

Philosophy Department  
Ryerson University, Winter 2019

**PHL 708 Introduction to Modern Philosophy**

Time: Monday 1:00pm–3:00pm; Wednesday 1:00pm–2:00pm

Location: Monday KHE 129; Wednesday EPH 216

Instructor: Chris Dragos

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 12:00pm–1:00pm at POD 375

Course Webpage: on D2L (<https://courses.ryerson.ca/d2l/home>)

Email address for this course: **idragos@ryerson.ca**

**Course Description:**

In this course, students will examine the foundations of contemporary conceptions of knowledge through a study of the two dominant philosophical traditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries—Rationalism and Empiricism. The main philosophers studied will be Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant. The themes examined will include the nature of knowledge, the origin and formation of beliefs about the external world and of scientific theories and methods, the threat of skepticism, and the relation between mind and body.

**Required Texts:**

- (1) Reading Package.
- (2) Additional readings on D2L.

**Evaluation**

- (1) Précis..... **15%**..... **Due Feb. 9** (11:59pm)
- (2) Short Response Paper..... **25%**..... **Due Mar. 15** (11:59pm)
- (3) Term Paper..... **35%**..... **Due Apr. 15** (11:59pm)
- (4) Quizzes..... **20%**..... **In Class** (see schedule)
- (5) Participation..... **5%**

A précis is a short expository essay. Students will have limited space to present the core idea(s) or argument(s) of an assigned text. A good précis will be accurate and concise. It will demonstrate one's ability to distinguish between the primary and auxiliary contents of a text. This assignment is strictly about accurately comprehending and presenting another's ideas. Thus, students are not to critically engage with the text.

In the response paper, students will identify and present an idea or argument from their choice of assigned text to-date. They will then offer a criticism of the idea or argument. An in-class Essay Writing Primer will be provided ahead of the term paper deadline.

5 quizzes are scheduled on Wednesdays throughout the term, written at the beginning of class. Quizzes will cover all the material since the last quiz. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Thus, each quiz is worth 5% of the final grade. Quizzes will contain definitions (a 2-3 sentence explanation of a term or idea) and short answer questions (a short paragraph in response to a question posed). There will be no long answer or essay questions on the quizzes. At least 48 hours before each quiz, I will post a set of Possible Quiz Questions to D2L. A subset of these will appear on the quiz.

**Course Page:** All announcements will be made through D2L. It is your responsibility to check the course page on a regular basis and keep up-to-date with the course. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are receiving emails sent out through D2L.

**Email Policy:** All emails for this course should be directed to idragos@ryerson.ca, and should be sent from your university email account. Emails will generally be answered within 48 hours. However, I may *not* answer emails if (1) the relevant information is available on the course webpage or syllabus, or if (2) the question is best addressed during class or office hours (e.g. a detailed philosophical question).

**Extensions and Late Papers:** Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, unless (a) prior arrangements have been made with me by email for an extension or (b) there is a medical or family emergency (in which case documentation may be required). Plan ahead: you may request extensions by email up until 48 hours before assignments are due; after that, extensions will be granted only for illness or family emergencies.

**Accessibility:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. We will ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from Ryerson University is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, Ryerson University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Ryerson University's code of behaviour on academic matters is available at (<https://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/students/penalties-and-consequences/>). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see <https://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>).

**Copyright in Instructional Settings:** If a student wishes to record or reproduce lecture presentations, course notes, or other materials provided by the instructor, the student must obtain the instructor's consent beforehand. Otherwise reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is absolutely prohibited. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, the instructor's consent will not be unreasonably withheld.

### **Schedule of Topics & Readings:**

**Jan. 14, 16:** Overview, Housekeeping, & Critical Reasoning Primer

**Mon. Jan. 21:** Aristotelian-Medieval Natural Philosophy  
Reading: Aristotle, *Physics*, bk.1 pt.1, bk.2 pts.1-3.

**Wed. Jan. 23:** Aristotelian-Medieval Epistemology & Metaphysics  
Reading: DeWitt, *Aristotelian-Medieval Worldview*.

### **QUIZ#1**

**Mon. Jan. 28:** Ancient Skepticism  
Reading: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism*, book 1 parts i-xiii.

**Wed. Jan. 30:** Descartes—Foundationalism  
Reading: Descartes, *Meditations*, 1-4.

**Mon. Feb. 4:** Descartes—Natural Philosophy  
Readings: Descartes, *The World*, "The Treatise on Light," chapters 1-2.  
Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, excerpts of parts 2-4.

**Wed. Feb. 6:** Weather Cancellation.

**[Sat. Feb. 9: Précis Due @11:59pm on D2L]**

**Mon. Feb. 11:** Copernicus, Galileo, & Kepler  
Reading: Galileo, *Siderius Nuncius*.

**QUIZ#2**

**Wed. Feb. 13:** Weather Cancellation.

**Mon. Feb. 18:** **NO CLASS (Family Day)**

**Wed. Feb. 20:** **NO CLASS (Study Week)**

**Mon. Feb. 25:** Locke—Ideas & Knowledge

Reading: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book 1 chapters 1-2; book 2 chapters 1-7, 12-13.

**Wed. Feb. 27:** Locke—Primary & Secondary Qualities

Reading: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book 2 chapter 8.

**Mon. Mar. 4:** Locke—Substance & Personal Identity.

Reading: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book 2 chapter 27; book 4 chapter 3 section 6.

**Wed. Mar. 6:** Locke—Substance & Personal Identity (cont'd)

Reading: No Readings.

**QUIZ#3**

**Mon. Mar. 11:** Leibniz—Mechanism & Unity/Identity

Reading: Leibniz, *A New System*.

**Wed. Mar. 13:** Leibniz—Empiricism & Necessity

Reading: Leibniz, *New Essays On Human Understanding*, preface.

**[Fri. Mar. 15: Response Paper Due @11:59pm on D2L]**

**Mon. Mar. 18:** Hume—Impressions, Substance, Identity, Custom & Habit

Reading: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections 1-4.

**Wed. Mar. 20:** Cancellation (Student Walk-Out)

**Mon. Mar. 25:** Hume—Problem of Induction

Reading: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, re-read section 4.

**QUIZ#4**

**Wed. Mar. 27:** Kant—Overview

Reading: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*, Intro; Preamble; Gen. Problems.

**Mon. Apr. 1:** Kant—Overview (cont'd)

Reading: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*, Main Transcendental Prob. 1-3.

**Wed. Apr. 3:** Kant—Sensibility & Understanding

Reading: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*, Conclusion.

**Mon. Apr. 8:** Kant—Categories of Understanding; Essay Writing Primer

Reading: No Readings.

**QUIZ #5**

**Wed. Apr. 10:** Writing Appointments (11:00am-3:00pm)

**[Mon. Apr. 15: Term Paper Due @11:59pm on D2L]**