

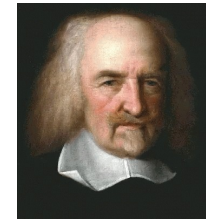
Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

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Hamilton College
Spring 2016

Class #1 - The Scientific Revolution and Descartes

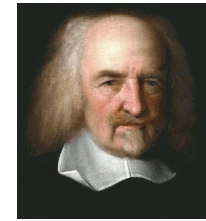
History of Modern Western Philosophy

- Medieval intellectual life was dominated by Aristotle's work and the Church.
- The scientific revolution
- The Protestant reformation
- Descartes and the philosophers who followed him attempted to accommodate new learning with a broad view of human abilities, and to construct systematic understandings of the world.
- Central themes of this course
 - ▶ Sensing and thinking
 - ▶ Appearance and reality
 - ▶ The self
 - ▶ Minds and their relations to bodies
 - ▶ The nature of substance (What is there?)
 - ▶ The existence of God (Are there proofs?)
 - ▶ Free will
 - ▶ Language and ideas
 - ▶ Laws of nature
 - ▶ Mathematics



History of Modern Western Philosophy

- Five Units, mainly proceed chronological
- Unit 1: Descartes
- Unit 2: Monism
 - Hobbes
 - Spinoza
- Unit 3: Empiricism: Naive Materialism or Idealism
 - Locke
 - Berkeley
- Unit 4: Humean Skepticism
 - Hume
 - A little Leibniz
- Unit 5: Kant's Transcendental Idealism
 - Kant
 - A little Newton and a litte Leibniz
- Check out my timeline!



Team-Based Learning

- Philosophy is only poorly learned by Prof TV.
 - You must engage and verbalize and discuss.
- Flipped Classroom
 - Learn what you can from the readings on your own.
 - Come to class and actively engage.
 - Small classes: great
 - Large class: how?
 - TBL









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Team Work

- My fifth grade project
- But research shows
 - Short attention spans
 - ~20 minutes for adults
 - Shorter for technology addicts
 - Teams do better than individuals in many tasks.
- Philosophy needs conversation.
- And the class is too darn large.

TBL

- You'll be in permanent teams, through the semester.
 - We'll form them in a moment.
- All teamwork is classwork.
 - No long-term group projects
- Graded work is almost all individual.
 - Papers (short and medium)
 - Exams
- Let's look at the syllabus.

Syllabus and Assignments

Texts

- Required:
 - ▶ Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins. *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, 2nd edition. Hackett, 2009.
 - ▶ Various supplementary handouts, available in class and on the course website.
- Recommended:
 - ▶ Norman Melchert. *The Great Conversation, Volume II: Descartes through Derrida and Quine*, 6th ed. Oxford, 2010.

Course Website

http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Course_Websites/Modern_S16/Course_Home.html

Assignments

- Attendance
- Readings
- Readiness Assessment Tests (RATs) (20%)
 - ▶ Multiple choice
 - ▶ Beginning of each unit
 - One on Thursday!
 - Practice one today.
 - ▶ On first reading of unit
 - ▶ Your grade on each RAT is an average of your individual and team scores.
 - ▶ Should be challenging, if I'm doing them right.
- In-Class Work (5%)
 - ▶ In-class team activities
 - ▶ A grade for the team
 - ▶ Carrot: I hope that classes will be fun and productive.
 - ▶ Also a stick

Assignments

- First Paper (15%)
 - Draft to class on February 9
 - Full draft emailed February 16
- Three End-of-Unit Writing Assignments (15%)
 - Shorter (500-750 words)
- Midterm (15%)
 - After spring break
- Peer Evaluations (10%)
 - Both numerical and 1-3 sentences
 - Midterm and Final
- Final Paper or Final Exam (20%)
 - Your choice

Grading

- Grades on assignments will be posted on Blackboard, along with a running total, which I call your grade calculation. Your grade calculation is a guide for me to use in assigning you a final grade. There are no rules binding how I translate your grade calculation into a letter grade. The Hamilton College key for converting letter grades into percentages is not a tool for calculating your final grade. I welcome discussion of the purposes and methods of grading, as well as my own grading policies.
- Roughly
 - ▶ C: What they say
 - ▶ B: Why they say it
 - ▶ A: Whether they're right

Activities

- Make decisions or choices
- I might grade some (in-class work grade)
- Mainly to prime discussion
- Contract:
 - You need to do the readings and come to class prepared to engage.
 - I will make classes engaging and worth attending.

Office Hours

10:30am - noon, Tuesdays and Thursdays
202 College Hill Road, Room 210
My name is Russell.

Let's Form Teams

- Write down the number of philosophy courses you've taken before this semester.
- Write down:
 - 4, if you are a senior
 - 3, if you are a junior
 - 2, if you are a sophomore
 - 1, if you are a first-year student
- Add the two numbers to get your score.
- Line up by score.
- Count off by 8.

Team Names

- Put on Envelope
- Seating?

