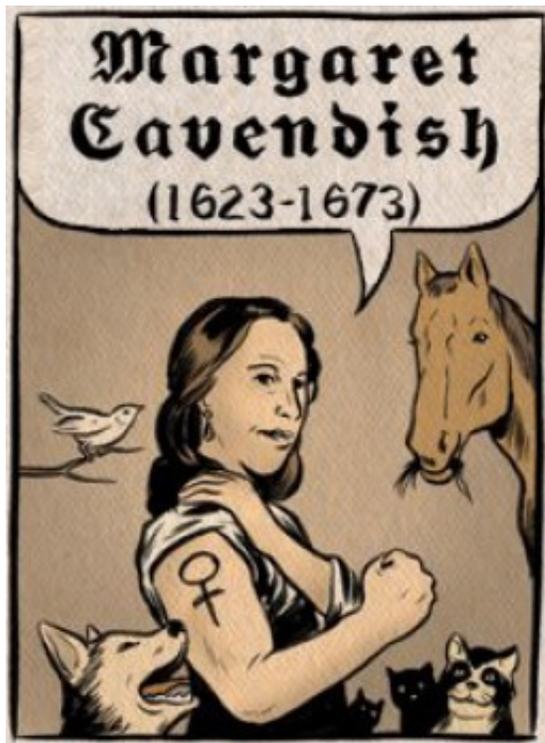


# PHIL 300. Princesses, Mad Women, and Feminists: Women of the Enlightenment

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Eugene Marshall — Syllabus — Fall 2012

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Facts:

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- Meetings: W 9:50–12:20 Phil Dept. Library/seminar room
- My office: 324 Founders Hall
- Office Hours: 11–12 Thursdays and [by appointment](#)

Course Description:

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The Enlightenment is the foundation of the modern world. During this period, modern science, government, and economy developed. The thinkers who generated these revolutionary changes are among the most famous and important intellectuals and philosophers in history: Descartes, Locke, Voltaire, Kant. Indeed, this is how the period is often taught, as the story of an ongoing conversation beginning with Descartes, with chapters on Locke, Hume, and others, and concluding with Kant. Unfortunately, this story has traditionally excluded women thinkers, even though many women philosophers participated in the vibrant intellectual culture of the period; indeed, some of them may have done more to advance the Enlightenment project than many of the canonical men. We will attempt to correct this historical bias. Along the way, we shall encounter princesses, mad women, and revolutionaries, as well as scientists, metaphysicians, and devout believers.

## Course Goals:

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1. **Get to know the philosophical themes of the Enlightenment:** students are to become familiar with central themes and arguments in this period through readings, lecture, discussion, and writing.
2. **Learn to read arguments:** students are to learn how to read texts in philosophy, so that they may grasp the arguments employed by the authors.
3. **Learn to write and speak clearly:** students are to be able to express their understanding of these arguments clearly and accurately, both orally and in writing.
4. **Learn to engage arguments critically:** students are to engage these arguments critically, analyzing them for strength and weaknesses, presenting objections, as well as responses to those objections. This activity should develop the rigorous critical thinking and writing skills central to philosophy, as well as allow students an opportunity for original and creative thinking.

## Paper Texts:

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- *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, edited by Margaret Atherton
- Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and other Writings*

*Both texts available in the campus bookstore.*

## Online Sources:

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- Margaret Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*
- Gabrielle Suchon, *A Woman Who Defends All the Persons of Her Sex*
- Emilie Du Châtelet, *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*
- Early Modern Texts

- [Our Course Google Folder](#)

*Click on the titles to be taken to the webpages. The texts above are also on reserve at the Clapp, should you prefer printed editions.*

## Evaluation:

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- Argument reconstruction paper (10%)
- Presentation on one of our week's readings (10%)
- Final paper proposal (10%)
- Literature review and exegetical summary (20%)
- Final paper (30%)
- Participation (20%)

*A Grading Rubric is available on the course website. This document explains the criteria for grades on written work and class participation. Let me know if you have any questions.*

## Two Comments on the Readings:

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This course assumes that students have taken at least one philosophy class at the 200 level. Nevertheless, you are certain to find the readings difficult at times. This should not be a cause for despair. You should expect to read the assigned texts more than once before the class meeting for which they are assigned.

Philosophical essays are meant to be read and re-read, and though philosophers try to write clearly (and often succeed), even clear writing about extremely abstract topics is hard to grasp all at once. Read carefully and critically, asking yourself what the authors are trying to show, who they imagine their main opponents to be, and what kinds of reasons they provide to support their views.

