

Phil 100B: The Rationalists
Winter, 2024

Monday and Wednesday, 5:20–6:55pm, Soc. Sci. 2 075

Contact Information

Professor: Abe Stone (abestone@ucsc.edu)¹

Office: Cowell Annex A-106

Website: <https://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses>

Zoom class meeting: <https://ucsc.zoom.us/j/91243306143?pwd=NW1TcEpyaFJxR2ozaHd0TC9GeD>

Office hours: Wednesday 3:00–4:00pm (in person)

Zoom office hours: Wed. 3:00–4:00pm; Thurs. 11:30am–12:30pm (or by appointment)

Teaching Assistants:

Takuma Nishiike (tnishiik@ucsc.edu)

Edwin Wolf (etwolf@ucsc.edu)

Discussion Sections

Section	Time	Place	TA
A	Mon. 2:40–3:45pm	Crown Clrm 203	Takuma
B	Tue. 5:20–6:25pm	Crown Clrm 203	Takuma
C	Wed. 10:40–11:45am	Crown Clrm 203	Edwin
D	Thur. 8:00–9:05am	Cowell Acad 223	Edwin

Course Description

Readings from the three most famous members of the school of 17–18th century Continental Rationalists: René Descartes (1596–1650), Benedict (a.k.a.

¹Please feel free to contact the instructor and/or your TA with questions about the substance of the course (philosophical issues, questions about the meaning of the texts, questions about paper topics, etc.). On administrative issues (grades, lateness/extensions, due dates, section times, etc.) please try your TA first.

Baruch) de Spinoza (1632–1677), and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716).

Modality: In general, I will lecture in person in our assigned classroom, but I intend also to live-stream every lecture over Zoom. I will also make a recording of every lecture available on YouTube.

Course Requirements

Participation in discussion sections (good participation will be possible grounds for raising course grade, especially if it is on a borderline).

“Metaphysics exercises” (kind of a short take-home multiple choice quiz), due most class days (all exercises together are worth 35% of the final grade; graded heavily on a curve). These will be made available on-line via the “Tests & Quizzes” tool on Canvas.

Two short papers (2–3 pages), due Tuesday, February 6 and Tuesday, February 27 (each worth 15% of the final grade).

One longer paper (6–8 pages) (worth 35% of the final grade). The paper is due Wednesday, March 20, but you must hand in an introductory paragraph and brief outline (approximately one sentence per paragraph of the proposed complete paper) at some time on or before Monday, March 11. Your TA will send this back to you as soon as possible with suggested changes, which you should take into account. This preliminary assignment will not be separately graded, but if you do not hand it in at all or if it is wholly unsatisfactory, your grade on the final paper will be reduced by one half step (e.g. A to A-).

All paper assignments are available on-line, and there are links to them from this syllabus as well as from my main course page. I will discuss the assignments in class when the due date draws near.

Papers are to be handed in, as attachments, via the “Assignments” tool on Canvas. Please submit in MSWord format, or in a format easily convertible to MSWord. The system will accept late submissions, but late papers may not receive full credit. The system is *not* set up to allow resubmissions: once you press the “submit” button, it will not let you change your response. If, however, you mistakenly submit something and want to change it, please

contact me and I can make an exception.

Please do not plagiarize. If you do and I catch you, you will receive no credit for the assignment and may fail the course, and you will also be subject to “disciplinary sanctions” from the University. (In contrast: if you hand in a paper consisting mostly of quotes from or paraphrases of other sources you have consulted, properly cited, you will not get a good grade — a good paper will contain your own interpretations and thoughts — but you will not fail, either.) If you have any questions about what plagiarism is or how to avoid it, you can ask me, or consult the resources listed on the Library website.² For possible consequences of plagiarism, see the Academic Misconduct Policy.³

As noted above, the ME’s will be accessed and submitted on-line via Canvas. (The system will accept late submissions, but credit — possibly reduced — will only be given up until the time that the correct answers are available, usually one week after the due date.)