Galileo iRAT

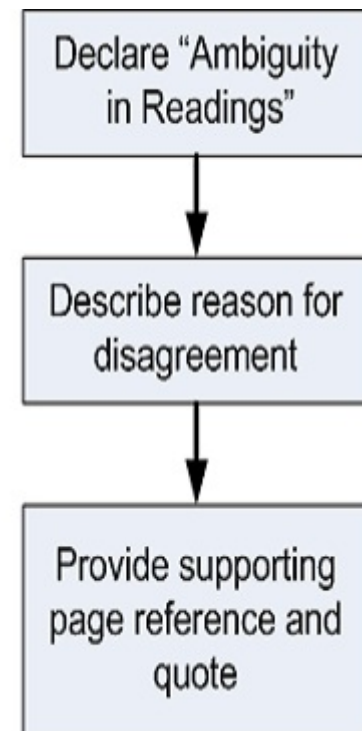
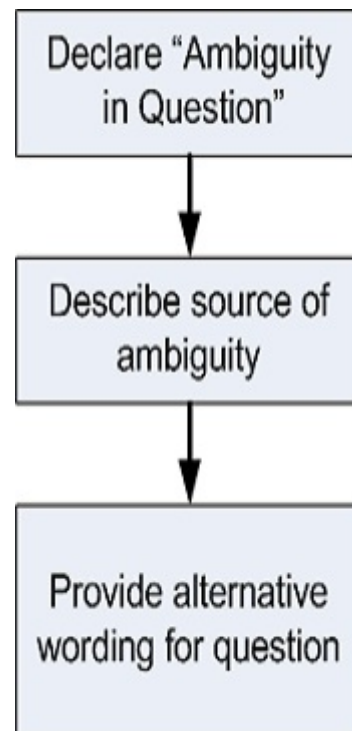
- 9 minutes

Galileo tRAT

- 10 minutes

Appeals

- Appeals are most promising when they demonstrate that you understood the concept(s) but there was ambiguity in the question or ambiguity in the reading material that caused a discrepancy between my answer and yours.
- Only teams who file a successful appeal will get points added.
- I'll evaluate appeals after class.



Debrief

- You should be reading like this all the time, even if the RATs come only once, at the beginning of the unit.
- Notice: Immediate feedback
- Skin in the game
- Also: we can focus on areas of dispute or confusion.

Why Read the History of Philosophy?

Underlying Central Themes

Metaphysics and Epistemology

- Metaphysics is the study of what exists, and what those things are like.
 - ▶ trees, tables, people, planets and stars, electrons, numbers, space-time points, God
 - ▶ redness, squareness, velocity, and being located outside of space and time
 - ▶ causation, necessity, the relationship between mind and body, and free will and determinism
- Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, of how we know what we know.
 - ▶ Does all our knowledge originate in sense experience?
 - ▶ Are we born with innate capacities to learn?
 - ▶ How can we account for knowledge of laws and mathematics which don't appear to our senses?

Absurd Views

- We're going to read some weird views.
 - Berkeley: There is no material world
 - Hume: We do not know that the sun will rise tomorrow.
- Such claims, and others, will seem to most of us to be obviously false.
- Yet, we are going to evaluate them not merely for their interest, but for their truth.
- We are going to look at the arguments, and take them seriously.

Why Study the History of Philosophy?

Rosenthal

- Philosophers are engaged in a search for truth.
- Unlike historians and sociologists of ideas, who may just want to know what people believed, we want to know the answers to the questions:
 - ▶ Is there free will?
 - ▶ Is there an external world?
 - ▶ How do we acquire knowledge?
 - ▶ Does God exist?
 - ▶ What actions are morally permissible and impermissible, and why?
- We are like scientists, in desiring correct answers.
- Scientists don't study the history of science in the way that philosophers study the history of philosophy.
 - ▶ not central to their own research
 - ▶ The physicist's interest in Galileo is historical, rather than scientific.
- Historicism: our intellectual lives are essentially constituted by our experiences.
 - ▶ The concerns of one generation are independent of those of earlier and subsequent generations.
 - ▶ Our interests in the history of philosophy can only be historical, and not philosophical.
 - ▶ On historicism, we are like the physicist in regard to Galileo.
 - ▶ But we're not!

History and the Humanities

- In the humanities, study of the history of a field is integral to the study of that field.
 - Musicians study the history of music.
 - Literature majors study the history of literature.
- Humanities don't centrally aim at the truth, in the way that science and philosophy do.
- The goal of the study of art and literature is to understand a given work:
 - to place it in its historical context,
 - to grasp the culture out of which it is produced,
 - even to enjoy it.
- Philosophy straddles the humanities and the sciences in a puzzling way.
- It is not merely a cultural phenomenon like art or literature.
- Instead, it aims at solving problems, like the sciences.
- Yet, we study history like scholars in the humanities
- Why?

Team Activity

Rosenthal on the History of Philosophy

“Philosophy and Its Teaching” and “Philosophy and Its History”

Rank the following justifications for reading the history of philosophy most plausible to least.

- A. It is a source of ideas for contemporary philosophers.
- B. It gives us a good set of errors to avoid.
- C. We gain perspective by seeing a wider diversity of viewpoints than we would in contemporary work.
- D. Philosophers used to be more comprehensively systematic.
- E. In order to understand the history, we have to refine our contemporary views.

For Thursday

- Read Syllabus
- Discourse on Method, Parts 1 and 2 (AW 25-33)
- Meditations on First Philosophy, through Meditation One (AW 35-42)
 - Skeptical hypotheses
 - I think that Descartes doesn't care much about skepticism.
 - Think about the role of the doubts if they're not about skepticism.
- RAT for real!