

**Philoso 2202F:
[Western] Early Modern Philosophy**

Course Outline 2020-21

Dr. Benjamin Hill

**Fall Term 2020
Lecture (001)
Emergency Remote Learning
MWF / 09:30–10:20***

*TBD by class consensus, see Class Charter below

Instructor: Benjamin Hill (he/him/his)
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Office Hours: F 09:30-10:20*
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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research, and community service.

EMERGENCY REMOTE LEARNING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the current emergency situation is extraordinary and that the extra demands of remote learning are difficult to manage even in the best of times, to say nothing of during the current pandemic. In retooling this course for the current emergency remote learning environment, our aim has been to avail ourselves of the best research and recognized good principles and practices for remote learning. **We pledge that this course will not consist of you watching us speaking into a webcam 3 hours a week.** Because we also recognize the special challenges facing all of us because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've aimed to incorporate recommended structures and progressive strategies for supporting student wellness and well-being, as well as academic achievement, during the pandemic. **We pledge that we will be sensitive to and supportive of everyone's personal challenges and to recognize academic accommodations that a student's specific situation may require.**

COURSE GOAL

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the study of Western early modern philosophy. This includes introducing them to the unique methodology used by historians of early modern philosophy as well as providing guidance regarding good practices. Also introduced will be some of the key figures, texts, topics, and themes that dominated philosophical practice in Western Europe during the early modern period (1550–1800).

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Contemporary Western philosophy (both the Anglo-American and Continental streams) often traces its source to the texts and themes of Western early modern philosophy. It is common for Rene Descartes to be presented as "the father of modern philosophy" and for contemporary practitioners to label themselves or their positions "Kantian," "Humean," or "Cartesian." It is also common for classes dedicated to contemporary Western treatments of philosophical topics to begin with selected readings from Western early modern texts. But philosophy in the early modern period (1550-1800 CE) was also its own endeavor, a unique set of philosophical thinkers working within various traditions and against various historical and cultural backgrounds to wrestle with challenges and concerns both universal to the human condition as well as unique to their own times and periods. This course introduces students to several key figures, texts, topics, and themes that arose within the Western European philosophical tradition during the early modern era. It also introduces students to the unique intellectual activity of the history of philosophy and will develop their abilities to use, appreciate, and engage in research in the history of early modern philosophy. Students enrolled in the course can expect to study selected texts from Michel de Montaigne, Rene Descartes, Princess Elisabeth, Margaret Cavendish, Gottfried Leibniz, John Locke, Anton Wilhelm Amo, Émilie du Châtelet, George Berkeley, David Hume, Lady Mary Shepherd, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, Bernard Mandeville, Joseph Butler, François Poulain de la Barre, Baruch Spinoza, Damaris Cudworth Masham, Mary Astell, Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat Marquis de Condorcet, Olympe de Gouges, Julien Raimond, Ottobah Cugoano, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Students can also expect exercises and activities that will develop their abilities to interpret historical texts, defend their interpretations, and assess the interpretations of others.

Prerequisites: None

Antirequisites: None

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

PREFERRED NAMES AND PRONOUNS

If you prefer to be called something other than the name on file with the Registrar, please let us know. Please also feel free to specify the pronoun(s) you wish to be referred to by. If anyone mispronounces your name or forget your preferred name/pronoun, please correct them. I always greatly appreciate being corrected when I mispronounce or forget someone's preferred name/pronoun.

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CLASS CHARTER

The first week of the course, we will establish a Class Charter, which describes the expectations and norms for our encounters and activities as a group. This is a student participatory activity that is focused on establishing group consensus regarding these expectations and norms. Research points to the many benefits from student participation in forging consensus regarding these expectations and norms. Appendix 1 outlines the basic topics and questions that should be addressed specifically for this class and includes draft text for the class to modify or use for its Charter.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

See [Appendix 2](#) for the alignment of the course learning outcomes with the program and Western degree learning outcomes.

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to:

1. **Articulate** the major themes that animated philosophical discourse in the early modern period primarily in Western Europe in oral and written contexts.
2. **Restate** and **Explain** the primary theories and arguments examined in this course in oral and written contexts.
3. **Question** the theories and arguments presented by the figures and texts studied in oral and written contexts.
4. **Apply** knowledge about the intellectual contexts of the figures and texts studied to interpretations of those texts in oral and written contexts.
5. **Compare** and **Contrast** interpretations of the figures and texts studied in oral and written contexts.
6. **Collect** and **Arrange** premises and conclusion(s) from the texts studied into rigorous argument reconstructions in oral and written contexts.
7. **Construct** coherent and plausible contextualist defenses of their own interpretations and reconstructions in oral and written contexts.
8. **Evaluate** from a contextualist standpoint the coherence and plausibility of interpretations in oral and written contexts.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

All assignments are due at midnight on their specified due dates and must be submitted via OWL or MS Teams unless specified otherwise. Assignments that have an automatic 48-hour grace period may be submitted via OWL or MS Teams as “late” but without any late penalty. To submit an assignment after the 48-hour grace period when the OWL and MS Teams submission portal closes, contact Prof. Hill and, if necessary, your Academic Dean, regarding an academic accommodation and alternative submission. Assignments that are designated “Pass/Fail” will be scored as follows: Pass = 100; Fail (with submission) = 40; No Submission = 0.

