

**Philosophy 306: The Rationalists (Winter Session 2020, First Term [Fall])
Section: A01 (CRN: 12450 S)**

General Course Information, Recommended Supplementary Reading

I. General Course Information

Class Time (live Zoom): Mon. & Thurs. 8:30 – 9:50 a.m. [synchronous]
Instructor: David Scott
Office: CLE B320
Office Hours (Live Zoom): Tues. & Wed. 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
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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 in some sense reason is real and that the universe exhibits reason or is rational. It is expressed in the views that everything 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 and as quickly as possible, 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. You will find this under the heading "Continental Rationalists, The" on the following website:

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

MARKING SCHEME:

Your work in this course will be evaluated exclusively by means of *four* take-home essay-style assignments consisting of one or more long-answer questions. These assignments are scheduled at roughly equal intervals throughout the semester. (Please refer to the separate course schedule provided in Brightspace.) Each assignment is worth 25% of your overall grade. All grading in this course will be 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, I believe, criteria which common sense would suggest in the assessment of philosophical writing. Primarily my concern is with content or substance, i.e., the course material; and in this respect the guiding question is the extent to which a student has understood the material. Of course, this does not mean that form or style count for nothing (and indeed it may not ultimately be possible to divorce form from content).

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, IN-CLASS DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPATION:

In this course you can assume that all essay topics are intended to test you on *the material covered in class*. You are of course permitted and encouraged to supplement class lectures and discussion of the subject with outside material, but the minimum expectation is that you deal with the material covered in class, and that you address the points raised there about that material. This does not mean that for essays you are expected merely to repeat the in-class proceedings. Rather, it means that *you are expected to take explicit account of the texts and passages covered in class and to do justice to the in-class discussions of them. Needless to say, the best way to ensure that you take account of the texts and passages covered in class, is to attend class.*

I cannot stress enough how important attendance is for writing your essay assignments. These constitute the sole means by which you are to be evaluated in this course, and the questions asked in those assignments are based solely on class lectures and discussions—not discussion group presentations, not class participation assignments, etc. The essay assignments for this course constitute part of a continuous whole with the lectures and in-class discussions. They do not float free of the work done in class, but are deliberately constructed to incorporate what goes on there. Certainly, these essays also provide you with room to explore topics more deeply than they have been treated in class, and good essays will do precisely that. Thus, very roughly speaking, “B+” and “A-” papers take account of and rise to the level of the class discussion; “A” and “A+” papers take that discussion to a higher/deeper level.

Another reason attendance is so important in this course is that, in general, there is not a lot of time between the date on which essay-assignment topics are made available to you and the date on which they are due for submission. In this course, the due dates for all essay-question assignments fall approximately after every six classes. However, from the time the topics are made available to you to the time they are due for submission, there are usually only three classes. This leaves a relatively short window of opportunity to research your answers, which in turn makes classroom attendance significantly more important, since that is where you will find the key information.

In normal times my classes tend to involve lots of discussion, and my hope is to replicate this as closely as possible in the new, online format. 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, please come see me during office hours.

If you happen to miss a live Zoom class, a summary of the material scheduled for that day will always be available through Brightspace. However, it must be emphasized that

these are just summaries, not detailed class-notes. They do little more than list the key themes covered in the lecture on a given day. Thus, without the context of the classes in which to frame them, they are not particularly informative. Finally, though every class will be recorded—to obtain a recording you’ll need to contact me after class—hearing the class after-the-event is never quite the same learning experience as participating in it at the time.

STRONG FOCUS ON PRIMARY TEXTS:

This course is *highly text-focused*, which means that both in instruction and in evaluation (testing) emphasis is put on your ability to understand the assigned readings and class discussions of them. In this course we will not be relying on secondary literature or commentary, though of course you are always welcome to supplement your reading and class lectures/discussions with secondary material.

Because there is such a focus on the texts, students are strongly encouraged to make sure they use the specifically assigned textbook for this course. The philosopher(s) studied in this course originally wrote in languages other than English, so the readings in this course are all translations. Because translations can sometimes differ greatly, it will be of great benefit to you if you use the assigned translation (textbook), on which both class discussion and essay questions/topics will be based. Using the assigned textbook will allow you to work from the same page (literally and figuratively) as everyone else in the class.

DOING PHILOSOPHY BY SYNCHRONOUS ZOOM CLASS:

Likely most students and instructors of philosophy agree that the best way to teach and study the subject is by attending and participating in real-time (live), in-person classes. Obviously, in-person classes are not a possibility as things currently stand. The good news, however, is that at least half of this formula—namely, the back-and-forth of *real-time (live)* instruction discussion—still applies. This is what Zoom provides and we shall be endeavoring to make the most of it. However, please note: because Zoom lacks the in-person dimension, it provides only half of what’s needed to do philosophy in the way people think it’s done best: so *it is especially important that you make sure to attend and participate in the twice-weekly live sessions in which this course is being delivered*. In other words, attending live classes is absolutely vital.

Overall, this greater emphasis on attendance and participation in the live Zoom sessions in this course means that I will be making great efforts, during the class time, to enhance that live experience. You have *a standing invitation to ask questions or make comments* (by hitting the “raise hand” button under the “Participants” button), and as part of this effort to replicate the to-and-fro of live, in-person classroom experience, I’ll be constantly calling for volunteers to answer questions about the material.

In an effort to approximate more closely the in-person classroom experience, you are always welcome to turn on your video during class, if that’s feasible and desirable for you to do. You should note, however, that turning your video function on during your Zoom class uses up more bandwidth, so if this is an issue for you, you might want to

forego that option. If you wish to turn on your video during the session, I ask that you make sure that your background isn't distracting for other students. Keep in mind that it is often possible, depending on the equipment you have, to participate by video using a virtual background of your own choosing.

ONLINE STUDENT CONDUCT:

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.

Please be advised that by logging into UVic's learning systems and interacting with online resources 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

MISSED CLASSES:

If you miss a class and wish to find out what material was covered, please contact me for a recording of the class, or make an appointment to see me in my office hours, when I can provide a summary of what went on.

EMAILING YOUR PROFESSOR:

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 addition to this, 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. 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#>

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*. I will not accept essays that exceed the maximum word limit.

(b) I will not be available to discuss test or essay questions on the day before or on the day they are due to be submitted, as I need to avoid being swamped by last-minute enquiries.

(c) When graded work is returned to you it will frequently be annotated with comments. If you wish to discuss your 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.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS / MISSED TESTS:

Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty, unless justified by a medical or other academically legitimate reason, for which documentation of some kind (e.g., a medical certificate) will generally be required. Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 5% per day (or part-day, including weekend days or part-days), for a maximum of 4 days (20%). After four days, no late assignments will be accepted.

OFFICE HOURS:

Office hours will be conducted live (by Zoom), and to compensate for the lack of in-person contact resulting from the pandemic, there will be a total of two office hours per week dedicated specifically to this course. However, 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. Needless to say, to get the most out of your appointment, it's generally best to come prepared with specific questions.

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.

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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.