

# Course Syllabus

PHIL 403/603: Early Modern Philosophy

Spring 2021

Tu/Th 10:00–11:15am

Instructor:

Office hrs: Tu/Th 11:30–12:30pm

## Aim of the Course:

This course examines the developments in metaphysics and epistemology in 17th and early 18th century European philosophy. We will focus on questions such as the following: How do we know our own mind, and in what way can we know the world that lies outside our mind? How is the mind different from the body? Am I the same thing as my mind? Is the will free or subject to necessity or fate? What kinds of fundamental entities (or “substances”) are there in the world? What is a cause and how can we know causal connections in nature? The figures we will be covering articulated answers to these questions that are diverse and that also set the stage for our own contemporary understanding of the universe and our place in it. We will focus our reading and discussion on works by Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.

## Learning Outcomes:

Students successfully completing this course will be able to

1. articulate the epistemological and metaphysical views of six key philosophers of 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe;
2. explain the major motivations and arguments behind these views;
3. evaluate these arguments critically;
4. construct sound interpretative arguments concerning a challenging text from the history of philosophy (i.e., be able to marshal textual evidence to construct sound arguments that the author held a certain view and offered certain arguments in favor of that view); and

5. synthesize textual interpretation and argument-evaluation in clear, precise, and well-organized written expression.

## Required Texts:

1. Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy. With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, translated by Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780192806963. Available at [Amazon](#) and the UNLV Bookstore. If ordering online, make sure that you are getting the correct edition.
2. All other readings for the course are available on Canvas/Webcampus. Individual readings are available in the [Readings by Topic](#) folder and are also linked to in the [Course Schedule](#) page. In addition, all of these texts are assembled in the [Early Modern Philosophy Reader. 2020 Edition](#) prepared for this class.

The original languages of the texts are Latin (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz), French (Descartes, Leibniz), and English (Locke, Berkeley, Hume). For Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, you are required to use an approved translation. Original-language texts are available in a [Canvas file folder](#).

## Email:

Course announcements and assignments will be distributed via Canvas or to the email address that UNLV has on file for you in MyUNLV. In most cases, this is your Rebelmail account (<username>@unlv.nevada.edu). *You will be responsible for any announcements and assignments sent to this email address.* For instructions on forwarding your Rebelmail see: <http://rebelmail.unlv.edu/set-pop-imap-or-forwarding>. You are welcome to send me emails with questions about the contents or mechanics of the course, but it may take me a day or more to respond. Please take this into account if, for example, you email me the night before an assignment is due.

## Assignments and Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following elements:

1. Three 5-page Papers (28.3% each, 85% total).

Undergraduate students must write three papers. The first assignment will be on **Descartes**; the second will offer a choice of **Spinoza** or **Leibniz**; and the third will be on **Locke**, **Berkeley**, or **Hume**. Topics will be announced during the semester. (Note: Graduate students enrolled in PHIL 603 must write the first 5-page paper and then one more **10-15 page** paper based on their own topic created in consultation with me. The second paper will be worth 40% of the final grade. Graduate students must contact me no later than the end of 13<sup>th</sup> week to discuss an appropriate paper topic.) Letter grades have the following numerical value for calculating your final grade:

<b>A+</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A/A-</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>A-/B+</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B+/B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B/B-</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C+/B-</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C+/C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>D</b>
100	97	95	92	88	86	84	82	80	78	76	75	73	70	68	67

2. Midterm Quizzes (5% total)
3. Final exam (10%)
4. Participation

Participation is not a requirement of the course, but students who regularly participate will receive up to 2 percentage points added to their semester grade. (Students that distract others from the class, on the other hand, will have percentage points deducted from their semester grade.)

