Important Information:

Lecture: MWF 11-12 (including required section)
Location: First day – Sever Hall 213, then hopefully moving to Emerson 310
Professor: Jeffrey McDonough
Office Hours: 314 Emerson Hall, Friday, 3-5 p.m. and by appointment
E-mail: jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu
Course Web Page: Through my.harvard, Course iSite

Required Text (available at the Coop):

Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. R. Ariew & D. Garber (Hackett), Abbrviated below as AG.

Recommended Texts:


Course Description:

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were among the most exciting and revolutionary periods in the history of philosophy. Among the most prominent philosophers working in that period, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz have traditionally been grouped together under the label “Continental Rationalists” in virtue of their embrace of systematic metaphysics and emphasis on rational reflection as a source of knowledge. This course aims to provide an overview of the development of early modern rationalism while exploring in some detail a number of central issues, arguments and controversies. Topics will include philosophical methodology, skepticism, knowledge, substance, mind-body relations, and the metaphysical foundations of science.
**Requirements and Grading:**

1. **Reading**

The ability to read texts carefully and thoughtfully is one of the most important skills the study of philosophy can help to foster. In order to better understand what is being taught, and to promote informed classroom discussions, required readings should be completed before lecture. Those readings are typically very short, but also very difficult, and students who wish to do well in the course should expect to read assigned texts more than once.

2. **Papers**

In order to give students a chance to explore topics in greater depth, and to improve their writing skills, each student will be required to write two short papers and one longer term paper over the course of the semester. Each short paper should be 3-5 pages double-spaced. Undergraduate term papers should be 12-15 pages. Graduate term papers should be 15-20 pages. Students should write one paper on each of the philosophers we are studying, but they can choose which philosophers to write their short essays on and which philosopher they write their term paper on. (So, for example, one student may wish to write her term paper on Descartes, and short papers on Spinoza and Leibniz. Her first paper will be due when the short Spinoza papers are due, her second paper will be due when the short Leibniz papers are due, and her term paper will be due at the end of the semester when all term papers are due. Another student may wish to write his term paper on Leibniz, and short papers on Descartes and Spinoza. His first paper will be due when the short Descartes papers are due, his second paper will be due when the short Spinoza papers are due, and his term paper will be due at the end of the semester when all term papers are due.) Please submit papers to jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu as Word documents.

3. **Grading**

Grades will be determined by: classroom participation and papers according to the following percentages:

- Participation: 20 %
- First short paper: 20 %
- Second short paper: 20 %
- Term paper: 40 %

4. **Special Needs and Emergencies**

Students requiring special assistance are encouraged to inform the professor at the beginning of the term. I will be happy to accommodate those with special needs as far as possible. Absences from class or exam periods and late papers will be dealt with in accordance with the policies described in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences handbooks. Students should expect that late papers will be marked down a third of a letter grade for each day that they are late. Requests made to the professor prior to an absence or due date may result in special accommodation.
5. Academic Integrity

Collaboration is permitted in written work: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you should acknowledge this assistance by adding a footnote at the end of your paper that says something like "I would like to thank so-and-so for her helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper."

Tentative Schedule

(1) Wednesday, September 4: Introduction to Early Modern Rationalism

Required Reading: Syllabus

• Friday, September 6: No discussion section first week

—DESCARTES—

(2) Monday, September 9: Descartes’s Life, Works, and Early Method

Required Reading: Replies to Second Set of Objections (selection)=CSM 2:110-113; Rule XII=CSM 1:39-51; Discourse on Method, Part VI=CSM 1:141-151.

Optional Reading: Discourse on Method, Parts I-V=CSM 1:111-141

(3) Wednesday, September 11: Epistemology: Doubt

Required reading: Meditation 1=CSM 2:12-15; “First Objection and Reply” from Third Set of Objections=CSM 2:121.

Optional reading: Dedication, Preface, and Synopsis to the Meditations=CSM 2:3-11.

