

Philosophy Department, Ryerson University, Winter 2020
PHL 508: The Empiricists

Class Time: Wed. 3:00–6:00pm

Class Location: KHE 222

Instructor: I. Chris Dragos

Instructor Email: idragos@ryerson.ca

Office Location: POD375

Office Hours: By appointment on Wednesdays and Thursdays (request *via* email)

Course Description: Empirical practice—the study of nature through careful observation—has been undertaken for at least two-and-a-half millennia. But empiricism as a systematic philosophical doctrine was developed in the 17th and 18th centuries, most notably in the works of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. This doctrine grounds the generation of knowledge and/or ideas in the deliverances of the senses rather than in pure intellectual reasoning. We will begin this course by tracing the roots of empiricism in ancient through renaissance philosophy and empirical practice. We will then study the works of Locke as an attempt to offer the philosophical underpinnings of the new, experimental science that emerged in the sixteenth century. We will explore the works of Berkeley and Hume as extensions of the empiricist programme that attempt to address fundamental philosophical concerns about the nature of substance, the self, the limits of human knowledge, and other issues. This is a seminar-style course.

Required Texts: Readings to be provided by instructor on D2L.

Evaluation:

(1a) Précis.....	25%	Due Feb.2 (@10:00pm)
(2a) Presentation.....	20%	In-Class (sign-up for date)
(2b) In-Class Précis.....	20%	In-Class Mar. 11
(3) Term Paper.....	40%	Due Apr. 11 (10:00pm D2L)
(4) Participation.....	15%	

A précis is a short expository essay. Students will have limited space and/or time 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 components of a text. A précis is concerned with comprehending and presenting another's ideas rather than critically engaging with them.

The first assignment will be a take-home précis. Students will write a précis on an assigned text. This assignment is intended to foster organization and concision. Thus, the word limit will be strictly enforced.

For the second assignment, students will have two options. One is an in-class précis, which is a type of test. Students will be given a short text and 90 minutes to write a précis on that text. Students will not know ahead of time which text they will be assigned. There will be a limit of one exam booklet, front pages only, double-spaced (5 pages total). The second option is an in-class presentation. Students will sign-up to give a 10-15 minute presentation on a reading and conclude by posing one or two questions to the class for discussion.

The participation grade will be based on attendance and general contributions to seminar-style discussion. Quality of contributions is a key factor in this grade, not merely volume of contributions.

Course Website: Materials for the course will be available on D2L. All announcements will be through D2L. It is your responsibility to check D2L on a regular basis and to keep up-to-date with the course.

Email Policy: All emails for this course should be directed to idragos@ryerson.ca, and should be sent from your Ryerson 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 page or syllabus, or if (2) the question is best addressed during class (e.g. a detailed question about content).

Extensions and Late Papers: Missing the In-Class Précis will result in a grade of 0% unless the absence is due to a documented medical or other emergency. The appropriate documentation and information can be found here: <https://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf>. 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 Ryerson's accessibility services as soon as possible (<https://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport/academic-accommodation-support/>). We will work together to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential.

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, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Ryerson University's Academic Integrity Office (<https://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity/students/penalties-and-consequences/>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. 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 the Academic Integrity Office.

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: This schedule may change. Any changes will be announced. You are expected to complete the readings prior to class.

Jan. 15: Introduction & Course Overview
Readings: None

Unit 1: Antecedents

Jan. 22: Aristotelian Science/Epistemology

Readings: Plato, *Meno*;
Aristotle, *Physics* bk.1 ch.1, bk.2 ch.1-2;
Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, bk.1 ch.1, bk.2 ch.19;

Jan. 29: Case Studies: Classical Medical Empiricism & Renaissance Moon Mapping

Readings: Galen, *On the Sects for Beginners*;
Galileo, *Siderius Nuncius*;
Chapman, “A New Perceived Reality: Thomas Harriot’s Moon Maps.”

[Feb. 2. Précis Due @ 10:00pm on D2L (25%)]

Feb. 5: Cartesian Revolution & Rationalism

Readings: Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, pts.2-4 (excerpts);
Descartes, *Meteorology—Discourse 8: On the Rainbow*

[Feb. 7: DROP DEADLINE—GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING—50% REFUND]

Unit 2: Lockean Empiricism—Grounding the New Science

Feb. 12: Locke—Simple & Complex Ideas (Lockean Philosophy of Mind)

Readings: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk.1 chs.1-2; bk.2 chs.1-7,
12-13.

Feb. 19: NO CLASS (Reading Week)

Feb. 26: Locke—Knowledge & its Limits. (Lockean Epistemology)

Readings: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk.4 ch.3 sec.1-6.

Mar. 4: Locke—Primary & Secondary Qualities; Identity (Lockean Metaphysics)

Readings: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk.2 ch.8; bk.2 ch.27.

Mar. 11: In-Class Précis (20%)

Unit 3: Berkelian & Humean Empiricists Programmes

Mar. 18: Berkelian Idealism

Readings: Berkeley, *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, paras.1-33.

Mar. 25 Hume—Impressions, Substance, Identity, Custom & Habit

Readings: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections 1-3.

[Fri. Mar. 27: DROP DEADLINE—GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING—NO REFUND]

Apr. 1: Hume—Problem of Induction

Readings: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections 4-5.

Apr. 8: Kant—Transcendental Idealism (or Continuation of Hume, depending on pace)
Readings: Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*.

[Apr. 15: Term Paper Due @10:00pm on D2L (40%)]