

Philosophy 306: The Rationalists (Fall Semester 2024)

Section: A01 (CRN: 12627)

Course Information, Recommended Supplementary Reading, Schedule

I. Course Information

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| <u>Class Time:</u> | Mon. & Thurs. 11:30 – 12:50 a.m. |
| <u>Room Number:</u> | to be announced |
| <u>Instructor:</u> | David Scott |
| <u>Office:</u> | CLE B320 |
| <u>Office Hours (zoom):</u> | Tues. & Wed. 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. (by appointment only) |
| <u>Email:</u> | djfsco@uvic.ca |

ABOUT THIS COURSE:

Rationalism is one of the most historically important streams of philosophy, and it informs and motivates much philosophical activity. It is the name given to a broadly defined set of positions and doctrines, all of which tend to involve the ideas that (i) in some sense human reason or rationality is something real in itself, and (ii) the universe exhibits reason or is rational and can be known by us as rational beings. Rationalism is expressed in the views that everything that exists has a reason, and that humans possess the ability, in the form of a faculty of reason, to apprehend the rational character of the universe.

In this course we shall examine some of rationalism's most famous and influential proponents, all of whom were active in the enlightenment period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We shall be focusing on works by René Descartes (*Rules for the Direction of the Mind, Discourse on Method, Meditations, and Principles of Philosophy*), and Gottfried W. Leibniz (*Discourse on Metaphysics, Monadology*). We may also be supplementing these studies with brief excursions into the philosophies of Malebranche and Spinoza.

Although we will be looking at these works in the order listed here, because these works interconnect to a significant degree, at the outset of this course I will occasionally be referring ahead to the later works on this list. Therefore, I strongly advise you to *start reading these works straight away*, in order to gain an early appreciation of the systematic, interconnected nature of the writings you will be studying.

TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIAL:

1. René Descartes. *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 2000. Paper ISBN-13: 978-0872205024

2. G.W. Leibniz, *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989 (ISBN: 9780872200623)*

*Please Note: There is a free electronic access version of this Leibniz text available to UVic students through the UVic library. Go to the following website:

<http://pm.nlx.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/xtf/search?browse-subject-continental=true;brand=default>

When you get to the page with the heading “Continental Philosophy”, and are asked to “Select a Title”, you need to select the *second* title on that list, namely, “Continental Rationalists, The”. Once you bring up that page, the text of Leibniz’s writings that we’re using for this course is listed on the left, under the heading “Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz Philosophical Essays”.

MARKING SCHEME:

(a) in-class test (25%); (b) take-home essay (35%); (c) final exam (40%).

All grading in this course will done by the course instructor (not by teaching assistant).

Letter grades correspond to the following marks: A+ = 90 - 100, A = 85 - 89, A- = 80 - 84, B+ = 77 - 79, B = 73 - 76, B- = 70 - 72, C+ = 65 - 69, C = 60 - 64, D = 50 - 59, F = 0 - 49.

MAIN EVALUATION CRITERIA:

The criteria I use to evaluate essays are those which common sense would suggest when it comes to assessing philosophical writing. Primarily my concern is with content or substance, i.e., the course material; and in this respect the guiding question concerns the extent to which a student has understood the material.

In indicating the evaluation criteria for this course, I emphasize that philosophy is an arts or humanities subject, which means that assessing the merits of philosophical writing ultimately requires qualitative evaluation or judgment on my part. Therefore, I do not assign precise numerical values to the following assessment criteria; nor is there a mathematical formula I can employ to judge the quality of your work. However, as a rough guide I employ a list of relative priorities, presented here in ascending order of importance:

- spelling/grammar
- organization & clarity of expression
- accuracy of exposition
- use of examples reflecting understanding of the subject
- breadth of analysis, i.e., number of points covered
- depth of analysis, i.e., how far into the issue analysis is pushed

- resourcefulness, originality and imagination
- tightness, rigor or logical coherence of analysis
- overall quality of philosophical insight and expression

I emphasize that, with the exception of the last criterion—that of overall quality of philosophical insight and expression—in practice the ranking of these criteria is not absolute. Thus, sometimes less important criteria will be given more weight than more important ones. For instance, a student’s use and analysis of examples might be so good that I am led to conclude that that student has an excellent understanding of the subject. In such a case the value I attach to the use of examples might increase significantly, and I might lay less emphasis on the fact that the student has failed (for instance) to cover as many points as other students.

