

# PHIL401 Modern Philosophy

## Course Summary

**Course:** PHIL401 **Title:** Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant

**Length of Course:** 8

**Prerequisites :**[leave blank] **CreditHours:**3

## Course Description:

This course focuses on the work of European philosophers from roughly 1600 to 1800. Students will study the philosophy of René Descartes and trace the development of philosophical rationalism and empiricism in thinkers such as John Locke, David Hume, and Baruch Spinoza. In addition, the class will cover the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant.

(Prerequisite: PHIL101)

## Course Scope:

This course covers a historical time period of roughly 200 years, from 1600 to 1800. During this period, European thought and philosophy underwent a fundamental transformation as traditional Aristotelian and Scholastic theories about nature were systematically disproven through the new mechanistic science of Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes. The issues that these early modern philosophers were grappling with are related to the historical context in the form of grave concern over the justification of our claims to knowledge. How do we know what reality is really like? Can we even access the truth?

In this class, we will focus on five thinkers: Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Kant. The progression of ideas through these five thinkers presents the pressing intellectual concerns of this time period in European history. The issues they were grappling with remain with us today, in various modified forms.

# Objectives

- CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
- CO-2: Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
- CO-4: Analyze overlapping and diverging themes and arguments as presented by various early modern philosophers.

# Outline

## Week 1: Early Modern Aspirations & Descartes

### Learning Objectives:

- CO-1: CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
  - LO-1: Discuss the impact of the Copernican Revolution and the subsequent rise of mechanistic science.
- CO-2: CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-2: Read Descartes' first three Meditations and analyze the central arguments therein.

### Readings:

Consult Readings & Resources:

Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy*, Meditations One, Two, and Three

### Assignments:

Week 1 - Lesson and Readings

Week 1: Discussion

## **Week 2: Descartes and Rationalism**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
  - LO-1: Analyze the philosophical position (or method) known as rationalism.
- CO-2 : Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
  - LO-2: Identify and discuss central philosophical issues such as: epistemic justification, substance dualism, philosophical skepticism, and the nature of thought.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-2: Read Descartes Meditations IV-VI, and analyze the central arguments therein, concerning epistemic error, God's existence, and the existence of the mind-independent world.

### **Readings:**

Consult Readings & Resources:

Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy*, Meditations Four, Five, and Six

### **Assignments:**

Week 2 - Lesson and Readings

Week 2: Discussion

Week 2 – Short Paper

## **Week 3: Spinoza**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
  - LO-1: Analyze major philosophical concepts such as substance monism, the relationship between thinking and being, and the debate between theism and pantheism.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-3: Read Book I of Spinoza's *Ethics* and analyze the following concepts from his philosophy: God (or Nature), Substance, Attributes, and Modes.
- CO-4: Analyze overlapping and diverging themes and arguments as presented by various early modern philosophers.
  - LO-4: Analyze the development of continental rationalism from Cartesian dualism to Spinozistic monism.

## Readings:

Consult Readings & Resources:

Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book One

## Assignments:

Week 3 - Lesson and Readings

Week 3: Discussion

## Week 4: Spinoza and Locke

### Learning Objectives:

- CO-2: Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
  - LO-1: Discuss the foundations of empiricist thinking as presented by John Locke.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-2: Read Book II of Spinoza's *Ethics* and analyze the nature of the human being, on Spinoza's conception.
  - LO-2.a: Read selections from Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and analyze his empiricist epistemology.

- CO-4: Analyze overlapping and diverging themes and arguments as presented by various early modern philosophers.
  - LO-3: Analyze the distinction between continental rationalism and British empiricism.

## Readings:

Consult Readings & Resources:

Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book Two

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, Chapters 1 and 2, & Book II, Chapters 1-12

## Assignments:

Week 4 - Lesson and Readings

Week 4: Discussion

## Week 5: Hume

### Learning Objectives:

- CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
  - LO1 Analyze the development of skepticism and concerns over epistemic justification in early modern European philosophy.
- CO-2: Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
  - LO-2: Identify connections between Hume's skeptical challenges to our claims to justified knowledge, and the current state of philosophical and scientific discourse.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-3: Read and analyze selections from Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.
- CO-4: Analyze overlapping and diverging themes and arguments as presented by various early modern philosophers.

- LO-4: Consider and present Hume's skeptical challenges to both rationalism and empiricism.

