

Metaphysics

Course Leader: Dr. Gary Banham

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Room 3.09

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CORE OPTION: LEVEL II PHILOSOPHY COURSE

CREDIT VALUE:

20 Credits

Core Topics:

Simple Ideas and Simple Modes; Power and Causation; Substance;
Knowledge; Primary and Secondary Qualities; Motion and Force;
Space and Time.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. To ensure that students develop an appreciation and critical grasp of the central debates within metaphysics.
2. To increase understanding of the development of concepts in the history of metaphysics.

COURSEWORK:

Assessment: two 3,000-word essays, one on topics from the first term, one on topics from the second term, each is worth 50% of the total marks on the course.

PENALTIES: Students who submit coursework late may expect to receive a maximum mark of 40% for the work, providing it is of a pass standard. You are advised to see the Programme Handbook (2005/6) for details of the absolutely final deadline after which coursework will not be accepted for formal assessment and will therefore attract a mark of zero.

A WARNING ON PLAGIARISM:

Students are warned that Faculty procedures will be set in motion to investigate suspected cases of plagiarism. The Faculty student handbook defines plagiarism as:

- i. the wilful representation of another person's work, without acknowledgement of the source, as one's own; or:
- ii. the deliberate and unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or otherwise) of another, examples of which are:
 - a. the unacknowledged use of more than a single phrase from another person's work without the use of quotation marks;
 - b. the unacknowledged summarising of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation;
 - c. the acknowledged and/or unauthorised use of the ideas of another;
 - d. copying the work of another person with or without that person's knowledge or agreement or presenting it as one's own.

Students are reminded that the criteria covers electronic sources such as Internet sites – hence all www/http websites should be fully listed.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS:

1. The Course Tutor will make available an alternative page coloured version of this document if you think that this would be more appropriate to your learning needs.
2. Students with Special Educational Needs should make an appointment with the Course Tutor to discuss ways in which lectures, classes and supporting handout material can be effectively organised to meet their educational needs.

INDICATIVE READING:

Bernard Williams (1978) *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harvester Press)

Tom Sorell (2000) *Descartes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press)

Roger Scruton (1999) *Spinoza* (Routledge)

ATTENDANCE:

Important: Seminar/Class attendance is compulsory. Absences should be authorised by the Course Tutor. Any unauthorised absences will be reported to the Programme Leader of your respective degree programme. The University is under a statutory obligation to notify LEA's of regular student absenteeism.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Term 1

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Descartes on Simple Ideas (1)
Rules for the Direction of the Mind: Rules 1-10

Week 3: Descartes on Simple Ideas (2)
Rules for the Direction of the Mind Rules 11-14

Week 4: Locke on the Simple Modes of Space and Time
Essay on Human Understanding Book II Chapters XIII-XV

Week 5: Locke on Power (1)
Essay on Human Understanding Book II Chapter XXI

Week 6: PDP Week

Week 7: Locke on Power (2)
Essay on Human Understanding Book II Chapter XXI

Week 8: Descartes on Knowledge
Principles of Philosophy Part 1

Week 9: Descartes' Laws of Nature
Principles of Philosophy Part 2, paragraphs 1-44.

Week 10: Spinoza on Descartes' Laws
Spinoza Principles of Cartesian Philosophy Part 2

Week 11: Spinoza on Substance
Spinoza Principles of Cartesian Philosophy Part 1
Spinoza Ethics Part 1

Term 2:

Week 1: Occasionalism

Malebranche *Search After Truth* Book VI, Part 2, Chapter 2 and Elucidation XV

Week 2: Primary and Secondary Qualities

Locke *Essay* Book 2 Chapter XXIII + XXIV

Berkeley *Principles of Human Knowledge* paragraphs 1-25

Week 3: Matter and God

Berkeley *Principles of Human Knowledge* paragraphs 26-52

Week 4: Hobbes and Leibniz on Motion

Hobbes *On Body* Part 2 Chapter 8

Leibniz *Studies in Physics and the Nature of Body*

Week 5: PDP Week

Week 6: Leibniz on Descartes' *Principles*

Leibniz *Critical Thoughts on the General Part of the Principles of Descartes*

Week 7: Leibniz on Force

Leibniz *New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances*

Leibniz *Nature Itself*

Week 8: Space and Time in Leibniz and Newton (1)

Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence

Week 9: Space and Time in Leibniz and Newton (2)

Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence

Week 10: Hume on Causation (1)

Hume *Treatise* Book 1, Part 3, sections 2-6

Week 11: Hume on Causation (2)

Hume *Treatise* Book 1, Part 3, sections 8-9, 12, 14-15

ESSAY QUESTIONS:**Term 1:**

1. How does Descartes' view of simple ideas help us to understand his view of metaphysics?
2. Why does Locke present space and time as simple modes and is he right?
3. "Locke's account of power is full of confusions." Do you agree?
4. Critically examine Locke's *positive* account of power.
5. Is Descartes' account of knowledge in the *Principles* similar or different to his account of ideas in the *Rules*?
6. By what method does Descartes arrive at the statement of his three laws of nature?
7. Why is it important for Descartes to distinguish motion from its cause and what is the result of this distinction?
8. Critically assess Spinoza's interpretation of Descartes' laws of nature.
9. How does Spinoza's view of substance respond to Descartes' account of knowledge?