CLASS ATTENDANCE:

Under the heading of “Attendance”, Vic’s Undergraduate Calendar states the following: “Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled.” The full policy statement in the calendar is here:

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/ryNResf_E?bc=true&bcCurrent=03%20%20Attendance&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemtype=policies.

In this course there is a minimum attendance requirement: attendance is required for a minimum of 13 classes. Attendance will be taken every class, and students who fail to meet this minimum attendance requirement will be debarred from writing the final examination (worth 40%).

In this course class attendance is also required for students wishing to discuss class content during office hours. While students are welcome and encouraged to come to office hours to discuss class content, to do so students must first have attended class, or at least have listened to the recordings of the relevant missed class(es) that are posted on Brightspace. Student use of office hours should function primarily as supplement to classroom lecture and discussion. Office hours are not intended as private tutorial time with the course instructor, which is a service not provided by UVic.

Finally, as noted above, class attendance is extremely important in this course when it comes to essays and tests because, when it comes to these forms of evaluation, the minimum expectation is that you deal with *the material covered in class as covered in class*. In all assignments you need to take explicit account of and do justice to the material covered in class as it has been covered. Obviously, the best way to do this is to attend class.

If you happen to miss a class, a recording of the class will be posted on Brightspace shortly thereafter (usually within 24 hours).

IN-CLASS DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION:

In general my classes tend to involve lots of discussion. I encourage and greatly value your in-class contributions, and I can assure you that other students do too. It is a frequently unacknowledged fact of the classroom that if you have a question or comment, it's highly likely that others have the same one too. So, go ahead and ask your question, or make your comment: it helps me, you, and your classmates. If, however, you are more reserved but still have comments or questions, either send me some questions in an email or come see me during office hours.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT & MISCELLANEOUS CLASS POLICIES:

(a) The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and supportive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to this experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment. The University will not tolerate racism, sexualized violence, or any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Humanities. As part of professionalism, students, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with University policies, including the [Tri-Faculty's Standards for Professional Behaviour](#).

Please be advised that by logging into UVic's learning systems and interacting with online resources, and by attending class, you are engaging in a university activity.

All interactions within this environment are subject to the university expectations and policies. Any concerns about student conduct, may be reviewed and responded to in accordance with the appropriate university policy.

To report concerns about online student conduct: onlineconduct@uvic.ca

(b) Coming late to class: The classroom is a work environment, and when students arrive late this can be a distraction. So please try to be on time.

(c) Visits to the classroom by non-registered students: As the instructor for this class I am duty-bound to ensure that a work environment is preserved in the course. Both students and I can find it a distraction for strangers to walk into the classroom. It takes some students time before they gain confidence to participate in the class proceedings, and the presence of a stranger can be disruptive in that regard. If, as sometimes happens, you wish to invite a friend to attend my class to check it out, please ask permission ahead of time.

(d) Use of computers in the class: For the purpose of taking notes, you are of course welcome to use laptops with quiet keyboards in the classroom. Watching films and other distracting uses of computers are prohibited.

(e) Missed classes: An audio recording of each class will be available on the Brightspace site for this course, usually within 24 hours of class, should you wish to hear any class that you have missed or simply want to listen again to a class.

EMAILING ME:

Because of problems with SPAM and viruses transmitted by email, I request that whenever you email me you make sure to put something in the subject line of your email that identifies you as a student in this course. If you don't do this, and I don't recognize your name, I will delete your email without opening it.

In contacting me, I would greatly appreciate it if you observed the (still) standard courtesy of beginning your emails with a salutation, e.g., "Dear Dr. Scott", "Hello Dr. Scott", etc. (as opposed to, e.g., "Hey Dave" or "Dude", which is too informal). Use of formal salutation is social etiquette rooted in the recognition that people are not simply inanimate objects (like ATM machines), but should be addressed before being spoken to. After all, unlike ATM machines, humans have the option to respond, so it's wise to ask them nicely.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Cheating of any kind, including collusion (working with others too closely) and plagiarism from (i) books and/or articles, (ii) other students' papers, and (iii) papers or other material on the internet, is a serious academic offence. So too is the use of AI-based programs in the production of essays. On this score, please note that if I suspect that a student has used an AI-based program (e.g., Chat GPT) in the production of an essay, I reserve the right to test that student's knowledge of their own essay in a live, oral exam on that essay. If I am not satisfied that the student's essay has been produced without the use of AI, the matter will be referred to the departmental chair as a potential case of academic dishonesty.

