

Philosophy 211: History of Philosophy in the 17th and 18th Centuries

Handbook



Philosophy 211: History of Philosophy in the 17th and 18th Centuries

Course tutor: Vernon Pratt

Terms taught: Michaelmas and Lent

Available each year

Prerequisite: Part 1 Philosophy

The Agenda for modern Western philosophy was set in the 17th Century with the establishment of the scientific outlook on the world. This course begins a study of the great philosophical problems which were either invented or revamped early in this period, and which have been pursued ever since:-

Given the new notion of the human being as a mind or soul in a body, as promulgated by Descartes:

- What is the nature of the mind? How does it relate to the body? What is the nature of perception in particular? How do we 'make contact with' the world about us?
- What is the nature of human knowledge? Can we come to have any reliable knowledge of the world outside our minds?
- What is the nature of human language?

Given that the universe is (in the modern period) to be regarded 'scientifically':

- Is there a God?
- What is fundamentally real?
- What is the nature of 'causality'?
- Are human beings subject to causality?

These problems (and others) are studied in this course by close

consideration of a selection of the great classical texts of Western Philosophy: works by Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant.

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Explain what is involved in (most of) the problems listed;

- set out some of the influential argumentation that has been pursued in relation to each;
- relate this argumentation to the philosophers of the period;
- begin an independent evaluation of it.

Teaching and learning:

One plenary session a week (usually about 40 people).

One seminar a week (10-15 in each group).

Two assignments.

Assessment by coursework and exam (or, depending on how many dissertations you are doing altogether, by coursework and dissertation.)

Preliminary Reading

A single volume history which you will find very useful to have by you throughout the course, but which can be read rewardingly at the outset is:

Roger Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy*, 2nd ed., London, 1995, Routledge.

A nicer book to handle and use (pictures as well as a panel of authoritative writers):

Anthony Kenny, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy*, Oxford, 1994, OUP.

Topics summary

Scholasticism

The 'Form'

Descartes

Method of doubt

The Cogito

God: Descartes' Cosmological Arguments

Descartes and the Modern concept of the Mind

Substance

Locke

The scientific revolution and the birth of the Modern world

Ideas as mental atoms

Ideas either from sense or from reflection

The homunculus

Reason

Innate ideas

Primary and secondary qualities

Substance

Nominal essences

Real essences

Generality

Berkeley

Berkeley's attack on Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities

Immaterialism

Berkeley's attack on Locke's account of abstraction

Hume

The empiricist perspective on knowledge

Causality and necessity

The self

Hume's attack on the possibility of miracles

Hume's attack on the teleological argument

The problem of induction

Laws of nature

The external world

Kant

What concepts must we have in order to think at all?

Learning Resources

Central Texts

The course proceeds by close consideration of a selection of the great classical texts of Western Philosophy. The texts are:

Work	Cheap editions	Approx cost
Descartes, Rene : <i>Discourse on the method & Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , 1637, 1641	(Descartes' <i>Selected Philosophical Writings</i> ed.Cottingham, Stoothoff & Murdoch, Cambridge, 1998, CUP; cheaper: the Penguin edition, <i>Discourse on Method and the Meditations</i> , translated and introduced by F.E.Sutcliffe)	£7

Locke, John : <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , 1690.	Everyman ed. London 1961	£7
Berkeley, George . : <i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i> , 1710	Penguin edition Ed R.S. Woolhouse, Harmondsworth, 1988	£7
Hume, David : <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , 1748	Ed. Eric Steinberg, 2nd ed. Indianapolis, 1993, Hackett. Or OUP Paperback.	£6.
Kant, Immanuel : <i>A Critique of Pure Reason</i>	Everyman ed.	£7

These are the main resource for the course and need to have very frequent access to them.

However all these texts are also freely available (in easily 'searchable' form) on the Internet. I have put simple editions on our server, where their editors allow, as well as pointing to others on the course web pages. A pair of discs carrying the core texts is available for loan for those who have yet to handle the net easily.

I suggest two secondary works as likely to help you understand the texts, and to place them in context. I look on them as 'textbooks', backing up the lectures, together covering the course as a whole. They are:

Text		Approx cost
John Cottingham: <i>The Rationalists</i> , No 4 of History of Western Philosophy, Oxford, 1988, OPUS.		£8.
Roger Woolhouse: <i>The Empiricists</i> , No 5 of History of Western Philosophy, Oxford, 1988, OPUS		£7.

For copyright reasons these are not available on the Internet. They are in the library, but participants are recommended to buy their own copies.