• Friday, September 13: Discussion Section
(4) Monday, September 16: Epistemology: Certainty

*Required reading:* Meditations II-V=CSM 2:16-49


(5) Wednesday, September 18: Cartesian Matter


• Friday, September 20: Discussion Section

(6) Monday, September 23: Eternal Truths

*Required reading:* Letter to Mersenne 27 May 1630=CSMK 25-26; Reply to Fifth Set of Objections (selection)=CSM 2:261-3; Meditation 6 (selected paragraph)=CSM 2:54; Section 6 from Sixth Set of Replies=CSM 2:291-292; “For [Arnauld] 29 July 1648-Section 6=CSMK:358-59; Letter to Gibieuf 19 January 1642=CSMK 201-204.


(7) Wednesday, September 25: The Real Distinction between Mind and Body

*Required reading:* Meditation VI=CSM 2:50-62; Selection from the Fourth Set of Objections=CSM 2:139-144.

*Optional reading:* Principles 1:60=CSM 1:213; Selection from First Set of Objections=CSM 2:72-73; Selection from First Set of Replies=CSM 2:85-86; Selection from Second Set of Replies - Proposition IV=CSM 2:119-120; Selection from Discourse on Method, Part 4=CSM 1:127; Selection from Preface to Meditations=CSM 2:7; Fourth Set of Objections=CSM 2:139-144; Fourth Set of Replies CSM 2:154-162; Point 5 from Fifth Set of Objections=CSM 2:238-239

• Friday, September 27: Discussion Section
(8) Monday, September 30: Mind-Body Union

*Required reading*: Descartes to Princess Elizabeth 21 May 1643=CSMK 217-220; Descartes to Princess Elizabeth 28 June 1643=CSMK 226-229; The Passions of the Soul Part I, Article 30=CSM 1:339; Descartes to Regius December 1641=CSMK 200-201; Letter to Regius January 1642=CSMK 205-209.

*Optional reading*: Passage from Gassendi’s Fifth Set of Objections=CSM 2:236-7; The Passions of the Soul, Part I, Article 34=CSM 1:341; Selection from Sixth Meditation (again)=CSM 2:56-62; “Gravity Example” in Sixth Set of Replies=CSM 2:297f; Arnauld to Descartes [July 1648] AT 5:215 (not in CSMK); More to Descartes 11 December 1648 AT 5:238-39 (not in CSMK).

--SPINOZA--

(9) Wednesday, October 2: Spinoza’s Life, Works, and Methods

*Required reading*: The Emendation of the Intellect, Paragraphs 1-49 (available on course web site); Also quickly look through the *Ethics* for a feel of its presentation and structure.

*Optional reading*: The Emendation of the Intellect, Paragraphs 50-110 (available on course web site); Letter 37 (all of Spinoza’s letters listed in the syllabus will be available on the course web site).

• Friday, October 4: Discussion Section

    --- Descartes Short Papers Due by Monday, October 7, 9:00 am ---

(10) Monday, October 7: Substance and Modes

*Required reading*: Ethics 1d3, 1d5, 1p25c.

*Optional reading*: Descartes, Principles 1:51=CSM 1:210; Descartes, Second Set of Replies, “V. Substance” CSM 2:114.

(11) Wednesday, October 9: Attributes

*Required reading*: Ethics 1d4, 1d6, 1p4d, 1p10ds, 1p11, 2d2, 2p47d, Letter 9

*Optional reading*: 1p13cs, 1p19ds, 1p28ds, 2p7s, Letter 10, Letter 64

• Friday, October 11: Discussion Section
• Monday, October 14: Columbus Day – No Classes

(12) Wednesday, October 16: Spinoza’s Master Argument for Monism, Part I

Required reading: Ethics 1d6, 1p5, 1p11, 1p14

Optional reading: Letters 2, 3, 4 (all to Henry Oldenburg)

• Friday, October 18: Out of Town at Conference – No Discussion Section & No Office Hours

(13) Monday, October 21: Spinoza’s Master Argument for Monism, Part II

Required reading: Ethics 1d2, 1d3, 1p6-1p11, 1p14.

Optional reading: Letters 35 and 36.

