

PHI 211/ PHI 311
Modern Philosophy
Spring 2021, Session 2

Instructor Information

Professor: Dr. Yuval Abrams
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Zoom: Albright.zoom.us/j/6533050217
Office: MPK Chapel basement
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Office Hours

I will be holding office hours by appointment only, on Zoom. **I am more than happy to set up appointments**, so please email me if you'd like to meet!

In-Person Class Meetings

- **Synchronous in-person** meetings will be every Monday and Wednesday 12-1:45 PM
- Friday sessions will either be on Zoom or will be substituted with asynchronous content.
- I will announce the plan for Friday no later than class on Wednesday

Course Format

This is a **hybrid** course. This means the course contains both online and in-person components. Online lecture content will be posted on Canvas. All exams will be online. **Attendance is required at all synchronous sessions.**

Course Description

This course will cover basic philosophical texts of 17th and 18th century Europe, with a special emphasis on Continental Rationalism, British Empiricism, and German Idealism. We will study selected texts from the major contributions of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Berkeley, Locke, Hume, & Kant. After an overview of the history of Western Philosophy until the 17th century, the class will focus on reading, discussing and writing on the selected texts. The course will conclude with an assessment of the relevance of Rationalism, Empiricism, and Idealism to subsequent philosophers. FOUNDATIONS-HUMANITIES

Course Objectives

- 1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to philosophical theories, issues, and claims in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics clearly in writing.
- 3) Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.

- 4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings.
- 5) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views.
- 6) Students will acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues, and will be able to explain important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints.
- 7) Students will be able to explain several classic epistemological theories, and to compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired.
- 8) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint.
- 9) Students will develop a conceptual foundation for future learning by exploring philosophical theories and arguments and will acquire related critical thinking and communication skills.
- 10) Students will be able to identify the Early Modern period in the history of ideas and explain what is distinctive about it.
- 11) Students will acquire facility with and identify and distinguish Rationalism and Empiricism, and the meaning of the terms 'Logical', 'Empirical', and what distinguishes between them.

Required Text:

There is no textbook in this course. All readings will be made available to you on Canvas.

- We will focus on primary sources by Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. We will also explore some primary sources by Spinoza and Leibniz.
- For all of these authors, you will be given an option of reading the original or you may read the modern adapted versions at Early Modern Texts. I will link to both on Canvas.
- I will also link to helpful secondary sources that are available, electronically, at Gingrich Library.

Optional Texts:

The following two books are recommended (but not required) as supplementary reading; both are short, accessible, cheap, and easily available. Some sections of the Nagel book will be included in the course material. I will be posting excerpts of these books online on the Course Moodle site:

- Blackburn, Simon, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*, Oxford (1999), ISBN: 0192100246
- Nagel, Thomas, *What Does It All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*, Oxford (1987), ISBN: 9780195052169

Grading

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Exams 50% (2 exams 25% each)
2. Papers: 24% (2 papers 12% each)
3. 4th Hour Canvas Activities: 16%
4. Class participation: 10% ,based on attendance (taken each class) and discussions.

The final grade will be curved.

Exams (2 exams 25% each, total = 50%): There will be two take-home exams. The first exam will be due (4/29th at 11:59 PM). **The second (final) will be due 5/28th at 11:59PM.**

Two Papers (12% each, total 24 points). The two paper assignments will be short essays where students will be asked to compare and evaluate material. Late papers are penalized with one letter grade (i.e. A becomes A-) per late day. One paper will be due before the midterm, the other at the end of the semester. **Exact dates for papers to be announced.**

Students taking PHI 311: Will complete a more comprehensive paper assignment. You must get in touch with me to discuss.

4th hour (16% of grade): You will be given 4 films to watch: *The Matrix*, *The Prestige*, *Minority Report*, and *Blade Runner-The Final Cut*. Each of these films relates to material discussed in this course. Links to the films will be made available to you on Canvas. I will give you a short assignment prompt for each film, to which you will respond with a 1-2 page paper (worth 4% each).

Class Participation (10% of grade): I will be taking attendance and monitoring participation. My goal is to cultivate a classroom environment that welcomes lively discussion, questioning, and debate. Each student should read ALL the assigned material for the day and actively contribute to the class discussion. There are many ways of participating in class. When I say active participation, I mean being fully present in class, such as asking thoughtful questions, listening intently and building on others' comments, raising observations or issues about the material, drawing links between theories and findings, and relating class ideas to your own observations or experiences. We are all here to learn from each other so view your class participation as a way to enhance your own learning and those of your classmates.

