

**Continental Rationalists**  
**Philosophy 4277/5278**  
Fall Semester 2016  
Temple University

**Time and Location**

TR, 2:00-3:20 pm, Anderson Hall 706

**Instructor**

Prof. Colin Chamberlain  
Office: Anderson Hall 746  
Office Hours: Thursday 3:30-4:30 pm (or by appointment)  
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**Description**

In this course, we will examine early modern conceptions of the physical or natural world, focusing on three main topics: color, matter, and space. We will ask questions like: what is the nature of material objects like tables, chairs, trees and mountains? Given the nature of material objects, are they really colored? What is the nature of the spaces or positions through which material objects move? We will read selections from René Descartes, Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, Isaac Newton, Gottfried Leibniz, and Emilie du Chatelet.

**Required Texts**

Cavendish, Margaret. 2001. *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Edited by Eileen O'Neill. Cambridge. ISBN-13: 978-0521776752. Abbreviated OEP below.

Descartes, René. 1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Translated and edited by Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch. Volumes 1-2. Cambridge. ISBN-13: 978-0521288071 and 978-0521288088. Abbreviated CSM below.

Leibniz, Gottfried. 1989. *Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*. Translated and edited by Roger Ariew and Dan Garber. Hackett. ISBN-13: 978-0872200623. Abbreviated AG below.

**Grades**

First Paper (~5 pages) - 20%  
Second Paper (~ 5 pages) - 20%  
Final Paper & Process (~10-15 pages) - 40%  
Participation - 20%

**Participation**

I expect everybody to come well-prepared to class with questions and things to say about the material, as approximately half of each class will be devoted to discussion. I especially encourage undergraduates to come to my office hours to discuss the course material as well as possible paper topics. If anyone is interested in running the discussion for a class, please let me know.

**Writing Assignments**

The first two papers are due at the beginning of class, in hardcopy, on the day they are due. I ask that you submit these papers anonymously, using only your TuID as identification. The final paper will be due December 15 at 5 pm. (More instructions forthcoming...)

### **Late Policy**

It is important that you complete the written assignments on time. I will thus deduct a whole letter grade for every day that assignments are late (so, for example, an A would go to a B), unless you request an extension from me at least 48 hours before the assignment is due.

### **Plagiarism**

Cite all sources you use. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an F on the assignment and I will report you to the department chair. Please follow this link to see Temple University's Policy on Academic Honesty: [http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities\\_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm](http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm).

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory. If you cannot attend for some legitimate reason you must notify me by email before class. Excuses after the fact will not be accepted unless there is a documented emergency. You get one unexcused absence for free. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a deduction of your final grade by a step, for example, from B+ to B.

### **Tardiness**

If you come to class more than 20 minutes late without a legitimate excuse, I reserve the right to deduct from your final grade as if your tardiness were an absence. Each subsequent tardy attendance will be counted as an absence.

### **Cellphone Policy**

No cellphones are allowed in class. If I catch you using a cellphone, this will count as an unexcused absence. Similarly for other electronic devices (such as laptops and tablets), unless you seek and receive special permission from me in advance. This means that you will need to print out all readings in advance.

### **Disability Statement**

This course is open to all students who met the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Statement on Academic Freedom**

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy\\_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02)

## **Course Calendar**

### **Week 1:**

### **August 30: Material Things & The Aristotelian Worldview**

*Required Reading:* Syllabus.

## DESCARTES

### September 1: Descartes's Epistemology: Doubt

*Required Reading:* *Meditation 1*, CSM II 12-15; "First Objection and Reply" from *O/R 3*, CSM II 121).

*Recommended Reading:* *Dedication, Preface, and Synopsis to the Meditations*, CSM II 3-11.

*Recommended Commentary:* Janet Broughton, *Descartes's Method of Doubt*; John Carriero, "The First Meditation"; and Gary Hatfield, "Reason, Nature, and God in Descartes".

### Week 2:

### September 6: Descartes's Epistemology: Certainty

*Required Reading:* *Meditations 2-5*, CSM II 16-49.

*Recommended Reading:* *O/R 2* ("Thirdly,...") CSM II 89-90; *O/R 4*, CSM II 150 and CSM II 171-172.

*Recommended Commentary:* Lex Newman and Alan Nelson, "Circumventing Cartesian Circles"; Edwin Curley, *Descartes Against the Skeptics*, ch. 5; James Van Cleve, "Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle".

### September 8: Cartesian Matter

*Required Reading:* *Principles* II.1–19, CSM I 223-231; *Letter to More 5 February 1649* ("I pass to your second difficulty..."), CSMK 362 (available on website).

*Recommended Reading:* *Principles* II.20-21, CSM I 231-232; *The World*, esp. chs. 4, 6 & 7; and *Treatise on Man*, CSM I 81-108.