(14) Wednesday, October 23: Rationalism, Determinism, Necessitarianism

Required reading: Ethics 1p16, 1p28, 1p29, 1p33, 1p34, 1p35.

Optional reading: Letters 40, 54, 74, 75, 80-83; Ethics 1p4d2.


• Friday, October 25: Discussion Section

(15) Monday, October 28: Panpsychism, Parallelism, and Persons

Required reading: Ethics 2 preface, definitions, axioms; 2p3-7.

(16) Wednesday, October 30: Freedom, The Passions, and Eternality

Required reading: Ethics 2 preface, definitions, axioms; 2p3-7; Ethics 4 preface, definitions, axiom, 4p18, 32-35, 37, 67-68, 72s; Ethics 5 preface, axioms, 5p22, 38, 29s

• Friday, November 1: Discussion Section
--LEIBNIZ--

--- Spinoza Short Papers Due by Monday, November 4, 9:00 am ---

(17) Monday, November 4: Leibniz’s Life, Works, and Three Themes

*Required:* “Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason” = AG 206-212; “The Principles of Philosophy, or, The Monadology” = AG 213-224

*Optional:* Discourse on Metaphysics

(18) Wednesday, November 6: Matter


*Optional reading:* Primary Truths (selection)=AG 33-40; Letter to Arnauld 28 November/8 December 1686 (selection)=AG 79-81; Letter to Arnauld 30 April 1687=AG 85-89; Note on Foucher’s Objection=AG145-147; Letters to Johann Bernoulli=AG 167-171; Letter to Samuel Mason (selection) AG 228-230.

• Friday, November 8: Discussion Section

(19) Monday, November 11: Dynamics

*Required reading:* A Specimen of Dynamics I = AG 118-130; Discourse on Metaphysics 17 & 18=AG 49-52.

*Optional reading:* Dynamics: On Power and the Laws of Corporeal Nature=AG 105-111; Letters to De Volder=AG 171-186

(20) Wednesday, November 13: Corporeal substances

*Required reading:* Discourse on Metaphysics, sections 8-14=AG 40-47; Notes on Some Comments by Michel Angelo Fardella (1690)=AG 101-105; Leibniz to de Volder 20 June 1703=AG 174-178; Leibniz to de Volder 1704 or 1705= AG 181-4

*Optional reading:* Leibniz to de Volder 24 March/3 April 1699=AG 171-174; Leibniz to de Volder 30 June 1704=AG 178-181;

• Friday, November 15: Discussion Section
(21) Monday, November 18: Immaterial substances:

Required reading: Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason (1714)=AG 206-213; The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology (1714=AG 213-225; Leibniz to Des Bosses 5 February 1712=AG 198-199.

Optional reading: Notes for Leibniz to Des Bosses 5 February 1712=AG199-200; Leibniz to Des Bosses 26 May 1712=AG 200-201; Leibniz to Des Bosses, 29 May 1716=AG 201-206; Editor’s introduction to “Theological Writings related to the Catholic Demonstrations” (posted on course site [L. 109]); Letter to John Frederick 1679 (posted on course site [L. 259-262]; To Arnauld (28 Nov/8 Dec 1686=AG 77-81; To Arnauld 30 April 1687=AG 81-90

(22) Wednesday, November 20: Space, time and monads

Required reading: Letters to Clark=AG 320-346

Optional reading: Primary Truths (selection: “There is no vacuum”)=AG 33.

• Friday, November 22: Discussion Section

(23) Monday, November 25: Leibniz’s Two Realms

Required reading: “Leibniz’s Exchange of Views with Bayle” available on Jonnathan Bennett’s earlymoderntexts.com

Optional reading: Tentamen Anagogicum: An Analogical Essay in the Investigation of Causes (on course web site)

• Wednesday, November 27: Thanksgiving Break – No Classes

• Friday, November 29: Thanksgiving Break – No Classes

--- Leibniz Short Papers Due by Monday, December 2, 9:00 am ---

(24) Monday, December 2: Student Presentations of Term Paper Topics

(25) Wednesday, December 4: Student Presentations of Term Paper Topics

-- Final Papers Due Monday, December 16, 9:00 am--