## **Readings:**

Consult Readings & Resources:

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections I - VIII

## **Assignments:**

Week 5 - Lesson and Readings

Week 5: Discussion

Week 5 – Comparative Paper

## **Week 6: Kant, Critical Philosophy & The Transcendent Aesthetic**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
  - LO1 Identify the ways in which Kant's transcendental idealism represents a continuation and synthesis of previous philosophical positions considered in this class.
- CO-2: Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
  - LO-2: Analyze Kant's ongoing impact and philosophical legacy.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-3: Read selections from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and analysis of the same.
  - LO-3a: Identify Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy, and the nature of space and time, on Kant's view.

## **Readings:**

Consult Readings & Resources

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transcendental Aesthetic,

James O'Shea, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

## **Assignments:**

Week 6 - Lesson and Readings

Week 6: Discussion

## **Week 7: Kant's Transcendental Analytic**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- CO-2: Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
  - LO-2: Analyze Kant's account of knowledge, and its ongoing impact on post-Kantian philosophy, up to the present.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-3: Read and analyze sections from Kant's "Transcendental Analytic" in Critique of Pure Reason, as well as secondary commentary.
  - LO-3a: Identify and be able to discuss the concept of a priori synthetic knowledge and its importance to Kant's project.

### **Readings:**

Consult Readings & Resources

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transcendental Aesthetic, (pp. 63-79)

James O'Shea, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction*, Chapters 3 and 4

## **Assignments:**

Week 7 - Lesson and Readings

Week 7: Discussion

Week 7 – Final Paper or Presentation

## **Week 8: Kant's Transcendental Dialectic**

### **Learning Objectives:**

- CO-1: Identify and analyze key trends in the development of Early Modern European philosophy (ca. 1600-1800).
  - LO1: Assess Kant's criticism of traditional metaphysics in the context of Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, and Hume.
- CO-2: Analyze lines of historical development connecting the current social, political, and philosophical state of the West with the philosophical themes in early modern thinkers.
  - LO-2: Analyze Kant's account of knowledge, and its ongoing impact on post-Kantian philosophy, up to the present.
- CO-3: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophical projects of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Spinoza, and Kant.
  - LO-3: Read and analyze sections from Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" in *Critique of Pure Reason*, as well as secondary commentary.
  - LO-3a: Identify and analyze some of Kant's arguments against classical arguments for "metaphysical ideas," such as God, the world-whole, and the soul.
- CO-4: Analyze overlapping and diverging themes and arguments as presented by various early modern philosophers.
  - LO4: Analyze Kant's position as synthesizing and challenging the various thinkers who preceded him.

### **Readings:**

Consult Readings & Resources

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transcendental Ideal (pp. 427-458)

### **Assignments:**

Week 8 - Lesson and Readings

Week 8: Discussion

## Evaluation:

Name	Grade %
Discussions	40%
Week 1 - Introductions	11.11%
Week 1 - Cartesian Doubt & Knowledge	11.11%
Week 2 - Rationalism	11.11%
Week 3 - Spinoza - Deus Sive Natura	11.11%
Week 4 - Spinoza and Locke	11.11%
Week 5 - Hume, Anti Philosopher?	11.11%
Week 6 - Kant's Copernican Revolution	11.11%
Week 7 - Transcendental Analytic	11.11%
Week 8 - Kant's Transcendental Dialectic	11.11%
Paper Assignments	60.00%
Week 2 Short Paper	30.00%
Week 5 Comparative Paper	30.00%
Week 7 Final Paper or Presentation	40.00%

## Materials

Book Title: Various resources from the APUS Library & the Open Web are used. Please visit eReserve to locate the course.

Author: Publication Info:

ISBN: ERESERVE NOTE

All reading is provided on the syllabus and in the Lessons in the course for each week. There is also a list in the eReserve in the library: Scroll to our course, PHIL416, select the link, and all readings will be listed.

## Course Guidelines

### Citation and Reference Style

Students will follow MLA format as the sole citation and reference style used in written assignments submitted as part of coursework to the Philosophy Department.

Note, if your degree program uses another style, discuss this with your instructor.

Please note that no formal citation style is graded on discussion assignments in the School of Arts, Humanities & Education—only attribution of sources (please see details regarding discussion communication below).

### **Turnitin**

Assignments are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com within the course. Turnitin.com will analyze an assignment submission and report a similarity score. Your assignment submission is automatically processed through the assignments area of the course when you submit your work.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic Dishonesty incorporates more than plagiarism, which is using the work of others without citation. Academic dishonesty includes any use of content purchased or retrieved from web services such as CourseHero.com or Scribd. Additionally, allowing your work to be placed on such web services is academic dishonesty, as it is enabling the dishonesty of others. The copy and pasting of content from any web page, without citation as a direct quote, is academic dishonesty. When in doubt, do not copy/paste, and always cite.

