

Historians of philosophy typically refer to the 17th & 18th centuries as 'Early Modern Philosophy'; others refer to this period as 'the Enlightenment'. Lately, medievalists as well as postmodernists take offense at these terms, presumably because they see either some implied denigration of medieval thinkers or because they prefer to dismiss the scientific, epistemological, ethical or political attainments of the early modern thinkers. Well, I will be so bold as to take the Enlightenment thinkers at their words, for they certainly envision themselves as making a radical break with all that has gone before them, and these philosophers see the discoveries of the early modern scientists as requiring complete reconceptualization of human knowledge in all areas. Accordingly, the leading thinkers continually speak of the 'New Science' [**scientia**, **Wissenschaft**] that has been unearthed or is demanded by the **Naturforschern** [students of nature]. This means that the inherited medieval project of providing a true **scientia** of nature -- a systematic, interrelated body of demonstrative knowledge of real essences of substances -- must be completely reinterpreted, if not given up altogether. One way of constructing a new **scientia** of nature is to employ a new logic (that of induction), a new epistemology (one founded on sense observation, experiment, and rational reflection), new instruments (telescopes & microscopes), and a new method for establishing scientific generalizations (mathematical precision of laws of nature).

Both Francis Bacon and Renè Descartes proposed new methods that were intended to guarantee certain progress for science and philosophy. Accordingly, philosophical tradition divides the modern philosophers into two camps, the Continental rationalists and the British empiricists, but we shall find that this categorization is a bit too facile. For while it is true that rationalists like Descartes certainly stress the capacity of human reason to attain knowledge of the essences of things such as bodies and minds, he also emphasizes the importance of experiment and sense observation; similarly, a classic empiricist like John Locke focuses not only on sensation but also on the role of reason in our arriving at knowledge in mathematics and metaphysics. Hence, following the leads of Bacon, Spinoza, and Kant, I will distinguish between the dogmatists and the skeptics; since both camps, the Continentals and the British thinkers, are concerned with the roles of reason and experience (or experiment) in philosophical thought, I will take the dogmatism/skepticism distinction as a more fundamental one.

Recently, some critics of modernity have argued that the philosophical tradition wrongly has treated Descartes as the founder of early modern philosophy. Instead, they have suggested either Locke (Nicholas Wolterstorff) or Montaigne (Stephen Toulmin) as having made more radical breaks with the preceding medieval traditions. One moral theorist, Alasdair MacIntyre, has argued that 'the Enlightenment project', with its mistaken conception of morality as autonomy (which he takes to be a secularist morality independent of all religious moorings) is both incoherent and philosophically mistaken. We will spend the semester reading the Enlightenment thinkers themselves but keep in mind these postmodernist critics; then you as enlightened students will make your own informed decisions about these early modern philosophers.

Schedule of Readings:

January	11 --	Donne: 'And New Philosophy Calls All in Doubt' -- New Science of Nature: Copernicus' <i>Revolutionibus</i> , Kepler's <i>New Astronomy</i> , Galileo's <i>Two New Sciences</i> , Bacon's <i>New Organon</i> (AW vii-viii, 4-7); Newton's Rules of Reasoning (MM, 146-58)
	13 --	Overthrowing Aristotle: Galileo's <i>Letter on Sunspots</i> , Assayer (AW 8-11); Epicurus' Atomism Baptized -- Gassendi's <i>Paradoxes Against the Aristotelians</i> , Boyle on the Corpuscular Philosophy (AW, 262-9); Ancient Skepticism Revived -- Pyrrho & Pierre Bayle (AW 486-490)

For these first two readings, there is a very helpful website on the scientific background to early modern science found at <http://galileo.rice.edu>. [This is known as 'The Galileo Project' -- very well-informed site put together by some prestigious historians of science.] Scroll down to **Science**, then down to **Theories**, then

down to **Copernican system** .

