

Early Modern Philosophy

Instructor: Mike Griffin (griffinm@ceu.edu)

2 credits/4 ECTS credits

Mandatory 2-year MA course

Fall Semester 2018

This course is a survey of 17th and 18th-century philosophy meant to fulfill a core requirement in the 2-year MA program. The main aim of the course is to acquire knowledge of the central issues and arguments of the early modern period. Topics will include knowledge and skepticism, the nature of substance, the relation of mind and body, the scope and limits of scientific explanation, personal identity and freedom and necessity. By the end of the course students will be able to read historical texts and interpret and evaluate their philosophical content.

For students in the philosophy 2-year MA program, these achievements will be measured by a written examination at the end of the academic year. Students who are taking the course as an elective are required to write a 2000 word term paper, on a topic of their choice, to be handed in at the end of the term. An outline of the paper is due in week 11.

Readings will be made available electronically

Schedule

Week 1-2: Descartes on knowledge and skepticism

Readings: Meditations 1-4

Week 3: Descartes on mind and body

Readings: Meditations 5-6

Week 4: Spinoza's Substance Monism

Readings: Selections from Descartes's Principles of Philosophy; Spinoza's Ethics, Part I, Propositions 1-15; Leibniz's On the Ethics of Spinoza.

Week 5-6: Spinoza and Leibniz on Necessity and Contingency

Readings: Ethics, Part I, Propositions 16-18, 21-29, 33, 35; Selections from Leibniz's Philosophical Essays

Week 7-8: Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities and Mechanical Explanation Readings: Essay, Book II, chh. 1-9, Book IV, ch. 3 (selections)

Week 9: Locke on Personal Identity

Readings: Essay, Book II, ch. 27

Week 10: Berkeley on Material Substance: Phenomenalism

Readings: Principles of Human Knowledge, Part I, sections 1-33, 67-72

Week 11-12: Hume critique of causal inference

Readings: Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, sections 3-5