AI policy: I encourage the use of AI assistance with proper caution (i.e., keeping in mind that current AI is often wrong). You may use AI assistance basically in any way that would not constitute cheating if you used a human for the same thing. Similarly, you should cite the AI in cases where you would cite a human. If in doubt, feel free to ask me for clarification.

All assignments are due by 11:55pm on the due date.

Attendance at lecture is *strongly* encouraged, but it is not a course requirement and I will not be taking attendance.

You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading in my FAQ (<https://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html>).

Texts

Descartes, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, tr. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (Cambridge, 1988) (ISBN: 0521358124).

Most, if not all, of the assigned readings from this text are available,

²<https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/citesources/plagiarism>.

³<https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic-misconduct>.

in a different translation, on Google Books and Wikisource. There are LibriVox recordings (again, in a different translation) of the *Discourse on the Method* and the *Meditations*.

Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. R. Ariew and D. Garber (Hackett, 1989) (ISBN: 0872200620).

This collection is available on-line (free to read, but costs to download) on Scribd. Many of (but not all) of the assigned readings are to be found free on Google Books. There is a LibriVox recording of the *Monadology*.

Spinoza, *The Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and Selected Letters*, tr. S. Shirley, ed. S. Feldman (Hackett, 1991) (ISBN: 0872201309).

Again, there are free versions of the *Ethics* on Google Books and LibriVox, though not in the same translation.

The above texts have been made available as e-books via “Inclusive Access.” For more information about this program (which I’m using for the first time as an experiment, so please let me know if you have comments or criticisms!), see the bookstore’s FAQ.⁴ You can opt out of Inclusive Access if you wish to access the readings in some other way: e.g. if you want to buy print copies, use the copies on reserve at McHenry, and/or use the above public domain alternatives. Readings not from texts on the above list are available on Canvas.

Readings

Monday, January 8: (no reading, first class). (Lecture on YouTube.)

Background: Aristotelian Metaphysics

Wednesday, January 10: selections from Aristotle (on substance and accident). (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, January 15: **No class (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)**

⁴<https://slugstore.ucsc.edu/scs/pdf/Inclusive%20Access%20FAQs%20for%20Students.pdf>

Wednesday, January 17: selections from Aristotle and Porphyry (on the predicables and the categories). ME #1 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, January 22: selections from Plotinus, Porphyry, Avicenna, and Thomas Aquinas (on substance and accident). ME #2 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Descartes

Wednesday, January 24: Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, parts 1–3 (pp. 20–35), part 6, first paragraph (p. 46); *Principles of Philosophy* I.1–3 (p. 160), IV.207 (p. 212). ME #3 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, January 29: *First Meditation* (pp. 76–9). No ME due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Wednesday, January 31: beginning of *Second Meditation* (pp. 80–83, through the paragraph ending “in this restricted sense of the term it is simply thinking”); *Principles of Philosophy* I.9–10 (p. 162–3), .20 (pp. 166–7); *Objections and Replies*, selection entitled “[Appendix: Arguments Arranged in Geometrical Fashion],” pp. 150–52. ME #4 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, February 5: remainder of *Second Meditation* (pp. 83–6); *Principles of Philosophy* I.8 (p. 162), .11 (p. 163), .45–8 (pp. 174–6), .51–4 (pp. 177–8), .63 (p. 182), .66 (p. 183), II.4 (p. 190). ME #5 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Tuesday, February 6: **First paper due.**

Wednesday, February 7: *Third and Fifth Meditations* (pp. 86–98; 105–110). No ME due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, February 12: *Fourth and Sixth Meditations* (pp. 98–105, 110–22); *Principles of Philosophy* I.6 (p. 161); *Objections and Replies*, selection entitled “[The indifference of the will]” (pp. 134–5). (Lecture on YouTube.)

Spinoza

Wednesday, February 14: Spinoza, *Ethics* I, beginning through Scholium to Prop. 15 (pp. 31–43). *Theologico-Political Treatise*, ch. 7, tr. Elwes, pp. 98–top of 101 (ending “which occur in the Bible”). (All readings from the *Theologico-Political Treatise* are available as a single file on Canvas.) ME #6 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Friday, February 16: ME #8 due.