	18 --	Descartes: <i>Discourse on Method</i> , Pts. 1,2,5 (AW, 12-21); Dedication, Preface, Synopsis of <i>Meditations</i> (A&W, 22-27) [Also, see stanford.edu , then go to 'Descartes' Life and Works' for Pts. 3, 4, 6 of the <i>Discourse</i> .]
	20 --	Descartes: <i>Meditation</i> I, II (AW, 27-34); Hobbes' Obj. (AW, 63-66)
	25 --	<i>Meditation</i> III (AW,34-41); Hobbes', Arnauld's Obj. (AW, 66-73)
	27 --	<i>Meditation</i> IV (AW, 41-5); Mersenne's Obj. (CSM, 278-284)
February	1 --	<i>Meditation</i> V (AW, 45-8); Gassendi's Obj. (CSM, 224-228)
	3 --	<i>Meditation</i> VI (AW, 48-55); Mersenne's Obj. (CSM, 87-92)
	8 --	Locke: <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , Bk. I, II, IV (270-81; 341-6; 358-67)
	10 --	Leibniz: <i>New Essays on Human Understanding</i> , Preface (374-85)
	15 --	<i>Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence</i> , 1 st Letter & Reply; 2 nd Letter & Reply (4-14)
	17 --	<i>Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence</i> , 3 rd Letter & Reply; 4 th Letter & Reply (14-35)
	22 --	<i>Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence</i> , 5 th Letter (36-66)
	24 --	Hume: <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (AW, 496-507; 555-7)
February 26-Mar.	6 --	SPRING BREAK
March	8 --	Hume: "Of Miracles"; "Immortality of Soul"; "Suicide" (H, 107-25; 91-105)
	10 --	Hume: <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Pt. I-III (H, 3-27)
	15 --	<i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Pt. IV-VII (H, 28-48)
	17 --	<i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Pt. VIII-X (H, 49-66)
	22 --	<i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Pt. XI-XII (H, 67-89)
March 24-27	--	EASTER HOLIDAY (Ironic, how it falls at the end of Hume readings?)
	29 --	Kant: <i>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</i> : Intuitions, Concepts, Principles (AW, 579-606)
	31 --	<i>Prolegomena</i> : Problem of Metaphysics, Antinomies, Solution (AW, 612-33)
April	5 --	Kant: "What is Enlightenment?"; "What is Orientation in Thinking?" (K, 3-14)
	7 --	"Miscarriage of All Philosophical Experiments in Theodicy" (K, 17-30)
	12 --	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Sheer Reason</i> , Part One (45-73)
	14 --	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Sheer Reason</i> , Part Two (77-102)
	19,21 --	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Sheer Reason</i> , Part Three (105-147)
	26,28 --	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Sheer Reason</i> , Part Four (151-191)
Wed., May	4 --	FINAL EXAM, 12:00-2:30 CHD B118

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Crucial Reading:** Improved ability in reading for pivotal points or passages of texts; learning to detect ambiguities, ironic and metaphorical terms, core ideas and arguments of complex texts.
- 2. Critical Reasoning:** Increased ability at analyzing and assessing arguments; uncovering hidden assumptions, faulty reasoning, logical organization of ideas and theories.
- 3. Moral Reflection:** Increased recognition of diverse moral/ political/ religious assumptions, theories, and implications of early modern European thinkers.
- 4. Historical Discernment:** Sensitivity to historical forces, changes influencing thinkers of the Enlightenment; learning how Enlightened thinkers conceived of the past, in relation to them.
- 5. Intensive Writing:** Enhancement of writing skills, stressing logically coherent, well-documented, interpretive and argumentative essays.

COURSE TEXTS:

Rental: Roger Ariew & Eric Watkins, *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*

Supplementary: *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*

David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Allen Wood, George di Giovanni; pay close attention to the excellent introduction by Robert M. Adams (vii-xxxii), and we will follow the chronological table on pp. xxxiii-xxxiv as a guide in seeing how Kant develops his

philosophy of religion over time.

For the early part of the course, in order to assure common ground on the scientific background of early modern philosophy, I have listed a website called 'The Galileo Project': this should be extremely helpful in bringing your scientific knowledge of the period up to speed. There are a number of historical giants listed on this site – Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, etc. (if you've heard of Stephen Hawking's *On the Shoulders of Giants* book, these are the giants that Hawking recognizes as his intellectual mentors). Click on any of the categories, and you will be able to fill in any gaps in your knowledge of the history of early modern science.

Course requirements: For the following assignments, students will find helpful the following sources for supporting claims in their critical analyses of the thinkers of the modern period.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards

The Philosopher's Index

The Cambridge (or, Oxford) Dictionary of Philosophy

Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*;

-----, *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*

Pierre Duhem, *To Save the Phenomena*

Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment* (2 vols.)

Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*

There are also some famous period pieces that give valuable insights into the philosophical assumptions and arguments of the day:

- A. Descartes, *Objections and Replies* (available in several trans. :
 - i. Elizabeth Haldane & G.R.T. Ross
 - ii. John Cottingham **et al.** (most recent scholarly ed.)
- B. Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*
- C. Pierre Bayle, *An Historical and Critical Dictionary*
- D. Antoine Arnauld & Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the Art of Thinking*
- E. Montaigne, *Essays* (esp. "Apology for Raimonde Sebonde")
- F. H. G. Alexander, ed., *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*
- G. Johannes Kepler, *A Defence of Tycho Against Ursus* (ed. Nicholas Jardine)
- H. Galileo Galilei, *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*;
 -----, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*
- I. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*
 -----, *Optics*
- J. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

Also, there is a helpful website at **EpistemeLinks.com** . Once there, click on the 'Early Modern' historical period, and you should be able to find all of the major philosophers that we are reading.

Course Assignments:

1. Choose one of Descartes' *Meditations* and discuss one of the most powerful objections raised by one of Descartes' contemporaries. For example -- does Descartes' method of hyperbolic doubt truly enable him to attain a genuine **scientia** of nature? Discuss whether or not Descartes has a convincing reply to his critics on this point. Consider at least 2 texts by Descartes scholars, such as Bernard Williams, Margaret Wilson, John Cottingham, Amelie Rorty, Daniel Garber, E. M. Curley, Roger Ariew, Harry Frankfurt, Stephen Gaukroger, Marjorie Grene, or Martial Gueroult. Due around February 3.
2. Choose one side of the Leibniz-Clarke debates -- stick with only one topic, e.g. Leibniz's (or, Clarke's) theory of space or time or human liberty or the nature of God. Some questions: why does Leibniz think natural religion is decaying in England? Which side of the debate is prone to the criticism of a Deist

conception of God? Can divine miracles be allowed to occur in a philosophical position committed to accepting the most recent scientific theories? To what degree do you see an empiricist or rationalist orientation in the selected position. Due February 24, before spring break.

3. Take one of Hume's positions in ethics or religion (on suicide or immortality of the soul or miracles or the design argument) and outline his argument. Is Hume's skepticism reasonable or is he being an excessive skeptic? Explain some differences between Humean skepticism and Pyrrhonian skepticism. If Hume's version is reasonable, what response might one give who is interested in defending the traditional moral or religious position under attack by Hume? Or, does Hume have a positive view of his own on religion that is intellectually engaging (consider his 'Natural History of Religion' in connection with this essay)? Or, can one, contrary to Hume's considered view, accept modern scientific naturalism and still find room for miracles in one's philosophical or theological position? Or, given Hume's criticisms of the Design argument, is all that is left one is some sort of fideist position in religion? Due March 22 (thought I'd give you a chance to reflect on religious agnosticism prior to the Easter holiday).

4. In his *Religion within the Boundaries of Bare Reason*, Kant seems to suggest that religion and theology should be very limited in what they can say to philosophers. Given that Kant is worried about the invasive and destructive nature of political authorities on freedom of religious thought, he gives a strong defense of the individual's freedom to use their own reason. In so doing, does Kant leave much (or, any) room for divine grace? Examine the introductory essay by Robert M. Adams and use that as a position from which to voice your own reflections on Kant's philosophy of religion. Another line of questioning: does Kant give us a constructive metaphysical position that does justice to human claims for moral freedom and yet acknowledges the fact that we live in a mechanistic universe? In responding to Humean skeptical worries, does Kant deny knowledge of the noumenal realm (God, freedom, immortality) to such an extent that he ends up providing a default argument for atheism or agnosticism? Due April 28.

5. Throughout the semester, I will ask you to turn in summaries of the reading for the day, or outlines of the argument of some portion of the book we are reading, or a set of questions drawn from the reading. Also, we will have a quiz on Descartes' *Meditations*, another on Locke and Leibniz, and a final one on Hume's *Dialogues*. For the final exam, I will draw from those quizzes for the objective portion of the final exam. The final will also include two essays on interpretation of one passage from Descartes (perhaps the ontological argument) and one passage from Kant (perhaps his critique of the ontological argument). You will be allowed to use your books in sketching out your answers to the 2 essay questions.