### **Submission Guidelines**

Some assignments may have very specific requirements for formatting (such as font, margins, etc) and submission file type (such as .docx, .pdf, etc). See the assignment instructions for details. In general, standard file types such as those associated with Microsoft Office are preferred, unless otherwise specified.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure all submitted work can be accessed and opened by the instructor.

### **Disclaimer Statement**

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of a particular group or class.

### **Communicating on the Discussion**

Discussions are the heart of the interaction in this course. The more engaged and lively the exchanges, the more interesting and fun the course will be. Only substantive comments will receive credit. Although there is a final posting day/time after which the instructor will grade and provide feedback, it is not sufficient to wait until the last day to contribute your comments/questions on the discussion. The purpose of the discussions is to actively participate in an ongoing discussion about the assigned content.

“Substantive” means comments that contribute something new and important to the discussion. Thus a message that simply says “I agree” is not substantive. A substantive comment contributes a new idea or perspective, a good follow-up question to a point made, offers a response to a question, provides an example or illustration of a key point, points out an inconsistency in an argument, etc.

As a class, if we run into conflicting viewpoints, we must respect each individual's own opinion. Hateful and hurtful comments towards other individuals, students, groups, peoples, and/or societies will not be tolerated.

Students must post a response to the weekly discussion prompt and post the required number of replies to other students – refer to the grading rubric and/or discussion instructions for specific expectations on several replies and word count requirements.

The main response to the discussion is due mid-week – refer to the grading rubric and/or discussion instructions for specific expectations.

### **Late Policy**

Students are expected to submit assignments by the due dates listed in the classroom. Late assignments, including but not limited to Assignments, Discussions, posts and responses, quizzes, and exams, may or may not be accepted after the course end date. Submitting an assignment after the due date may result in a penalty of up to 10% of the grade per day late, not to exceed a maximum of 50% of the grade. The amount of the penalty is at the faculty member's discretion. Faculty recognize that students have

limited time and may be more flexible if potential delays are communicated ahead of time.

**\*\*Students with DSA accommodations may have different late policies applied. For more information regarding our DSA services, please contact [DSA@apus.edu](mailto:DSA@apus.edu).**

## **Communications**

### **Student Communication**

To reach the instructor, please communicate through the MyClassroom email function accessible from the Classlist of the Course Tools menu, where the instructor and students' email addresses are listed, or via the Office 365 tool on the Course homepage.

- In emails to instructors, it's important to note the specific course in which you are enrolled. The name of the course is at the top center of all pages.
- Students and instructors communicate in Discussion posts and other learning activities.
- All interactions should follow APUS guidelines, as noted in the Student Handbook, and maintain a professional, courteous tone.
- Students should review writing for spelling and grammar.
- Tips on Using the Office 365 Email Tool

### **Instructor Communication**

The instructor will post announcements on communications preferences involving email and Instant Messaging and any changes in the class schedule or activities.

- Instructors will periodically post information on the expectations of students and will provide feedback on assignments, Discussion posts, quizzes, and exams.
- Instructors will generally acknowledge student communications within 24 hours and respond within 48 hours, except in unusual circumstances (e.g., illness).

- The APUS standard for grading all assessments (assignments, Discussions, quizzes, exams) is five days or fewer from the due date.
- Final course grades are submitted by faculty no later than seven days after the end date of the course or the end of the extension period.

## University Policies

Consult the Student Handbook for processes and policies at APUS. Notable policies:

- Drop/Withdrawal Policy
- Extension Requests
- [Academic Probation](#)
- Appeals
- Academic Dishonesty / Plagiarism
- Disability Accommodations
- Student Deadlines
- Video Conference Policy

## Mission

The mission of American Public University System is to provide high-quality higher education with an emphasis on educating the nation's military and public service communities by offering respected, relevant, accessible, affordable, and student-focused online programs that prepare students for service and leadership in a diverse, global society

## Minimum Technology Requirements

- Please consult the catalog for the minimum hardware and software required for undergraduate and graduate courses.
- Although students are encouraged to use the Pulse mobile app with any course, please note that not all coursework can be completed via a mobile device.

## Disclaimers

Please note that course content – and, thus, the syllabus – may change between when a student registers for a course and when the course starts.

Course content may vary from the syllabus schedule to meet the needs of a particular group.