade, the other for 15%
- These papers are due October 12th, November 4th, and December 20th

## Participation and Comportment (10%)

- This grade includes reading and bringing assigned material, arriving on time, and participating
- You can also participate by coming to office hours or emailing me
- Not coming to class, sleeping, not bringing assigned readings, arriving late, acting disrespectfully to me or your peers (by, e.g., having your phone out), &c., will lose you points

# Calendar with Topics and Readings

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

## 1: Introductions and History

### 03 Sep - Intro to the Course

Scruton - History of Philosophy

### 05 Sep - History, Bacon, Hobbes

Bacon, *New Organon* (§1-59)

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch.1-5, 7

### 10 Sept - Descartes

Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, pt.1

## 2: Locke

### 12 Sep - Against Innate Ideas

*Essay* I.ii, I.iv

### 17 Sep - Simple Ideas

*Essay* II.i-viii

### 19 Sep - Powers of Mind

*Essay* II.ix-xi

### 24 Sep - Complex Ideas, Idea of Space

*Essay* II.xii-xiii

### 26 Sep - Idea of Duration

*Essay* II.xiv-xv

### 01 Oct - Ideas of Infinity, Thinking, Power

*Essay* II.xvi-xix, xxi.1-10

### 03 Oct - Ideas of Substance, Relation, Cause/Effect

*Essay* II.xxii, xxiii.1-17, xxv-xxvi

### 08 Oct - Clear and Distinct, Adequate/Inadequate

*Essay* II.xxix-xxxi

### 10 Oct - True/False, Association of Ideas

*Essay* II.xxxii-xxxiii

**(Short Paper #1 due before 11:59PM Oct. 12th)**

## 3: Berkeley

### 15 Oct - Against Abstract Ideas

*Principles* Introduction §1-25

### 17 Oct - Against Abstract Ideas (continued)

*Principles* Introduction §1-25

### 22 Oct - The Master Argument

*Principles* I §1-33

Optional: *Three Dialogues* p.38-46

### 24 Oct - Objections

*Principles* I §34-84

### 29 Oct - Immaterialism as Common Sense

*Principles* I §85-102

*Three Dialogues* p.69-73

### 31 Oct - Notions of Spirits and God

*Principles* I §135-150

*Three Dialogues* p.64-67

**(Short Paper #2 due before 11:59PM Nov 4th)**

## 4: Hume

### 05 Nov - Science of Humankind, the nature of ideas

*Treatise of Human Nature* Intro, 1.1, 1.3.5.3

*Enquiry* 2, 3.1-3

### 07 Nov - Ideas of Space and Time

*Treatise* 1.2, focusing on 1.2.3-4

### 12 Nov - Ideas of Space and Time (continued)

*Treatise* 1.2, focusing on 1.2.5-6

### 14 Nov - Reason and Belief

*Treatise* 1.3.1-5

*Enquiry* 4.1-5

Optional: *Enquiry* 4.6-23

**19 Nov - Resolution of these worries**

*Treatise 1.3.6-8*

*Enquiry 5.3-6*

Optional: *Enquiry 5.7-22*

**21 Nov - Skepticism**

*Treatise 1.4.1*

**26 Nov - Paper Meetings (optional)**

**03 Dec - External Objects**

*Treatise 1.4.2-3*

**05 Dec - Personal Identity**

*Treatise 1.4.6*

Optional: *Treatise 1.4.7*

**5: Wrap Up**

**10 Dec - Wrap up**

*no new reading*

**Final paper due online at the time scheduled for  
the final exam Friday, Dec. 20th**

# 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.