In general, a different passage from a central text is set as the reading for each week (on the topic of the lecture and seminar) (see *Topics and Reading Week by Week*, below), and you are encouraged to draw on the relevant textbook as you encounter the need for help. A longer list (but highly select) of books is provided, and you are encouraged to turn to this to enrich your reading for their written assignments. You are also encouraged to go on to explore for yourselves the remainder of the library holdings

The assignments and assessment are designed so that it is possible for a sufficiently able student to achieve first class marks even though they restrict their reading to the central texts. (This is not difficult.)

Library

There are multiple copies in the Library of the central texts (though in a variety of editions).

The full holdings are not listed systematically for you - deliberately so that you have the occasion to develop independent library-use skills. Included are holdings of relevant research journals. You are encouraged to explore these.

The assessment design is such that if you make good use of the materials beyond the central texts and the textbooks you receive credit (with the implication that a wider reading base may compensate for or supplement other qualities of an essay - see Assessment Policy).

Bookshops

The campus bookshop is advised of the central texts, with cheap editions identified, and of the textbooks. It is also given a short list of other generally useful books and a longer list of books identified as for 'further and background' reading. It takes orders of course.

Waterstones have another branch in town. Hammicks is also in town. Blackwells and Amazon et al are currently providing a tremendously competitive service via the internet.

Web Site

There are web pages for the course. Get to them from the philosophy programme home page, or

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/philosophy/courses/211/211%20home.htm>

Here are kept:-

- All policy documents relating to the course (e.g. this one)

 - Summary notes of each lecture

 - Texts of overheads used in each lecture

 - Full texts of each lecture

- A select number of links to relevant web resources, which are substantial. As you find others, please let me know.

- Links to generic BA philosophy programme documents.

Broadcast materials

There are broadcast materials that are highly relevant from time to time, and I will draw attention to these.

Departmental Seminar

- Papers given to the Thursday seminar are sometimes directly relevant. Course members are always welcome.

Philosophy Society

This group is invaluable in offering informal course-related 'support' discussion. It welcomes everyone.



Topics and Reading Week by week

Term 1

Week 1 Descartes: A new approach to acquiring knowledge.

Descartes: *Discourse on Method* Sections 1, 2

Descartes: *Meditations* Meditation 1

The Rationalists, Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 2 Descartes: I can at least be certain that I exist; and that God exists.

Descartes: *Discourse on Method* Sections 4

Descartes: *Meditations* Mediations 2 & 3

The Rationalists, pp. 78-84.

Week 3 Descartes: The mind is a ghost in a machine

Descartes: *Meditations* Meditation 2

Descartes: *Objections and Replies*, On Meditation 6. Cottingham ed. pp.143-150.

The Rationalists, Chapter 4.

Week 4 Descartes: What there is.

Descartes: *Principles of Philosophy* Part 2 (Cottingham ed. pp.189-199).

Week 5 Dearing Week - Introduction to Career Management

Also: try to finish reading the Descartes texts; and the first assignment.

First Essay: to be handed in by the end of this week (5 pm Friday).

Week 6 Locke: Ideas as the atoms of the mind.

All Locke readings from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

BOOK I. OF INNATE NOTIONS

- I Introduction
- II No Innate Principles in the Mind
- III No Innate Practical Principles
- IV Other Considerations concerning Innate Principles

Week 7 Locke: The origin of our ideas; how reason works.

BOOK II. OF IDEAS

- I Of Ideas in General
- V Of Simple Ideas of Divers Senses
- XII Of Complex Ideas
- XXXIII Of the Association of Ideas

BOOK III. OF WORDS

- 1 Of Words in General

BOOK IV. OF KNOWLEDGE AND OPINION

- 11 Of the Degrees of Our Knowledge
- 111 Of the Extent of Human Knowledge
- IV Of the Reality of Human Knowledge
- XV Of Probability

Week 8 Locke: Primary and secondary qualities; substance.

BOOK II.	OF IDEAS
VIII	Some. Farther Considerations concerning Our Simple Ideas
XXIII	Of Our Complex Ideas of Substances
BOOK III.	OF WORDS
III	Of General Terms
IV	Of the Names of Simple Ideas
VI	Of the Names of Substances

Week 10 Berkeley: Idealism: 'there isn't anything outside the mind'.

George Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning The Principles Of Human Knowledge*

TERM 2

Week 11 Berkeley: Attack on the primary/secondary quality distinction.

George Berkeley's *Treatise* Continued

Week 12 Berkeley: Positivism

George Berkeley's *Treatise* Continued

Week 13 Hume: Knowledge

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, XII, iii

Week 14 Hume: Necessity.

