

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HUMANITIES II

HUMA 11600, Section 01
T/TH 09:00-10:20, Wieboldt 408
Winter 2016

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With the guide of de Cervantes, Descartes, Leibniz, Voltaire, Hume, and Kant we will take the following as our guiding thread through this extraordinarily rich period: how do our minds represent (or misrepresent) the world? This will lead us into a host of other questions: how can we know anything about how the world is in itself? What (if any) aspects of our experience represent the way world really is? What is the fundamental structure of physical reality? How can we know anything about it?

Required Texts:

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy)
Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett Publishing) Voltaire, *Candide: Or, Optimism* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition)

Please use the editions listed (the Descartes and Hume are available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore, 5751 S. Woodlawn Ave.). Both in written assignments and in class discussions, your references should be to these editions.

Additional readings will be made available on the Chalk Site. Make sure you bring an annotated hard copy of the texts assigned in the class schedule to each meeting.

Requirements:

I. **Reading**

Students are expected to complete all reading assignments before coming to class and to bring the relevant text(s) to class.

II. **Discussions**

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to actively participate in class discussion. This means both asking questions and being prepared to answer them.

“Philosophy is the kind of thinking that human beings do together, in their capacity as human beings. Some games (Solitaire) can be played alone; some (Tennis) cannot. Philosophy is like the second kind, only it’s not a game.” Agnes Callard

In addition, students must attend and contribute to all three writing seminars in order to pass the writing component of the course (15% of course grade).

NB: Attendance at all three writing seminars is required not only for the course, but it is also a mandatory requirement for graduation from the college.

III. **Chalk Posts**

(a) By **Thursday at 5pm** of each week you will receive a prompt for a weekly Chalk post on your group discussion board. The nature of these written assignments will vary, but will typically involve writing two or three short paragraphs analyzing or responding to something in the assigned reading for that week. By **Monday at noon** you are required to post your response. By **Monday at 8pm** you are required to respond to at least one post from one of your colleagues. These short assignments are mandatory and will count towards your participation grade for the class. They will not be graded, but will often form the basis for class discussion. You may skip one of these, at your choosing.

(b) Class discussion is intended to be largely student-driven. To facilitate this, I will divide the class into four groups of 4 or 5 students. For each class meeting, one group will be responsible for posting questions based on the day's reading in the discussion board area of the chalk website. Each student in the group should post at least two questions; questions must be posted by midnight the day before we discuss the readings. You should take very seriously the task of constructing valuable and interesting questions, since your questions will form the main basis for our in-class discussion. We will begin each class by surveying the questions that have been posted and using them to construct an agenda for the meeting. You should come prepared to state your questions and explain them if necessary. I will evaluate your contributions to these questions based on the insight they show into the readings, and the thought you have given to whether they will advance a useful discussion. On the day in which you are posting a question, you are not required to post a weekly response but may do so if you'd like.

IV. **Papers**

	Due Date	Length	Percentage of Course Grade
First Paper	01/28, 5pm	3-4 pages	15%
Second Paper	02/19, 5pm	5-6 pages	25%
Third Paper	03/15, Midnight	6-7 pages	30%

V. **Grade Composition**

Papers	70%
Class participation (class discussions, chalk posts)	20%
Writing Seminars	10%

Policies:

I. **Deadlines**

There will be a one day grace period after each deadline during which you may still submit your paper, any paper submitted during this period will automatically lose ½ a letter grade (e.g., will drop from an A to a B+). Papers submitted later than this will not be accepted unless an extension has been arranged no less than three days before the paper is due. It is your responsibility to manage your workload such that you can complete your assignments in a timely manner.

II. **Academic Integrity**

The penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course. Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and are advised to consult Charles Lipson's book *Doing Honest Work in College*. The Writing Program also provides helpful advice here:

http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/but_what_if_you_get_stuck.htm

In general, that work that you submit or present is expected to be the product of your own ideas, formulated in your own original language (with appropriate citation of external sources, where necessary), and written for this course alone. If after looking over Lipson's book and the writing program advice page you have any remaining questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask the professor or writing intern.

III. **Electronic Devices**

Conservative airplane takeoff rules apply: All devices with an ON/OFF switch must be switched off during class unless prior permission to use them has been obtained from the instructor. The first time the student breaks this rule a warning will be issued (this will most likely take the form of a request to put the device away), the second instance will be followed by a deduction to your participation grade.

IV. **Discussion etiquette**

In order to create a climate for open and honest dialogue and to encourage the broadest range of viewpoints, it is important for class participants to treat each other with respect. Name calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counter productive to successful teaching and learning about topics and won't be tolerated.

Some obvious specific guidelines include: do not interrupt one another; challenge one another respectfully; critique ideas, not people; build on one another's comments; work toward shared understanding; do not monopolize discussion; if you are offended by anything said during discussion, acknowledge it either immediately or after class; consider anything that is said in class strictly confidential.

While the instructor/a student is speaking, you may not speak to someone else. The first time the student breaks this rule a warning will be issued (this will most likely take the form of a request to stop talking), the second instance will be followed by a deduction to your participation grade.

Reading Schedule

The following schedule is provisional, and subject to change based on our discussion and progress in class.

Week 1	01/05 01/07	Introduction Galileo Galilei, "Letter to Duchess Christina" Francis Bacon, <i>Novum Organum</i> (both available on Chalk)	
Week 2	01/12 01/14	Miguel de Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i> ch. 1-36 (Chalk) Miguel de Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i> ch. 37-52	
Week 3	01/19 01/21	Descartes, "Dedicatory letter to the Sorbonne, and First Meditation Descartes, Second Meditation (Paper prompts distributed)	-- writing seminars --
Week 4	01/26 01/28 01/29	Descartes, Third Meditations Descartes, Fourth and Fifth Meditations First Papers Due, 5pm	
Week 5	02/02 02/04	Descartes, Sixth Meditation Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes, excerpts from their Correspondence with Descartes (Chalk)	
Week 6	02/09 02/11	Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things" (Chalk), Voltaire <i>Candide</i> Voltaire <i>Candide</i> (Paper prompts distributed)	
Week 7	02/16 02/18 02/19	Hume, Enquiry, chapters 1-3 Hume, Enquiry, chapter 4 Second Papers Due, 5pm	-- writing seminars --
Week 8	02/23 02/25	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , chapter 5 <i>Hume, Enquiry, chapter 7</i>	
Week 9	03/01 03/03	Hume, Enquiry, chapter 10 Hume, Enquiry, chapter 12 (Paper prompts distributed)	
Week 10	03/8 03/10	Kant, excerpts: responses to Hume on Causation (Chalk) Reading Period	--writing seminars --
Week 11	03/15	Third Papers Due, Midnight	