*Recommended Commentary:* Calvin Normore, "Descartes and the Metaphysics of Extension"; Roger Woolhouse, "Descartes and the Nature of Body"; Dan Garber, *Descartes's Metaphysical Physics*, ch. 3.

### Week 3:

### September 13: Space and Motion

*Required Reading:* *Principles* II, CSM II 223-247.

*Recommended Commentary:* Dan Garber, "Descartes's Physics"; Jonathan Bennett, *Learning From Six Philosophers*, volume 1, chs. 2-3; Gary Hatfield, "Force (God) in Descartes' Physics".

### September 15: Real Distinction of Mind and Body

*Required reading:* *Meditation 6*, CSM II 50-62; *O/R 4*, CSM II 139-144.

*Recommended Reading:* *Principles* I.60, CSM I 213; *O/R 1*, CSM II 72-73; *O/R 1*, CSM II 85-86; *O/R 2*, Proposition IV, CSM II 119-120; *Discourse IV*, CSM I 127; *Preface to Meditations*, CSM II 7; *O/R 4*, 154-162; Point 5 from *O/R 5*, CSM II 238-239.

*Recommended Commentary:* Marleen Rozemond, “Descartes’s Case for Dualism”; Marleen Rozemond, “The Nature of the Mind”.

**Week 4:**

**September 20: The Mind-Body Union**

*Required Reading:* *Meditation* 6, CSM II 50-62 (again); *O/R* 4, CSM II 160; *O/R* 6, CSM II 296-301; *Discourse* V, CSM I 139-141; *Principles* IV.189, CSM I 279-280; *Passions of the Soul* I.30-34, CSM I 339-341; correspondence with Elizabeth (available on website) <— Don’t miss this!

*Recommended Commentary:* Lilli Alanen, “Reconsidering Descartes’s Notion of the Mind-Body Union”.

**September 22: Misfits of Dualism: Color and Sensations**

*Required Reading:* *Meditation* 3, CSM II 25-32; *Meditation* 6, CSM II 55-62; *O/R* 1, CSM II 66-67; CSM II 74-76; *O/R* 4 “Concerning God”, CSM II 145-146, CSM II 162-164; *O/R* 6, CSM II 281-282, 294-296; *Optics* 1, 4-6, CSM I 152-156, 164-175; *The World*, ch.1, CSM I 81-82; *Description of the Human Body*, CSM I 323.

*Recommended Commentary:* John Cottingham, “Descartes on Color”; Ann Wilbur Mackenzie, “Descartes on Sensory Representation: A Study of the *Dioptrics*”.

**CAVENDISH**

**Week 5:**

**September 27: Method and Overview (First Paper Due)**

*Required Reading:* *Preface* to the *Observations*, OEP 7-10; *Observations* 2-3, and 34 (OEP 48-53, 135-136); *Philosophical Letters* I.1 (available on website).

*Recommended Commentary:* Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, ch. 2; Eileen O’Neill, *Introduction* to the *Observations*, OEP x-xxxvi.

**September 29: Cavendish on the Material World**

*Required Reading:* *Observations* Introduction (review OEP xxiii-xxxv), An Argumental Discourse (OEP 23-42); *Observations* 31 (OEP 125-131); *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* Part I (website); Letters I.23 & 30 (website).

*Recommended Reading:* *Observations* 1 (OEP 46-48), 15 (OEP 68-72), 25 (OEP 95-100), 37.3-7 (OEP 157-165) and 37.15 (OEP 184-185).

*Recommended Commentary:* Karen Detlefsen, “Atomism, Monism, and Causation in the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish”.

**Week 6:**

**October 4: Perception and Knowledge**

*Required Reading:* *Observations* 35-36 (OEP 137-154), *Letters* I.35-37 (website).

*Recommended Reading:* *Observations* 37 (OEP 155-194)

*Recommended Commentary:* Deborah Boyle, “Margaret Cavendish on Perception, Self-Knowledge, and Probably Opinion”; David Cuning, “Cavendish on the Intelligibility of the Prospect of Thinking Matter”; Karen Detlefsen, “Reason and Freedom: Margaret Cavendish on the Order and Disorder of Nature”; Kourken Michaelian, “Margaret Cavendish’s Epistemology”.

### **October 6: Color & Place/Space**

*Required Reading:* *Observations* 18-21 (OEP 75-90); *Observations* 31 (OEP 125-131); *Letters* I.30-32 (website).

*Recommended Commentary:* Alison Peterman, “TBD”.

## **NEWTON**

### **Week 7:**

### **October 11: Newton’s Critique of Cartesian Space**

*Required Reading:* Selections from *De Gravitatione* (website).

*Recommended Commentary:* Andrew Janiak, *Newton as Philosopher*.