Hume, *Enquiry*, V, I (Causality)

Week 15 Hume: External world

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Continued

Week 16 Hume: The self; religion

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Continued

Second Essay: to be handed in by the end of this week (5 pm Friday).

Week 17 Kant: rejection of mental atomism; Synthetic a priori; Copernican revolution; one project: what experience has to be like

Over the next three weeks:

Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*. Have a go. I have suggested some extracts focussing on the topics we consider.

Scruton: *A Short History of Western Philosophy*, Ch. 10.

Week 18 Kant: Time and Space

Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Antinomy of Reason, A426 - 429 / B454 - 457.

Week 19 Kant: The thesis of objectivity

Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding (B130-B169)

Week 20 Kant: Conceptual frameworks; Kant in the context of Enlightenment philosophy; noumena and phenomena; the self.

Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, The Analytic of Principles, Chapter III, A236 - 260 / B295 - 315.

Assignment 1

Please write a study defined according to the following formula:

"Set out as clearly and accurately as you can the arguments Descartes uses to demonstrate *p*. What is your response to them?"

Within this formula, please choose *p* yourself, e.g. *the existence of God*, that *mind is distinct from body*, or that *matter is extension* ...

The point is, I would like your first assignment to be an exercise in studying Descartes directly, but I am anxious for you to work on the topic which interests you most.

Aim for 2,500 words. Devote about two thirds of the study to exegesis and a third to critique.

To go on the title page of your essay you are asked to construct a 'synopsis'. This is a paragraph-length summary of the essay, reflecting its structure as well as its content. You should construct it by going through your draft a paragraph at a time and writing a single-sentence summary of each paragraph in turn. Preparing a synopsis helps you refine your sense of structure, and gives you practice in helping your reader follow your presentation.

A recent selection of Descartes' writings is: Descartes: *Selected Philosophical Writings*, Translated by Cottingham, Stoothoff and Murdoch, Cambridge, 1988, CUP.

But there are plenty of others. The Penguin selection (also suggested to the bookshop) is cheaper. All the main texts are also on the net.

I really want you to engage with Descartes directly, so only reluctantly refer to the recommended commentary by John Cottingham, *The Rationalists* (see reading list).

To be handed in please (post-box in the Department foyer) by the end of week 5.

Assignment 2

For your second assignment the structure of the essay is left for you to devise (for the first it was given by saying you should expound Descartes for two thirds and develop a critique in the final third.) This time I am asking you to set yourself an interesting question related to our period and discuss it at least partly by drawing on the work of one or more of the philosophers we are reading.

The questions I suggest are also designed to encourage you to develop your thinking on much wider-ranging (more interesting?) questions than ones of detailed scholarship.

Another part of the exercise is to get you to identify and make good use of relevant and good reading. I am deliberately not listing items myself (apart from the works of our philosophers), but I expect you to seek some out (one or two will be enough) and make use of them in your discussion. (As part of the exercise also you should document your references systematically. Some notes on this are available from the office.)

Please provide a synopsis, as for the first assignment.

1. How did early Modern thinkers conceive of *reason* and its place in human life? Is there another way?

(Suggestion: Locke's account of reason, and Hume's)

2. To what extent do human beings themselves *create* the world they think of themselves as living in? Discuss in relation to the ideas put forward in the early modern period.

(Suggestions: the distinction between primary and secondary qualities could be one aspect of this; Berkeley's thesis that to be is to be perceived could be another; Descartes' notion that we are directly in touch with 'ideas' and not the world beyond our minds a third.)

3. To what extent is there a world of appearance and a world of reality behind it? Discuss in relation to the ideas put forward in the early Modern period.

(Suggestions: this could be just a different way of getting into the issues raised in (2). But also relevant is the idea that science reveals patterns in events, not connections between them.)

4. Is there a Modern God?

(The early moderns seemed often to rely on God in their theories. But you might also argue that those theories actually undermined belief.)

5. What is the early Modern conception of the Universe?

(Possible issues include: Ideas of substance in Descartes and Locke, issues raised by (1).

6. What is the early Modern conception of the human being?

(Possible issues include: Locke, and Hume, on the self; the nature and significance of reason; the relation between the human being and God; the Cartesian Mind, the Individual, 'privacy'; the soul; Berkeley's ideas about the dependence of the human being on God.)

7. What is 'the scientific world-view'? Do we still have it?

You are welcome to devise your own topic, but If you do, it would be safest to write the title down and show me beforehand. Please formulate it in the form of a tightly worded *question*.