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- Homework Assignments (10%)**
- Weekly Philosophical Reflections (20%)**
- Philosophical Interviews (25%)**
- Interpretative Paper Project (35%)**
- Cumulative Final Examination (10%)**

Homework Assignments (10%) [Learning Outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]

Students will be asked to submit for assessment and grading various exercises and projects. Details will be posted in MS Teams and OWL under “CALENDAR” on the date it is due. They will consist of activities to be completed as homework. Each student’s two lowest scores will be dropped and their average across all the remaining assignments will then be calculated. The value of each assignment will depend on the total number of submissions requested of the class. Student should expect to submit 1–2 assignments per week of classes.

In addition, as a component of the homework grade there will be Weekly Questions, which will cover the week’s Reading Assignments. These will be available in MS Teams by Wednesdays of every week and due at the end of every week (midnight on Fridays) and will be graded Pass/Fail. The Weekly Questions will be eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period.

Weekly Philosophical Reflections (20%) [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 6]

At the end of every week (midnight on Fridays), students are required to submit in MS Teams a brief (min 250 words) reflection that critically engages at 2–3 points with the philosophical content of the week’s lesson plan. These should be points at which the primary source material, or its interpretation, seem especially interesting from a philosophical point of view. “Philosophically interesting” can mean a significant vulnerability, a philosophical breakthrough, or an important invulnerability to traditional concerns. Reflections are graded Pass/Fail. Each reflection is eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period.

Philosophical Interviews (25%) [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6]

Twice during the term, working in assigned groups, students are to prepare a slate of 10–12 probing, philosophical questions that could be used in a profile-style interview of a historical philosopher about their philosophical works. Then, working individually, they will submit answers to select questions on behalf of the philosophers.

- Interview #1 (Montaigne; Descartes; Elisabeth; Cavendish; Leibniz)
 - Interview Questions **Due October 7** [group submission; worth 3%; graded Pass/Fail/No Submission]
 - Interview Answers **Due October 16** [worth 8%; graded numerically]
- Interview #2 (Locke; Berkeley; Hume; Shepherd; Butler; Hume)

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- Interview Questions **Due November 13** [group submission; worth 4%; graded Pass/Fail/No Submission]
- Interview Answers **Due November 23** [worth 10%; graded numerically]

Details of each component as well as a grading rubric and guidelines and advice for planning and completing each component can be found in Appendix X and on OWL. Each component is eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period.

Interpretative Term Paper Project (35%) [Learning Outcomes: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]

Students are required to complete an Interpretative Term Paper Project during the term. The Project consists of THREE (3) concrete deliverables:

- A Paper Proposal **Due November 27** [worth 5%; graded Pass/Fail/No Submission with qualitative feedback] specifying the figure, topic, and key passage(s), the guiding interpretative question, and the working hypothesis being explored in the Project;
- An Argument Outline **Due December 4** [worth 10%; graded numerically with qualitative feedback] specifying the structure and character of the defense being developed for the student's Interpretative Term Paper submission; and
- An Interpretative Term Paper (minimum 1250 words) **Due December 9** [worth 20%; graded numerically] that explains and defends the student's interpretation.

An interpretative paper defends a way of understanding the philosophical content of a selection of key texts. Its thesis is that these texts should be read in a certain way, which expresses a certain type of philosophical idea(s) or argument(s). An argument outline is an outline of the student's argument presented in the interpretative paper as a defense of their interpretation. A paper proposal is a brief description of the figure(s) and topic to be engaged in the paper, a statement of the central interpretative question to be solved in the project, and a preliminary, provisional statement of what the student anticipates the solution will prove to be. Details of each component as well as a grading rubric and guidelines and advice for planning and completing each component can be found in Appendix X and on OWL. Each component of the project is eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period.