It is important to maintain a critical perspective on what you read, paying attention to what objections come to mind as you consider an author's views, but it is equally important to be able to give a fair and accurate account of the view that you are assessing. Our goal is to be charitable interpreters without being gullible, and to be imaginative enough to find constructive uses for our criticisms and objections.

## Further policies:

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- Attendance is required and participation is a part of your grade.
- I will not as a rule accept late work or rewrites, nor will I grant extensions, though I may make exceptions for real and documented emergencies.
- Most problems can be avoided by contacting me as soon as possible, preferably before any deadlines, to alert me to your difficulty. In fact, please feel free to

contact me via [email](#), or to come by my office, whenever you have questions, comments, or concerns.

- I shall conduct small group meetings during the first month of the course, after enrollment has been finalized. These meetings are to help me to get to know you and vice versa. I shall discuss these in class.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and who need disability-related classroom or assignment accommodations are encouraged to see me as soon as possible. The Coordinator of the Learning and Teaching Center and James Wice, the Coordinator of Disability Services, can assist students in arranging these accommodations.
- Finally, please remember that this course is conducted under the Wellesley honor code. I would also direct you to the resource below for information about plagiarism. Please take a moment to visit these sites and read them, if you have not done so already: [The Honor Code](#) and the College's discussion of [plagiarism](#).

## Course Schedule:

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Note: The schedule below is subject to revision as class interest and discussion will determine the speed at which we move through the various readings. For each week, the readings listed under a date heading are due on that day. Readings from Margaret Atherton's anthology, listed above, will say *Atherton*. Those from the website [earlymoderntexts.com](#) will say *EMT.com*. Readings from EMT.com, as well as from any other online source, will be hyperlinked to the source. Very often this link will take you to an ebook through the Wellesley Library, but sometimes it will take you to a PDF in the course's Google Docs folder. Such readings will be marked *PDF*. For each week, I shall also include supplemental readings, often from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, which shall be listed as *SEP* with a link. Let me know if you have trouble accessing any of these.

### **Wednesday, September 5. Introductions and background**

1. [The Pink Guide to Taking Philosophy Courses](#), (PDF)
2. The Introduction to the Atherton anthology (pp. 1–6).
3. Preface and Afterword from Andrea Nye's *Feminism and Modern Philosophy* (PDF)
4. Supplemental: Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* and "The Introduction to The Other Voice Book Series"

### **Sept 12. René Descartes and Elisabeth of Bohemia on Mind-Body Interaction**

1. Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, First, Second, Third, and Sixth Meditations on EMT.com , pp. 1–16, 28–35.
2. Atherton, *Women Philosophers*, Chapter One (pp. 9–21)
3. Deborah Tollefsen, "Princess Elisabeth and the Problem of Mind-Body

Interaction” (Readable online here)

4. Supplemental: Beatrice Zedler, “The Three Princesses” (PDF); SEP article on Descartes’s Real Distinction Argument
5. *Sign up for reading presentations!*

### **Sept 19. Thomas Hobbes’ and Margaret Cavendish’s Materialism**

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 1–4 on [earlymoderntexts.com](http://earlymoderntexts.com)
2. Margaret Cavendish, *Observations*, selections: Introduction (pp. x-xv), Chapter 31 (pp. 125–132), and Chapters 36 and 37, up to question 10 (pp. 149–169).
3. Stewart Duncan, “Debating Materialism: Cavendish, Hobbes, and More,” (PDF)
4. Supplemental: SEP articles on [Cavendish](#) and [Hobbes](#)
5. *Argument reconstruction assigned and discussed.*

### **Sept 26. Cavendish’s Panpsychism**

1. Cavendish, *Observations*, “Further Observations,” chs. 6–16 (pp. 204–225).
2. Atherton, *Women Philosophers*, Chapter Two (pp. 22–45)
3. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, selections: Part 1, beginning until Proposition 16 (pp. 1–10); Part 2, Proposition 7 to the Physical Interlude (pp. 25–29); and Part 3, beginning to Proposition 7 (pp. 50–54). (all on [EMT.com](http://EMT.com))
4. Supplemental: SEP articles on [Spinoza](#) and [Panpsychism](#). For a recent argument that materialism entails panpsychism, see Galen Strawson’s “The Self.”