Monday, February 19: **No class (Presidents’ Day)**

Wednesday, February 21: *Ethics* I, Prop. 16 through end and *Ethics* II, beginning through Scholium to Prop. 18 (pp. 43–79). *Theologico-Political Treatise*, pp. 101–4 (ending “its meaning concerning them”); paragraph beginning at the bottom of p. 106 (“We have thus shown . . .”) and ending on p. 107 (“...about the former”); top of p. 114 (beginning “There only remains”)–top of p. 117 (ending “the learned fare alike”). ME #9 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, February 26: (This lecture was canceled.) ME #10 due.

Tuesday, February 27: **Second paper due.**

Wednesday, February 28: *Ethics* II, Prop. 19 to end (pp. 80–101). *Theologico-Political Treatise*, pp. 117–119. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, March 4: *Ethics* III, beginning through Scholium to Prop. 11 (pp. 102–111) and Prop. 53 (p. 136); IV, Definitions (pp. 155–6) and Prop. 28 (p. 168); V, Preface (pp. 201–3), Prop. 4 (p. 206) and Prop. 14 to end (pp. 210–23). ME #11 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Leibniz

Wednesday, March 6: Leibniz, “A New System of Nature,” first three paragraphs (pp. 138–9); from letters to Clarke: 1.4 (pp. 320–21), 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; “A Specimen of Dynamics,” first two paragraphs (pp. 118–19); “Discourse on Metaphysics,” §§⁵ 8–12, 24, 26–8, 33 (pp. 40–44, 56–7, 58–60, 64–5). ME #12 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Thursday, March 7: “A New System of Nature,” remaining part (pp. 139–45); “Monadology,” §§1–61 (pp. 213–21). No ME due. **This special make-up lecture will be via Zoom only.** It will be at the usual class time (5:20–6:55), but on a Thursday. It will be recorded and posted to YouTube, as usual. Attendance is not required (as usual), but encouraged for those able to make this time. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Monday, March 11: selections from Thomas Aquinas (on angels); Leibniz, from letters to de Volder, last two paragraphs of B, first paragraph of C, and first paragraph of D (pp. 178–9, 181–2); “Monadology,” §§62–81 (pp. 221–3). **Introductory paragraph and outline of final paper due.** No ME due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Wednesday, March 13: Leibniz, “Dialogue on Human Freedom,” pp. 111–17; letter to Coste (pp. 193–6); “Discourse on Metaphysics,” §§13–16, 19–20, 30–32, 35–7 (pp. 44–9, 52–3, 60–64, 66–8); “Monadology,” §§82–end (pp. 223–5). ME #13 due. (Lecture on YouTube.)

Wednesday, March 20: **final paper due.**

⁵The symbol § stands for “section”; §§ means “sections.”

Timeline

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

399 B.C. Death of Socrates	–	
322 B.C. Death of Aristotle	•	347 B.C. Death of Plato
197 B.C. <i>Roman conquest of Greece</i>	–	
1 <i>Birth of Jesus (approx.)</i>	–	
305 Death of Porphyry (approx.)	•	270 Death of Plotinus
410 <i>Sack of Rome by the Visigoths</i>	–	312 <i>Conversion of Constantine to Christianity</i>
529 <i>Emp. Justinian closes phil. schools of Athens</i>	–	6th c. John Philoponus
622 <i>Muhammad flees from Mecca to Medina</i>	–	
8th–9th c. <i>Aristotle translated into Arabic</i>		
11th–13th c. <i>Aristotle translated into Latin</i>	•	1037 Death of Avicenna
1204–1261 <i>Latin (Crusader) rule in Constantinople</i>	•	1274 Death of St. Thomas Aquinas
1347–1351 <i>The Black Death</i>		
1453 <i>Fall of Constantinople to Turks</i>	–	1517 <i>Martin Luther posts “95 Theses”</i>
1677 Publ. of Spinoza’s <i>Ethics</i>	•	1641 Publ. of D.’s <i>Meditations</i>
1781 Publ. of <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (1st ed.)	•	1714 Leibniz composes “Monadology”
	–	1789 <i>French Revolution</i>
2024 <i>Now</i>	–	