By 5pm on the Friday of 7th week please. Length guideline 2,500 words. If you wish to seek an extension to the end of term this is likely to be agreed, but you will need to fill in a form with the reason beforehand.



Some Sources for Further Reading

Author/title	

Roger Scruton: <i>A Short History of Modern Philosophy</i> , London, 1984.	Routledge
Roger Scruton, <i>Kant, Past Masters</i> .	OUP.
Anthony Kenny, ed., <i>The Oxford Illustrated history of Western Philosophy</i> , Oxford, 1994.	OUP
Anthony Kenny, <i>Aquinas on Mind</i> , 1994.	Routledge
Margaret Atherton, <i>Empiricists : critical essays on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume</i> , 1999.	Rowman & Littlefield,
Gerald Hanratty, <i>Philosophers of the Enlightenment : Locke, Hume and Berkeley revisited.</i> , 1995.	Four Court Press
John Cottingham: <i>Descartes</i> , Oxford, 1986.	Blackwell
John Cottingham (ed): <i>Descartes</i> , Oxford Readings in Philosophy, 1998.	OUP
Anthony Kenny: <i>Descartes - a study of his philosophy</i> , Bristol, 1995 (1st pub. 1968).	Thoemmes
R.S. Woolhouse: <i>Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz</i> , London, 1993,.	Routledge
S. Gaukroger: <i>Descartes: An Intellectual Biography</i> , Oxford, 1997.	OUP
J.L. Mackie: <i>Problems from Locke</i> , Oxford, 1997.	OUP
G.A.J. Rogers (ed) : <i>Locke's Philosophy</i> ,	Clarendon.
David Berman, <i>George Berkeley : idealism and the man</i> , 1994.	Oxford U.P.
Margaret Atherton, <i>Berkeley's revolution in vision</i> , 1990.	Cornell U.P.
David Berman: <i>George Berkeley</i> , Oxford, 1994.	Clarendon
Georges Dicker, <i>Hume's epistemology and metaphysics : an</i>	Routledge

<i>introduction.</i> , 1998.	
Terence Penelhum, <i>Themes in Hume : the self, the will, religion</i> , 2000.	Clarendon
S.Copley & A. Edgar (eds): <i>Hume: Selected Essays</i> , , 1993.	Oxford, World's Classics
Peter Strawson: <i>The Bounds of Sense</i> , 196, London.	Methuen

Policy on Assessment

Assessment for this course is based on two assignments, one in each of the two terms, and a 3 hour closed-book exam.

I set out the different skills and abilities the course is designed to develop for you in the table. Alongside I explain how these are assessed through assignments and exams.

How your developing skills are assessed

	Year 1	Years 2 & 3	MA
lucidity	present simple philosophical ideas and arguments clearly	avoid confusion in the presentation of more difficult ideas and more complex argumentation	present most ideas and argumentation in the relevant literature without substantial obscurity
structure of presentation	present a limited number of related arguments or considerations in a clearly structured way	synthesise a wider range of ideas and arguments into a single coherently structured written presentation	marshal variously sourced arguments and considerations into a sustained and well-organised statement
grasp of problem	the beginnings of a grasp of some dimensions of the philosophical problems at issue	grasp at least some of the main dimensions of a philosophical problem at issue in such a way as to support the beginnings of critical independent thought about it	grasp the main dimensions of the problem at issue at such a level as to lend authority to the author's independent critique
critical awareness	show an awareness that claims are open to test and evaluation	maintain throughout a limited study the sense that claims are open to test and evaluation	maintain throughout a substantial study an independent voice
coherence of argumentation	work with the distinction between validity and invalidity	work with a sharp sense of validity and invalidity in relation to complex lines of	present extended critiques or lines of argumentation which avoid logical

	in argument	argumentation	confusion.
evidence of study	show the benefits in one's writing of careful listening, reading and thought	draw intelligently in one's own reading, writing and thinking on a range of challenging contributions made by others	write with a knowledge and grasp of the main contributions made by others to one's topic
knowledge and grasp of relevant literature	read and have a basic understanding of at least eight pieces of philosophical literature	read and have a good understanding of at least some aspects of some challenging contributions to the problem at issue	know and understand the main contributions to the problem at issue and develop some sense of overview
sense of relevance	know the difference between points that are straightforwardly relevant and points which are irrelevant to a particular argument or issue	work with a sense of relevance in relation to a limited project as a whole, both in choice of reading and in presentation of argumentation	work independently with a well-developed sense of relevance in relation to an extended project

Assignments

The primary point of writing essays is to help you develop skills, not to test them. But they do play a central role in assessment on this course nonetheless.