### **October 3. Cavendish’s Fiction and Feminism**

1. *Argument reconstruction due!*
2. Cavendish, *The Blazing World*, (1666) pp. 119–225 (Feel free to skim!)
3. Deborah Boyle, “Fame, Virtue, and Government: Margaret Cavendish on Ethics and Politics” (PDF)
4. Supplemental: Deborah Boyle, “Cavendish on Gender, Nature, and Freedom” (PDF) and Lee Cullen Khanna, “The Subject of Utopia: Margaret Cavendish and her Blazing World” (PDF)
5. Some other 17th Century fantastical utopias: Cyrano de Bergerac, *A Voyage to the Moon* (1655) (PDF) and Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, (1627) (Read online here)

### **Oct 10. Special Collections Visit**

1. Discussion of writing philosophy papers
2. Visit the Special Collections at the Clapp Library

### **Oct 17. Gottfried Leibniz and Anne Conway on Substance**

1. Anne Conway, *The Principles of the most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, at [EMT.com](http://EMT.com).

2. Gottfried Leibniz, *Monadology* at EMT.com
3. Carolyn Merchant, “The Vitalism of Anne Conway: Its Impact on Leibniz’s Concept of the Monad.” (PDF)
4. Supplemental: Jane Duran, “Anne Viscountess Conway: A Seventeenth Century Rationalist.” (PDF); SEP entries on Leibniz and Conway. See also Sarah Hutton’s *Anne Conway, A Woman Philosopher*

### **Oct 24. John Locke, Leibniz, and Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham**

1. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Section xxi: Power. (pp. 72–92) on EMT.com
2. Pierre Bayle on Leibniz, Notes H (pp. 2611–12) and L (pp. 2614–17) (PDF)
3. Atherton, *Women Philosophers*, Chapter Four (pp. 77–95)
4. Jacqueline Broad, “A Woman’s Influence? John Locke and Damaris Masham on Moral Accountability” (PDF)
5. Supplemental: Lois Frankel, “Damaris Cudworth Masham: A Seventeenth Century Feminist Philosopher” (PDF); SEP entries on Locke and Masham

### **Oct 31. Masham and Mary Astell on Love and Sociability**

1. Atherton, *Women Philosophers*, Chapter Five (pp. 96–125)
2. Catherine Wilson, “Love of God and Love of Creatures: The Masham–Astell Debate” (PDF)
3. Joanne E. Myers, “Enthusiastic Improvement: Mary Astell and Damaris Masham on Sociability” (PDF)
4. Supplemental: SEP entry on Astell

### **November 7. George Berkeley, David Hume, and Mary Shepherd**

1. *Proposals, outlines, lit reviews, and exegetical summaries discussed!*
2. George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Sections 1–24 (pp. 11–17) on EMT.com
3. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 4–5 (pp. 11–27) on EMT.com
4. Atherton, *Women Philosophers*, Chapter Seven (pp. 147–159)
5. Margaret Atherton, “Lady Mary Shepherd’s case against George Berkeley.” (PDF)
6. Supplemental: SEP entries on Berkeley and Hume

### **Nov 14. Gabrielle Suchon’s Feminism**

1. *Final paper proposal due!*
2. Gabrielle Suchon, *A Woman Who Defends All the Persons of Her Sex*, “Treatise on Ethics and Politics,” pp. 87–226.
3. Séverine Auffret, “Gabrielle Suchon” (PDF)
4. Michèle Le Dœuff, “Feminism is Back in France — Or is it?” (PDF)

5. Supplemental: Suchon on choosing a single, celibate life of the mind, Suchon, pp. 229–293.

### **Nov 28. Emilie du Châtelet's Science and Ethics**

1. Emilie Du Châtelet, *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, Selections: “Foundations of Physics,” Preface - Chapters 3 and Chapter 7 (pp. 115–47 and 163–73); and “Discourse On Happiness” (pp. 344–365)
2. Supplemental: Sarah Hutton, “Emilie du Châtelet’s Institutions de Physique as a Document in the History of French Newtonianism” (PDF); Marcy Lascano, “Emilie du Châtelet on the Existence and Nature of God” (PDF); and *Emilie Du Châtelet: rewriting Enlightenment philosophy and science*, edited by Judith P. Zinsser and Julie Candler Hayes

### **December 5. Mary Wollstonecraft's Feminism**

1. *Literature review and exegetical summary due!*
2. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, on EMT.com
3. Lena Halldenius, “The primacy of right. On the triad of liberty, equality and virtue in Wollstonecraft’s political thought” (PDF)
4. SEP entry on Wollstonecraft

**Final Papers due via email on Friday, December 21st, by 4pm**



Wollstonecraft