Humanities 116: Philosophical Perspectives on the Humanities


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Course Requirements

Classroom participation, including attendance at and participation in writing seminars. Brief exercises on metaphysics, due Jan. 10, Jan. 12, Jan. 17, Jan. 19, Feb. 14, Feb. 28, and Mar. 7. (Each of these will consist of a few short answer, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blanks questions designed to help you focus on terminology and basic issues. We will do the relevant reading and discuss it in class before you have to do each exercise.) Two 4–6 page papers, due Wed., Feb. 9, and Wed., Mar. 16. (Roughly speaking, all the exercises together will count as one paper.)

Texts


Descartes, Selected Philosophical Writings, tr. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge).

Leibniz, Philosophical Essays, ed. R. Ariew and D. Garber (Hackett).

All texts should be available at the Seminary Coop. Readings not on the above list will be made available as photocopies.

(As was the case last quarter, you can use a different translation/edition at your own risk.)

Readings

Mon., Jan. 3: (no reading, first class).

Wed., Jan. 5: selections from Aristotle (on substance and accident).
Mon., Jan. 10: selections from Aristotle and Porphyry (on the predicables and the categories). Metaphysics Exercise #1 due.


Wed., Jan. 26: Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, parts 1, 2 and beginning of 3 (pp. 20–32, through the paragraph ending “which later, in their inconstancy, they judge to be bad”) and *First Meditation* (pp. 76–9).

Mon., Jan. 31: continued discussion of the *First Meditation*.

Wed., Feb. 2: Descartes, beginning of *Second Meditation* (pp. 80–83, through the paragraph ending “in this restricted sense of the term it is simply thinking”).

Mon., Feb. 7: no class (break).

Wed., Feb. 9: Descartes, remainder of *Second Meditation* (pp. 83–6) (and first paper due).


Mon., Feb. 21: Leibniz, “Monadology” (pp. 213–25), and selections from Thomas Aquinas (on angels) (recommended).


Mon., Feb. 28: Leibniz, “A New System of Nature,” first three paragraphs (pp. 138–9); “A Specimen of Dynamics,” first two paragraphs (pp. 118–19);
from letters to Clarke: 2.12 (p. 324), 3.17 (p. 327), 4.42 (p. 331), 5.107–11 (pp. 343–4), along with Clarke’s replies to each (in handout); “Discourse on Metaphysics,” (pp. 35–68), §§8–16, 19–20, 24, 26–8. Metaphysics exercise #6/7 due.


Wed., Mar. 16: **second paper** due.
Timeline

Timeline of various stuff more or less relevant to this course:

• 347 B.C. Death of Plato

197 B.C. Roman conquest of Greece

• 322 B.C. Death of Aristotle

1 Birth of Jesus (approx.)

• 305 Death of Porphyry (approx.)

410 Sack of Rome by the Visigoths

• 270 Death of Plotinus

529 Emp. Justinian closes phil. schools of Athens

• 312 Conversion of Constantine to Christianity

622 Muhammad flees from Mecca to Medina

• 6th c. John Philoponus

711 Muslim conquest of Spain

• 11th–13th c. Aristotle translated into Latin

8th–9th c. Aristotle translated into Arabic

1204–1261 Latin (Crusader) rule in Constantinople

1347–1351 The Black Death

1453 Fall of Constantinople to Turks

• 1109 Death of St. Anselm of Canterbury

1517 Martin Luther posts “95 Theses”

• 1274 Death of St. Thomas Aquinas

1632 Publ. of Galileo’s Two World Systems

• 1492 End of Christian Reconquest of Spain

1687 Publ. of Newton’s Principia

• 1694 Publ. of Don Quixote, part 1

1714 Leibniz composes “Monadology”

• 1641 Publ. of Meditations

1781 Publ. of Critique of Pure Reason (1st ed.)

• 1689 Publ. of Locke’s Essay

• 1739 Publ. of Hume’s Treatise

• 1789 French Revolution

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