5. There will be no other make-up or extra credit assignments.

Your final letter grade for the course will be based on the following scale:

<b>&gt;92%</b>	<b>&gt;90%</b>	<b>&gt;85%</b>	<b>&gt;80%</b>	<b>&gt;77%</b>	<b>&gt;75%</b>	<b>&gt;70%</b>	<b>&gt;67%</b>	<b>&gt;63%</b>	<b>≥60%</b>	<b>&lt;60%</b>
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	D-	F

## Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s ideas or writings as if they were one’s own. It is **your** responsibility to ensure that any ideas or expressions in your writing that are not your own (and that are not merely “common knowledge”) are indicated as such. (An item is probably “common knowledge” if it appears in exactly the same form in multiple sources without any credible disagreement. But no instructor will penalize you for citing too much.) Please note that re-wording (paraphrasing) the ideas of someone else counts as a form of plagiarism. **Ignorance of plagiarism standards will in no case be considered an excuse.** You are therefore **required to** read the following document about plagiarism:

UNLV Writing Center, "Avoiding Plagiarism": <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kYHoVxPKLh-cKnYzEDqpid8SqqmpRzA3/view>

# UNLV Policies

## Public Health Directives

Face coverings are mandatory for all faculty and students in the classroom. Students must follow all active UNLV public health directives while enrolled in this class. UNLV public health directives are found at [Health Requirements for Returning to Campus](https://www.unlv.edu/coronavirus/health-requirements), <https://www.unlv.edu/coronavirus/health-requirements>. Students who do not comply with these directives may be asked to leave the classroom. Refusal to follow the guidelines may result in further disciplinary action according to the [UNLV Student Conduct Code](https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf), [https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page\\_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf](https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf), including being administratively withdrawn from the course.

## Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the University community. We all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, and are encouraged to always take the ethical path whenever faced with choices. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's educational mission. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person, from the Internet or any other source without proper citation of the source(s). See the [Student Conduct Code](https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct), <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

## Auditing a Course

Auditing a course allows a student to continue attending the lectures and/or laboratories and discussion sessions associated with the course, but the student will not earn a grade for any component of the course. Students who audit a course receive the same educational experience as students taking the course for a grade, but will be excused from exams, assessments, and other evaluative measures that serve the primary purpose of assigning a grade.

## Classroom Conduct

Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn, or of instructors to teach. Use of devices such as cellular phones and pagers, or other potentially disruptive activities are only permitted with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. Students are specifically prohibited to record classes without instructor authorization, including online/remote classes (either audio only, or video and audio). The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative withdrawal of the student from the course.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced some instruction to be delivered remotely starting in Spring 2020, numerous students have asked instructors to record their synchronous classes, so that they can access them at their convenience. Instructors who agree to record their classes (audio only, or video and audio) should inform students in advance. Recorded lectures may not be broadly released to anyone, but made available exclusively to those students enrolled in the class during the particular academic term. Recorded lectures must be stored

securely, and are subject to the Nevada System of Higher Education's Records Retention Policy, meaning that the recordings can only be deleted 120 days after the end of class (i.e., after grades are posted). Once this requirement is met, the recordings should be deleted. Class recordings are protected from disclosure, as they are deemed part of an educational record under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### **Copyright**

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with, and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for student or employee violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional [copyright policy information](https://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright) is available at <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

### **Disability Resource Center (DRC)**

The [UNLV Disability Resource Center](https://www.unlv.edu/drc) (Student Services Complex, SSC-A, Room 143, <https://www.unlv.edu/drc>, telephone 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. Students who believe that they may need academic accommodations due to a permanent disability, temporary or permanent medical need, or academic support due to pregnancy are encouraged to contact the DRC as early as possible in the academic term. A Disabilities Specialist will discuss what options may be available to you. Students who are already registered with the DRC should request their accommodations online each semester, and make an appointment to discuss their accommodations with their instructors.

### **Final Examinations**

The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur on the date and at the time specified in the Final Exam schedule. The Final Exam schedule is typically available at the start of the semester, and the classroom locations are available approximately one month before the end of the semester. See the [Final Exam Schedule](https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars), <https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

### **Identity Verification in Online Courses**

All UNLV students must use their Campus-issued ACE ID and password to log in to WebCampus-Canvas.

UNLV students enrolled in online or hybrid courses are expected to read and adhere to the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy), <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy>, which states that "acting or attempting to act as a substitute for another, or using or attempting to use a substitute, in any academic evaluation or assignment" is a form of academic misconduct. Intentionally sharing ACE login credentials with another person may be considered an attempt to use a substitute, and could result in investigation and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Academic Misconduct Policy.

UNLV students enrolled in online courses are also expected to read and adhere to the [Acceptable Use of Computing and Information Technology Resources Policy](https://www.it.unlv.edu/policies/acceptable-use-computing-and-information-technology-resources-policy), <https://www.it.unlv.edu/policies/acceptable-use-computing-and-information-technology-resources-policy>, which prohibits sharing university accounts with other persons without authorization.