University regulations also prohibit students from submitting the same work for two different courses; in other words, plagiarizing or "recycling" one's own work is not permitted. If detected, cheating can result in dismissal from this course (with an "F"), and dismissal from the university.

Here is a link to the University's Academic Integrity policy:

<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html#>

EDITING:

The university has a strict view about seeking the help of others for editing: "An editor is an individual or service, other than the instructor or supervisory committee, who manipulates, revises, corrects or alters a student's written or non-written work. The use of an editor, whether paid or unpaid, is prohibited unless the instructor grants explicit

written authorization. The instructor should specify the extent of editing that is being authorized. Review by fellow students and tutoring that do not include editing are normally permitted. In addition to consulting with their instructors, students are encouraged to seek review of and feedback on their work that prompts them to evaluate the work and make changes themselves.”

SUBMITTING AND RETURNING GRADED WORK:

a) All essays must be typed (12-font, Times), double-spaced, paginated, and contain the word-count on the front cover. Submission of your essays will be either through Brightspace or as a hard copy (or both), and the method of submission will be indicated on each assignment. In general, I do not accept essays submitted as email attachments. I will not be available to discuss test or essay questions on the day before or on the due date of submission, as I need to avoid being swamped by last-minute enquiries.

b) Your graded work will be returned either through Brightspace or in class (in person), within two weeks of its having been submitted. (Because I do not use graduate students to grade your assignments, returning your work often takes longer than it does in courses in which graduate students are used as graders.)

When your graded work is returned to you it will frequently be annotated with comments. If you wish to discuss your graded work with me, please read those comments first. To give you a chance to do this, as a matter of policy I do not discuss work on the same day as it is returned.

In cases when I return graded work in class (in person), it is *up to students* to claim their work: I am not responsible for tracking students down to deliver their work. Normally I will bring graded papers to class three times in a row, where students have the opportunity to claim it. After that, any unclaimed assignments can be obtained from me in person, by appointment.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS / MISSED TESTS:

Late assignments unaccompanied by a legitimate excuse will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day or portion thereof, to a maximum of 20% (i.e., after four days, no late assignments will be accepted). Late assignments will be accepted without penalty only when justified by a medical or other academically legitimate reason.

OFFICE HOURS:

Office hours will be conducted synchronously (by Zoom), and there will be a total of two office hours per week dedicated specifically to this course. If for some reason you cannot meet me in my posted office-hour times, please contact me to arrange an alternative time. Because of demand (especially near test days or essay due-dates), if you wish to see me during office hours you need to make an appointment ahead of time. To meet with me in my office hours, contact me either in class or by email, and I will send you the Zoom link for the appointment.

To get the most out of your appointment, it's best to come prepared with specific questions about the course material. While students are welcomed and encouraged to come to office hours to discuss course related matters (incl. class content, tests, essays, etc.), students wishing to make an appointment to discuss class content in particular need first to have attended class, or at least to have listened to the recordings of the relevant missed class(es) that are posted on Brightspace. This requirement is to prevent this course's office hours being used simply as a way for students to catch up on classes they have missed. Missed classes can be made up by listening to the class recordings posted on Brightspace.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OF MATERIAL ON LMS WEBSITE:

Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website: Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity:

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies

Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

All course content and materials are made available by instructors for educational purposes and for the exclusive use of students registered in their class. The material is protected under copyright law, even if not marked with a ©. Any further use or distribution of materials to others requires the written permission of the instructor, except under fair dealing or another exception in the Copyright Act. Violations may result in disciplinary action under the Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations policy (AC1300).

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

II. Recommended Supplementary Reading

A. General Accounts of Rationalism & the Early Modern Period:

Aune, B. *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Pragmatism*. New York: Random House, 1970.