They ask you to engage in a sustained bit of philosophising.

The first gives you a structure: it asks you to give a careful exposition of a position/line of argument and to follow this with a critique. The second does not specify a structure but invites you to address a problem, creating a structure which best suits it and your approach.

For the first essay, though the general area and format is set, you are asked to specify a particular question within that yourself. This is to maximise your freedom to choose a topic of real interest to you while fulfilling the learning objectives of the course. Allowing wide freedom of choice also spreads the load on the library so it is easier for you to find the reading you need.

The same reasons lie behind the design of the second essay. In this case you are simply asked to choose a question from a list.

In each case you are asked to construct a 'synopsis' of the essay (to go on the title page). This helps you refine your sense of structure, and gives you practice in helping your reader follow your presentation.

The length guideline for each essay is 2,500 words.

Exam

We use exams to test for much the same capacities as are shown in essays, though with different emphases - see table. They test also your capacity to work under a very special kind of pressure (!). The University insists on your taking a minimum number of exams in your total assessment profile in part because they are thought to act as a check against plagiarism.

Across all your undergraduate programme as a whole, you are meant to develop a range of

knowledge, some of it on restricted topics but deep-going and some of it shallower but relating to a wider sweep. If you are using this course to develop breadth, you should opt for the exam. If you are getting breadth elsewhere, as it were, you should consider writing a dissertation in lieu of an exam. (The University rules that you can be assessed via dissertations in up to four of your 16 units of assessment.)

If you opt for the dissertation you will not be assessed for 'coverage'.

A function of an exam, as we use it in this course, is to test for 'coverage'. It tests, among other things, the breadth of your knowledge of the subject. It does this by setting questions (12 in all) which range across the whole course, by requiring you to answer three questions, and by requiring you to choose those questions so as to display knowledge of at least three of the major philosophers covered by the course. This strategy clearly allows a good deal of latitude. It is designed so that you can choose within limits to specialise by, say, ignoring a figure that does not attract you. On the other hand you can only expect to fail if you 'specialise' too much.

Criteria for the award of marks on an essay, dissertation or exam answer.

Class 2 Division 1

There is

- clarity of thought and expression
- ability to marshal arguments into a sustained and well-organised statement
- a good grasp of the philosophical problem being addressed
- critical awareness
- a tight sense of relevance

and normally

- knowledge and understanding of relevant literature.

Particular strength under one of these heads is seen as compensating for weakness under another.

First

The work meets the criteria for a 2/1 and in addition shows at least some of:

- exceptional lucidity of argument
- exceptional strength of structure
- exceptional mastery of problem being addressed
- a thorough and critical familiarity with challenging literature
- an original approach
- a creative line of argument

Marks within this class may vary reflecting

- a capacity to develop arguments beyond those in the relevant literature
- depth and sophistication of the argument
- critical acumen

Class 2 Division 2

the majority of the text is clear enough to be understood

the answer has a structure

a basic grasp of the question is demonstrated

there is

- critical awareness

- some coherent argumentation

- evidence of serious study

a sense of relevance is exercised

and normally

- some knowledge is shown of relevant literature.

distinguished from a 2/1 therefore by

- lower level of coherence

- lower level of critical awareness

and normally

- lower level of knowledge and understanding of relevant literature.

THIRD

the majority of the text is clear enough to be understood

there is

- a degree of structure

- some grasp of the question is demonstrated

- some attempt at argument is made

- some evidence of serious study

- some sense of relevance

and normally

- some knowledge of relevant literature

Particular strength under one of these heads is seen as compensating for weakness under another.

Thus distinguished from 2/2 by some of

- limited knowledge of relevant material
- limited powers of organisation of material
- absence of critical discussion
- lack of clarity
- lack of relevance

PASS

The work shows

- some clear text
- some evidence of study
- some evidence of an attempt to provide a relevant answer
- and
- some attempt at argument

So distinguished from 3rd by

- relative weakness in the features listed and
- lack of structure

FAIL

Work that fails to meet the criteria for a Pass.

The work will thus be characterised by all of:

- inadequate or no knowledge of relevant material
- no critical discussion
- little or no structured argument
- endemic lack of clarity

or

- complete irrelevance

NOTES

Every effort will be made to construe the work as relevant to the question set.

These criteria only come into play when the work is accepted as the student's own.

GLOSSARY

'critical', as in 'critical argument':

argument that shows awareness that claims are open to test and evaluation

'critical awareness':

awareness that claims are open to test and evaluation.

'material':

arguments and discussion on the topic derived from books or independent thought.