### **October 13: Newton’s Absolute Space**

*Recommended Reading:* Selections from the *Principia* (website).

*Recommended Commentary:* Andrew Janiak, *Newton as Philosopher*.

## **LEIBNIZ**

### **Week 8: Start Thinking About Final Paper Topics (if you haven’t already)!**

### **October 18: Leibniz’s Life, Works, and Three Themes (Second Paper Due)**

*Required Reading:* Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason (AG 206-213); The Principles of Philosophy, or, The Monadology (AG 213-225)

*Recommended Reading:* Discourse on Metaphysics (AG 35-68).

*Recommended Commentary:* Robert Adams, “Chapter 1: Leibniz’s Theories of Contingency”.

### **October 20: Matter**

*Required Reading:* On Nature Itself (AG 155-167); On Body and Force, Against the Cartesians (AG 250-256); Discourse on Metaphysics 11 & 12 (AG 43-44).

*Recommended Reading:* Primary Truths (AG 33-34) ; Letter to Arnauld 28 November/8 December 1686 (AG 79-81); Letter to Arnauld 30 April 1687 (AG 85-90;) Note on Foucher’s Objection (AG145-147); Letters to Johann Bernoulli (AG 167-171); Letter to Samuel Mason (AG 228-230).

*Recommended Commentary:* Samuel Levey, “Leibniz on Mathematics and the Actual Infinite Division of Matter”.

## **Week 9:**

### **October 25: Dynamics**

*Required Reading:* A Specimen of Dynamics I (AG 118-130); Discourse on Metaphysics 17 & 18 (AG 49-52).

*Recommended Reading:* Dynamics: On Power and the Laws of Corporeal Nature (AG 105-111); Letters to De Volder (AG 171-186).

*Recommended Commentary:* Daniel Garber, "Leibniz and the Foundations of Physics: The Middle Years".

### **October 27: Corporeal Substances**

*Required Reading:* Discourse on Metaphysics, sections 8-14 (AG 40-47); Notes on Some Comments by Michel Angelo Fardella (1690) (AG 101-105); Leibniz to de Volder 20 June 1703 (AG 174-178); Leibniz to de Volder 1704 or 1705 (AG 181-4).

*Recommended Reading:* Leibniz to de Volder 24 March/3 April 1699 (AG 171-174); Leibniz to de Volder 30 June 1704 (AG 178-181).

*Recommended Commentary:* Samuel Levey, "On Unity: Leibniz-Arnauld Revisited".

## **Week 10:**

### **November 1: Immaterial Substances**

*Required Reading:* Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason (1714) (AG 206-213); The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology (1714) (AG 213-225); Leibniz to Des Bosses 5 February 1712 (AG 198-199).

*Recommended Reading:* Notes for Leibniz to Des Bosses 5 February 1712 (AG 199-200); Leibniz to Des Bosses 26 May 1712 (AG 200-201); Leibniz to Des Bosses, 29 May 1716 (AG 201-206).

*Recommended Commentary:* Donald Rutherford, "Leibniz as Idealist".

### **November 3: Space, Time, and Monads**

*Required Reading:* Letters to Clark (AG 320-346)

*Recommended Reading:* Primary Truths (selection: "There is no vacuum", AG 33).

*Recommended Commentary:* J.A. Cover and Glenn Hartz, "Are Leibnizian Monads Spatial".

## **Week 11:**

### **November 8: Leibniz's Two Realms**

*Required Reading:* "Leibniz's Exchange of Views with Bayle" available on Jonathan Bennett's [earlymoderntexts.com](http://earlymoderntexts.com).

*Recommended Reading:* Tentamen Anagogicum: An Analogical Essay in the Investigation of Causes (on course web site).

*Recommended Commentary:* Jonathan Bennett, “Leibniz’s Two Realms”.

## **DU CHATELET**

### **November 10: Foundations of Physics, Principles and Existence of God**

*Required Reading:* *Foundations of Physics*, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2 (website).

*Recommended Commentary:* Karen Detlefsen, “Emilie du Chatelet” available online at the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

### **Week 12:**

### **November 15: Foundations of Physics, Space**

*Required Reading:* *Foundations of Physics*, Chapter 5 (website).

### **November 17: Foundations of Physics, Elements of Matter and Nature of Bodies**

*Required Reading:* *Foundations of Physics*, Chapters 7 & 8 (website).

*Recommended Commentary:* Katharine Brading, “Emilie du Chatelet and the foundations of physical science”.

## **FALL BREAK! NO CLASS NOVEMBER 22 & 24**

### **Week 13:**

### **November 29: Paper Presentations**

### **December 1: Paper Presentations**

### **Week 14:**

### **December 6: Paper Presentations**

### **December 8: Paper Presentations**

**Final Paper Due: December 15 at 5 pm.,**