Grade Assignment (based on percentage of total points earned in the course):

A	93%+	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	<60%

COVID-19 Absence Policies

Students are encouraged to work directly with their instructors regarding any absences. For absences related to COVID-19, please adhere to the following:

- **Do not come to class if you are sick.** Please protect your health and the health of others by staying home. Contact your healthcare provider or the [Gable Health Center](#) if you believe you are ill. In particular, if you have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), please do not come to class.
- If you are absent from class as a result of a COVID-19 diagnosis or quarantine, as instructor we will do the following to help you continue to make progress in the course: You must email us to notify us of the absence and we will assign an alternate assignment to count for participation credit. The final decision for approval of all absences and missed work is determined by the instructor.

If your psychological health is compromised due to the pandemic and how it may affect other family members and other close associates, you are encouraged to contact the [counseling services](#) on campus and to discuss options for a modified assignment schedule similar to that outlined above.

Social Distancing

In class, as well as on and off campus, maintain social distance of at least six feet; replace shaking hands, hugs and physical touching with verbal appreciation. Please be aware of social distancing with waiting for, entering, and exiting classes.

Masks and Face Shields

Proper wearing of a mask/shield is required in all classes at Albright College. All students must wear a mask/shield that covers both nose and mouth [as recommended by the CDC](#), both inside buildings (at all times) and outside of campus buildings when within six feet of another person. Students who do not wear a mask/shield properly will be asked to leave class and be reported to the Dean of Students. If you are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, you must get formal accommodations by contacting Sherry Young, Director of Student Accessibility and Advocacy, by email at SAA@albright.edu or by phone at 610-921-7503

Office Hours

The current pandemic has led me to adjust how I go about office hours, and I ask that you read and respect these guidelines—for your own health as well as the health of the community. Faculty offices are small and do not permit for adequate physical (social) distancing. Please see the office hours noted on this syllabus and note that for this semester, office hours will be held through zoom. You may access the link office link on Canvas in the Start Here module and the zoom office link appears on this syllabus. I also request that you contact me through email if you need to meet outside of office hours and avoid trying to set up meeting times before or after our class. We will need to leave our classroom promptly, in order to avoid a “bottleneck” as a new class enters. We also need to allow adequate time for cleaning in between classes. Thank you in advance for supporting this policy! Please do not hesitate to meet with me—I am here to support you and help you be successful in this course!

Course Changes

Please note that if we move online, there may be adjustments to the nature of our scheduled synchronous in-person meetings.

Course Schedule and Readings **(All Readings Subject to Revision)**

Week 1 (4/9, 4/12, 4/14) Background (Philosophy, Reasoning, Scientific Revolution, Modernity)

Friday 4/9: Introduction on Zoom (Intro to Philosophy)

Monday 4/12: Intro to Reasoning

- Lawhead "Brief Tour Guide to Philosophy"
- Intro Video "What is Philosophy?"
- Sober, "Deductive Arguments"

Wednesday 4/14: *Scientific Revolution and the Early Modern Period*

- Lawhead, "Cultural Context: Renaissance, Reformation, and the Rise of Modern Science"

Week 2 (4/16, 4/19, 4/21): Rationalism: Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy

Friday 4/16 Descartes, *Meditations* 1 & 2

Monday 4/19: Descartes, *Meditations* 3&4

Wednesday 4/21: Descartes, *Meditations* 5& 6

- **Watch: The Matrix**

Extra Credit Experience Event Monday 4/19 at 6pm

Week 3 (4/23, 4/26, 4/28): Rationalism (Spinoza & Leibniz)

Friday 4/23: Spinoza, *Ethics* (excerpts), Warburton ("Spinoza")

Monday 4/25: Leibniz (Readings TBA), Russell ("Leibniz")

Wednesday 4/28: Rationalism v. Empiricism (Readings TBA)

- **Watch: Blade Runner**

First Exam (Due 4/29)

Week 4 (4/30, 5/3, 5/5): Empiricism (Locke, Berkeley, Hume)

Friday 4/30 Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpts)

Monday 5/3 Locke (continued) / Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* (excerpts)

Wednesday 5/5 Berkeley (continued) / Hume, *Treatise on Human Knowledge* (excerpts)

- **Watch: Minority Report**

Midterm (5/3)

Week 5 (5/7, 5/10, 5/12): Hume / Kant

Friday 5/7, Hume, *On Miracles*

Monday 5/10, Hume (continued) / Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (excerpts)