- Buchdahl, Gerd. *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science: The Classical Origins: Descartes to Kant*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969.
- Collins, J. *God in Modern Philosophy*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960.
- Cottingham, J.G. *Rationalism*, London: Paladin Books, 1984. [B833 C67]
- Cottingham, J.G. *The Rationalists*, Oxford & New York: Oxford U.P., 1988. [B791 H5 v.4]
- Hamlyn, D.W. *Sensation and Perception* (ch. 5), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.
- Jarrett, C.E., King-Farlow, J. & Pelletier, F. J. (eds.) *New Essays on Rationalism and Empiricism*, Guelph, Ontario: Canadian Journal of Philosophy, sup. vol. 4, 1978.
- Jolley, N. *The Light of the Soul*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. [B822 J65]
- Kenny, A. (ed.) *Rationalism, Empiricism and Idealism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. [B791 R33]
- Koyré, Alexandre. *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*.
- Laporte, J. *Études d'histoire de la philosophie française au xvii siècle*, Paris: J. Vrin, 1951.
- Lennon, T.M. *The Battle of Gods and Giants: The Legacies of Descartes and Gassendi, 1655-1715*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. P., 1993.
- Loeb, L.E. *From Descartes to Hume*, Ithica, NY: Cornell U.P., 1981.
- Parkinson, G.H.R. (ed.) *Routledge History of Philosophy* (vol. 4): *The Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century Rationalism*, London: Routledge, 1993. [B 770 R38]
- Phemister, Pauline. *The Rationalists: Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz*. Cambridge: Polity 2006.
- von Leyden, W.M. *Seventeenth Century Metaphysics*, London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1968. [B801 L44]
- Woolhouse, R. S. *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth Century Metaphysics*, London & New York: Routledge 1993.
- Yolton, J. *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid*, Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1984.

B. Books on Descartes:

- Alanen, L. *Descartes's Concept of Mind*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Broadie, F. *An Approach to Descartes' "Meditations"*. [B1854 B7]
- Chappell, V. (ed.) *Rene Descartes (Essays on Early Modern Philosophers, vol. 1)*, New York & London: Garland 1992.
- Cottingham, J.G. *Descartes*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986. [B1873 C67]
- Cottingham, J.G. *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press 1992. [B1873 C34]
- Gibson, A. Boyce. *The Philosophy of Descartes*, London: Methuen 1932.
- Hatfield, Gary. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Descartes and the Meditations*, London & New York: Routledge 2003.
- Keeling, S.V. *Descartes*, London: Ernest Benn 1934. [B1875 K37 1968]
- Kemp Smith, Norman. *New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes*, London: Macmillan 1952. [B1875 S58]

- Kenny, A. *Descartes: A Study of his Philosophy*, New York: Random House 1968.
[B1875 K4]
- Laporte, J. *Le rationalisme de Descartes*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1950.
- Rorty, A. O. (ed.) *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*, Berkeley: U. of California Press 1986.
- Rozemond, M. *Descartes's Dualism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998.
[B1875 M55 R68]
- Schouls, P. *Descartes and the Enlightenment*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., 1989. [B1875 S365]
- Wilson, M.D. *Descartes*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978. [B1875 W58]

C. Books on Leibniz:

- Adams, Robert. *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Broad, C. D. and C. Lewey. *Leibniz: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Brown, Stuart C. *Leibniz*, Brighton: Harvester, 1984. [B2598 B75]
- Carr, H. W. *Leibniz*. Dover, 1960.
- Frankfurt, Harry G. *Leibniz. A Collection of Critical Essays*. [B2598 F67]
- Hacking, Ian. *Leibniz and Descartes: Proof and Eternal Truths*, Longwood Publishing Group, 1973.
- Hooker, Michael. *Leibniz: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, 1982. [B2598 L435]
- Jolley, Nicholas, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*, Cambridge University Press, 1995. [B2598 C335]
- Joseph, H. W. B. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Leibniz*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949.
- Kulstad, Mark. *Leibniz On Apperception, Consciousness, and Reflection*, Philosophia, 1991.
- MacDonald, R. G. *Leibniz*, Oxford University Press, 1984.
- McRae, Robert. *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception and Thought*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976. [B2599 K7M3]
- Martin, Gottfried, *Leibniz: Logic and Metaphysics*, Manchester University Press, 1963.
- Mungello, David E. *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord*. University of Hawaii Press, 1977.
- Parkinson, G.H.R. *Logic and Reality in Leibniz's Metaphysics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965. [B2599 M7P3]
- Rescher, Nicholas. *Leibniz, An Introduction to his Philosophy*, 1979. [B2598 R48]
- Rescher, Nicholas. *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Ross, G. MacDonald. *Leibniz*, 1984. [B2598 M24]
- Russell, Bertrand. *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, 2nd. ed. Cambridge University Press, 1937. [B2598 R8 1937]
- Rutherford, Donald. *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, 1995. [B2598 R83]
- Saw, Ruth Lydia. *Leibniz*, 1954. [B2598 S24]
- Van Peursen, C. A. *Leibniz*. Dutton, 1970.
- Wilson, Catherine. *Leibniz's Metaphysics: A Historical and Comparative Study*, 1989.
[B2599 M7W54]