Term 2:

1. What is the importance of occasionalism for modern metaphysics?
2. Is there a defensible distinction between primary and secondary qualities?
3. Critically assess Berkeley's argument for the existence of God.
4. How does Leibniz's early view of motion differ from that of Hobbes? Which view is preferable and why?
5. Is Leibniz's account of Descartes' laws of nature accurate?
6. Does Leibniz succeed in refuting occasionalism?
7. What are the main points of dispute concerning the nature of space and time between Leibniz and Clarke and why is the dispute significant?
8. Does either Leibniz or Clarke offer clearer and better arguments for their view? Which position is preferable?
9. What are the main points of Hume's critique of causation?
10. Critically assess Hume's *positive* account of causation.

FURTHER READING:

N. Jolley (ed.) (1995) *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge University Press)

N. Jolley (2005) *Leibniz* (Routledge)

B. Russell (1937) *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (George Allen & Unwin)

R.S. Woolhouse (1993) *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: the concept of substance in seventeenth century philosophy* (Routledge)

J. Brindley (1973) *Lectures on the Philosophy of Leibniz* (Greenwood Press)

S. Brown (1984) *Leibniz* (Harvester)

G. MacDonald Ross (1984) *Leibniz* (Oxford University Press)

R.M. Adams (1994) *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (Oxford University Press)

H. Ishiguro (1972) *Leibniz's Philosophy of Logic and Language* (Duckworth)

N. Rescher (2003) *On Leibniz* (University of Pittsburgh Press)

V. Chappell (ed.) (1994) *Cambridge Companion to Locke* (Cambridge University Press)

G. Fuller et. al. (eds.) (2000) *John Locke: an essay concerning human understanding in focus* (Routledge)

M. Ayers (1993) *Locke: epistemology and ontology* (Routledge)

C. B. Martin (1968) *Locke and Berkeley: a collection of critical essays* (Macmillan)

E.J. Lowe (1995) *Locke on Human Understanding* (Routledge)

E.J. Lowe (2005) *Locke* (Routledge)

J. Bennett (1971) *Locke, Berkeley and Hume: Central Themes* (Clarendon Press: Oxford)

J. L. Mackie (1976) *Problems from Locke* (Clarendon Press)

J.L. Mackie “Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities” (SHORT LOAN)

J.J. Jenkins (1983) *Understanding Locke* (Edinburgh University Press)

D. Garrett (ed.) (1996) *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge University Press)

R.J. Gennaro and **C. Huen** (eds.) (1999) *New Essays on the Rationalists* (Oxford University Press)

H.H. Joachim (1901) *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*

James Thomas (1999) *Intuition and Reality: A Study of the Attributes of Substance in the Absolute Idealism of Spinoza* (Ashgate)

G. Lloyd (1996) *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Spinoza and the Ethics* (Routledge)

Roger Scruton (1999) *Spinoza* (Routledge)

Andrew Pyle (2003) *Malebranche* (Routledge)

G.J. Warnock (1982) *Berkeley* (Basil Blackwell)

R.J. Fogelin (2001) *Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Routledge)

Tom Stoneham (2002) *Berkeley's World* (Oxford University Press)

D.F. Norton (ed.) (1993) *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (Cambridge University Press)

D. Garrett (1997) *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford University Press)

V.C. Chappell (1968) *Hume* (Macmillan)

B. Stroud (1998) *Hume* (Routledge)

A.J. Ayer (1980) *Hume* (Oxford University Press)

G. Dicker (1998) *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics: an introduction* (Routledge)

D. Pears (1990) *Hume's System* (Oxford University Press)

R. Read and **K. R. Richman** (2000) *The New Hume Debate* (Routledge)

Metaphysics is the most abstract branch of philosophy. It's the branch that deals with the "first principles" of existence, seeking to define basic concepts like existence, being, causality, substance, time, and space. Within metaphysics, one of the main sub-branches is ontology, or the study of being. These two terms are so closely related that you can often hear people use "metaphysics" and "ontology" interchangeably. Metaphysics. Quite the same Wikipedia. Just better. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy investigating the fundamental nature of being and the world that encompasses it.[1] Metaphysics attempts to answer two basic questions:[2]. Ultimately, what is there? What is it like? Topics of metaphysical investigation include existence, objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect, and possibility. Metaphysics. First published Mon Sep 10, 2007; substantive revision Fri Oct 31, 2014. It is not easy to say what metaphysics is. Ancient and Medieval philosophers might have said it is no longer possible to define metaphysics that way, for two reasons. First, a philosopher who denied the existence of those things that had once been seen as constituting the subject-matter of metaphysics—"first causes or unchanging things"—would now be considered to be making thereby a metaphysical assertion.