To the greatest extent possible, all graded assignments and assessments in UNLV online

courses should be hosted in WebCampus-Canvas or another UNLV-managed platform that requires ACE login credentials for access.

### **Incomplete Grades**

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) may be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session, but cannot complete the last part of the course for reason(s) beyond the student's control and acceptable to the instructor, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. For undergraduate courses, the incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the period indicated, a grade of "F" will be recorded, and the student's GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete grade do not register for the course, but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the "I" grade.

### **Library Resources**

Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the [Libraries' Research Consultation](https://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian) website, <https://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian>. You can also [ask the library staff](https://ask.library.unlv.edu/) questions via chat and text message at <https://ask.library.unlv.edu/>.

### **Missed Classwork**

Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or laboratory work because of observance of religious holidays will be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up opportunity will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for Fall and Spring courses (except for modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for Summer and modular courses, of their intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit the Missed Classwork policy, under Registration Policies, on the [Academic Policies](https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=8271&hl=) webpage, <https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=8271&hl=>.

In accordance with the policy approved by the Faculty Senate regarding missed class time and assignments, students who represent UNLV in any official extracurricular activity will also have the opportunity to make up assignments, provided that the student submits official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es).

The spirit and intent of the policy for missed classwork is to offer fair and equitable assessment opportunities to all students, including those representing the University in extracurricular activities. Instructors should consider, for example, that in courses which offer a "Drop one" option for the lowest assignment, quiz, or exam, assigning the student a grade of zero for an excused absence for extracurricular activity is both contrary to the intent of the Faculty Senate's policy, and an infringement on the student's right to complete all work for the course.

This policy will not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the University that could be reasonably avoided. There should be a good faith effort by both the instructor and the student to agree to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, decisions can be appealed to the Department Chair/School Director,

College/School Dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to academic recruitment activities, competitive intercollegiate athletics, fine arts activities, liberal arts competitions, science and engineering competitions, and any other event or activity sanctioned by a College/School Dean, and/or by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

### **Rebelmail**

Rebelmail is UNLV's official email system for students and by University policy, instructors and staff should only send emails to students' Rebelmail accounts. Rebelmail is one of the primary ways in which students receive official University communications, information about deadlines, major Campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the University. Sending emails within WebCampus-Canvas is also acceptable.

### **Tutoring and Coaching**

The Academic Success Center (ASC), at the Claude I. Howard Building, provides tutoring, academic success coaching, and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, please visit the [ASC website](https://www.unlv.edu/asc), <https://www.unlv.edu/asc>, or call 702-895-3177. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A, Room 254. Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library, and on the second floor of the College of Engineering building (TBE A 207).

### **UNLV Writing Center**

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the [Writing Center](https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/), <https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>, located in the Central Desert Complex, Building 3, Room 301 (CDC 3–301). Walk-in consultations are sometimes available, but students with appointments receive priority assistance. Students may make appointments in person or by calling the Center, telephone 702-895-3908. Students are requested to bring to their appointments their Rebel ID Card, a copy of the instructions for their assignment, and two copies of any writing they have completed on their assignment.

## **Course Schedule**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The Origins of Modern Philosophy: Aristotle to Galileo (via the Ancient Atomists)

### **II. René Descartes (1596–1650)**

2. Descartes's Method of Doubt and The Archimedean Point
3. Descartes on God's Existence and Priority
4. Descartes on The Criterion of Knowledge & the Existence of Material Substance

### **III. Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza (1632-1677)**

5. Spinoza on Substance & God
6. Spinoza on The Human Mind, Knowledge, & Freedom

### **IV. G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716)**

7. Leibniz on Truth, Necessity & Human Freedom

### **V. John Locke (1632–1704)**

8. Locke's Empiricist Metaphysics, Freedom, & Personal Identity
9. Locke on Empiricism & The Extent of Human Knowledge

### **VI. George Berkeley (1685–1753)**

10. Berkeley's Idealism

### **VII. David Hume (1711-1776)**

11. Hume: Skepticism or Skeptical Realism?
12. Hume: Skepticism, Personal Identity, & Common Life