Cumulative Final Examination (10%) [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2,3, 5]

Students are required to complete a self-administered, timed cumulative final examination. The examination may include multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer questions. The examination will be available via OWL "Quizzes and Tests" during a 48-hour window during the Final Examination period at a date and time set by the Academic Dean or the Registrar's Office. The examination will be open-book, open-note, and open-resource. Students, however, are not to collaborate, discuss, consult with one another, or jointly complete the examination; completing the examination must be an individual effort for each student. An honor pledge will be included with each examination. The examinations will cover all the materials in the assigned readings and

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course materials and all material presented, discussed, or reviewed during class or engaged with during in-class activities.

- Final Examination (cumulative), **Date TBD** [worth 10%; graded numerically]

Student may request that the window for writing the exam be adjusted based on their schedules. A grading rubric for Short Answer Questions on the Examinations can be found in [Appendix Y](#) and on OWL. Rubrics seem unnecessary for the multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions.

Extra Credit [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 8]

Opportunities for extra credits may be made available throughout the term. Some may be for extra credit on the score of a particular assignment; some may be for extra credit on one's course grade. All opportunities will be announced in MS Teams and on OWL with the expectations and potential credits specified.

- **ExCr Opportunity #1: "Critical Review" Due December 6** [Learning outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 8]

Students may receive up to TEN (10) points added on top of their final course average for writing a critical review (minimum 1000 words) of a book or analogous philosophical resource (listed below). Details of the assignment and rubric are contained in Appendix X and posted on OWL. The resources available for review are:

- a) Peter Adamson and Chike Jeffers, "Africana Philosophy," episodes 1 and 9–39, released 31 March 2018 through 10 November 2019, History of Philosophy without any Gaps, by Peter Adamson, podcast, 14:20 <https://historyofphilosophy.net/africana-philosophy>;
- b) Halla Kim, *Korean Philosophy: A Brief History*, manuscript;
- c) Toby Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Essay Course Word Count

As a course that satisfies the senior level essay course requirement, student enrolled in this course should expect to submit a minimum of 2500 words of written work.

Department Target Average Policy

The Philosophy Department has a policy requiring a 74 average for each 2nd year course. The grades I assign will be in the OWL "Gradebook". Should there be any discrepancy between the grade I recorded for you in OWL and your "official" grade reported by the Registrar, you should contact the Philosophy Department Undergraduate Chair for clarification and explanation. Western's current policies and procedures for undergraduate student academic appeals can be found [here](#).

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REQUIRED TEXTS

Eugene Marshall and Susanne Sreedhar, eds., *A New Modern Philosophy: The Inclusive Anthology of Primary Sources* (New York: Routledge, 2019);
Margaret Cavendish, *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*, edited by Anne M. Thell (Peterborough: Broadview, 2020);
Catharine Trotter Cockburn, *Philosophical Writings*, edited by Patrica Sheridan (Peterborough: Broadview, 2006).

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

We have a closed Facebook group, Earlymodphil2020, which you are welcome to join. I will record office hours Fridays 09:30-10:20 EDT* on Facebook Live and post the video to this group. For my virtual office hour, you are invited to post questions or comments ahead of time on the Facebook Group page or into the comments during the Facebook Live event, or to post questions ahead of time in the appropriate MS Teams Channel or the OWL "Forum" for questions. All questions received will be answered during the Facebook Live virtual office hour. Should you wish to discuss something private and confidentially with me, please contact me to arrange an alternative meeting time.

COURSE SOCIAL MEDIA

In addition to our official OWL site, we have a course website and blog as well as social media presence.

Website and blog:

Facebook public page: <http://www.facebook.com/WEModPhil>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DrBenjaminHill1>

To receive credit for any public event or social media challenge, your posting must include the official course tags. Students without any social media presence or who wish not to post anything that might compromise their personal privacy to social media should contact Prof. Hill regarding alternative ways of documenting their participation or meeting the social media challenge(s).

@drbenjaminhill1

@WEModPhil

#2202westernearlymodphil

#westernearlymodphil2020

#westernu

PROFESSIONALISM

Education is a professional activity and campus is a professional environment. Everyone is expected to comport themselves in a manner appropriate for and conducive of such an environment. All academic activities, interactions, and conversations should be conducted in a respectful, inclusive, and professional manner. **Judgmental, belittling,**

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shaming, rude, ridiculing, bullying, and all other such behavior, comments, and attitudes are inappropriate and will not be tolerated. We require that all discussion be respectful and kind even when that discussion is critical, defensive, emotional, and contradictory.

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AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website [here](#). It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Western Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found [here](#).

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less. The conditions in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances are [here](#).



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EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

For Phil 2202F the following grades will be available prior **TBD**, a total of **xx.xx**% of your final grade:

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, [here](#).

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](#).

SUPPORT SERVICES

[Registrarial Services](#)

[Student Support Services](#)

[Services provided by the USC](#)

[Student Development Centre](#)

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.