Wednesday 5/12, Kant (continued)

- **Watch: The Prestige**

Week 6 (5/14, 5/17, 5/19): Kant / Moral & Political Philosophy

Friday 5/14 Kant (continued)

Monday 5/17 Kant (continued)

Wednesday, 5/19 Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Week 7 (5/21, 5/23, 5/26) Moral and Political Philosophy (continued)

Friday 5/21 Locke's Political Theory

Monday 5/23 Hume's Ethics

Wednesday 5/26 Kantian Ethics

FINAL EXAM (TBA)

Final Papers Due 5/28

***Please note: The Unit on Moral & Political Philosophy (beginning with Hobbes' *Leviathan*) will only be covered time permitting. This depends on the pacing of the rest of the class.**

Academic Support

Students have academic support resources available to them at no charge. The Academic Learning Center offers course-specific tutoring, academic skills workshops, hands on learning strategies instruction, and academic counseling to supplement faculty advisement. The Writing Center offers tutoring to assist with writing and reading support for any class. The Student Accessibility and Advocacy office is the source for impairment-related accommodations consistent with the ADA and its amendments. Students who receive accommodations from the SAA office should meet with course instructors privately and in a timely manner to discuss the Academic Accommodation Letter (AAL) provided by that office. *Please note that IEPs and 504 plans do not apply to college level courses.* All three offices are in the administration building. For help or further information, contact the ALC at academiclearningcenter@albright.edu or 610-921-7662; the WC at writingcenter@albright.edu or 610-921-7540; and the Student Accessibility and Advocacy office at SAA@albright.edu or 610-929-6639.

Gingrich Library

The Gingrich Library provides resources to assist Albright students with their class projects and research needs. Located in the Center for Computing and Mathematics, the library offers access to its entire catalog of print materials and DVDs as well as an extensive collection of e-books, electronic journals and databases all available from on-campus, in residence halls or off-campus. A small browsing library and college computers are located in the building. Reference librarians are available to answer questions and help students use resources and find appropriate materials. Students are encouraged to contact a librarian at any stage of the research process. Real-time chat services are available through the library's portal at the library's main page (<http://library.albright.edu>)

Academic Learning Center

The Academic Learning Center (ALC) offers various resources to assist Albright students with their academic success. Students have academic support resources available to them at no charge. The ALC offers course-specific peer tutoring for many general education classes at the 100-200 level. You can request a tutor at this link:

www.albright.edu/academics/tutor_request_form.php. For upperclass students, the ALC offers one-on-one academic coaching on study skills, time management, note-taking, and learning strategies. (The Student Success Specialists offer coaching for first-year students.) The ALC office is located in Teel 309A and the ALC Tutoring Lab is accessible from the tunnel near Jake's Place. Contact the ALC at 610-921-7662 and academiclearningcenter@albright.edu.

Writing Center

You are encouraged to work with the Writing Center early and often to help build a strong foundation for writing in this course and in all of your courses. The center's peer tutors and director will work with you at any stage of the writing process, from developing and organizing ideas to revising and editing drafts. Tutors are also available to discuss and practice approaches to managing the college reading workload and reading more effectively. The center is located in Student Center Classroom 1, on the lower level near the mailroom and can be reached at writingcenter@albright.edu. For online chat sessions (with a whiteboard for revision and options for audio-video or type chat), use our appointment system at <http://alb.mywconline.com>. For e-mail-based feedback, you can submit an essay using this form: <https://www.albright.edu/about-albright/offices-departments/writing-center/essay-feedback-form/>.

The Writing Center may not be available during some holiday breaks.

Office of Student Accessibility and Advocacy

Consistent with the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Albright College welcomes students with disabilities into the college's educational programs. If you need impairment-related academic adjustments in this course, please contact Sherry Young, Director of Student Accessibility and Advocacy, by email at SAA@albright.edu or by phone at 610-921-7503. Our office is located in the Student Center Conference Room. Students should contact the office to schedule an appointment. Students who use accommodations should meet with course instructors privately and in a timely manner to discuss their Academic Accommodation Letter (AAL). *Please note that IEPs and 504 plans do not apply to college-level courses*

Academic Dishonesty

The policies of the College regarding academic dishonesty can be found on the College's website at <http://www.albright.edu/catalog/academicpolicies.html>. Please read these policies as it applies to all facets of this course. Please become aware as to what constitutes academic dishonesty.