Woolhouse, R. S. *Leibniz: Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

III. SCHEDULE*

WEEK 1 (Class 1: Sept. 5)

1. Thurs. Sept. 5 - Introduction. Rationalism, Plato & Aristotle, and Enlightenment.

WEEK 2 (Classes 2 & 3: Sept. 9 & 12)

2. Mon. Sept. 9 - Descartes: *Rules for the Direction of the Mind; Discourse on Method*.

3. Thurs. Sept. 12 - Descartes: *Meditations*.

WEEK 3 (Classes 4 & 5: Sept. 16 & 19)

4. Mon. Sept. 16 - Descartes: *Meditations*.

Tues. Sept. 17 - Last day for dropping course with 100% recovery of course fee.

5. Thurs. Sept. 19 - Descartes: *Meditations*.

Fri. Sept. 20 - Last day for adding course.

Fri. Sept. 21 - **First Essay Topic Assigned**: Due

WEEK 4 (Classes 6 & 7: Sept. 23 & 26)

6. Mon. Sept. 23 - Descartes: *Meditations*.

7. Thurs. Sept. 26 - Descartes: *Meditations*.

WEEK 5 (Class 8: Oct. 3)

Mon. Sept. 30 - **No Class (National Day of Truth and Reconciliation)**

8. Thurs. Oct. 3 - **Mid-term exam**.

WEEK 6 (Classes 9 & 10: Oct. 7 & 10)

9. Mon. Oct. 7 - Descartes: *Meditations* & Variations of Cartesianism.

Tues. Oct. 8 - Last day for dropping course with 50% reduction fees.

10. Thurs. Oct. 10 - Variants of Cartesianism: Spinoza & Malebranche.

WEEK 7 (Class 11: Oct. 17)

Mon. Oct. 14 - **No Class (Thanksgiving Day)**

11. Thurs. Oct. 17 - Variants of Cartesianism: Spinoza & Malebranche.

Fri. Oct. 17 - **First Essay Due.**

WEEK 8 (Classes 12 & 13: Oct. 21 & 24)

12. Mon. Oct. 21- Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

13. Thurs. Oct. 24 - Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

WEEK 9 (Classes 14 & 15: Oct. 28 & 31)

14. Mon. Oct. 28- Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

15. Thurs. Oct. 31 - Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

- Last day for withdrawing from course without penalty of failure.

WEEK 10 (Class 16 & 17: Nov. 4 & 7)

16. Mon. Nov. 4 - Leibniz: *Monadology* & Other Writings.

17. Thurs. Nov. 7 - Leibniz: *Monadology* & Other Writings.

WEEK 11 (Class 18: Nov. 14)

Mon. Nov. 11 - **No Class (Remembrance Day)**

18. Thurs. Nov. 14 - **Guest lecturer (Professor away at conference)**

WEEK 12 (Classes 19 & 20: Nov. 18 & 21)

19. Mon. Nov. 18 - Leibniz: *Monadology* & Other Writings.

20. Thurs. Nov. 21 - Leibniz: *Monadology* & Other Writings.

WEEK 13 (Classes 21 & 22: Nov. 25 & 28)

21. Mon. Nov. 25 - Leibniz: *Monadology* & Other Writings.

22. Thurs. Nov. 28 - Leibniz: *Monadology* & Other Writings.

WEEK 14 (Class 23: Dec. 2)

23. Mon. Dec. 2 - Course Review.

Exams for first term begin on Dec. 7 and end on Dec. 20.

* This schedule is subject to revision, as sometimes discussion and the flow of ideas in class require us to spend more time on certain subjects, less time on others, than originally planned.