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304-01 Early Modern Philosophy

Daniel Shields

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Course Description & Objectives:

This course is a survey of early modern philosophy, covering the historical period from 1600 AD to 1800 AD. The course begins with a consideration of the rejection of Aristotelian natural teleology and the establishment of a new way of understanding nature that occurred in the early 17th century, otherwise known as the scientific revolution. We will study the philosophical underpinnings of this revolution in the writings of Descartes and especially Francis Bacon. Then we will look at the implications of this intellectual movement for moral philosophy, particularly by reading the *Enquiries* of David Hume. We will then look at one of modernity's most powerful self-critiques in the writings of Rousseau, and end with the final modern synthesis in the work of Immanuel Kant, who attempted to salvage the modern project by introducing a new kind of teleology.

There are three main goals for this course. The first is to sharpen the skill of critical thinking learned in other philosophy classes, a skill supported by and embodied in the skills of critical reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The second goal is to familiarize ourselves with one of the most significant intellectual events in human history, representing a paradigm shift that has profoundly altered human life ever since. The third goal is to grow in our understanding of the truth about nature, humanity, and morality by reflecting on it in the company of these great thinkers.

This course may satisfy a requirement of Xavier University’s Core Curriculum.

Required Texts:


**Requirements:**

(1) **Reading Assignments:** The required texts are written by some of the greatest philosophers in the history of the world. They are our primary teachers. Accordingly, reading the assignments carefully is the primary requirement of the course. Please bring the reading assignments to class with you.

There will be pop quizzes at the beginning of some class periods. The questions will cover basic ideas from the readings. Although you should be in attendance and on time for every class, if you happen to miss a pop quiz, you will have the opportunity of making it up, but you must talk to me about it.

Some of the readings will be posted/linked to on Blackboard (blackboard.xavier.edu). These readings are indicated on the syllabus by the term “e-handout.” Please print them out, read them, and bring them to class. Some of the material posted on Blackboard is copyrighted and only students in this class section may access or print them, and any printed copies must be destroyed at the end of the semester.

(2) **Attendance:** Attending class is required, and I will take roll at the beginning of every class. **Up to 3 classes may be missed without penalty.** For these first three absences, no distinction is made between excused and unexcused absences. **Each additional absence beyond 3, however, will result in the reduction of 2 points out of 100 from the final grade if not excused. In general, more than 6 absences of any kind, excused or not, will result in failure of the course.**

If you have a valid reason for missing class, such as an athletic event or an illness, please notify me as soon as possible, so that I may determine whether the absence can be excused and decide what kind of make-up work, if any, should be assigned.

If there is an extraordinary reason for missing more than 6 classes, such as a serious illness, please discuss it with me as soon as possible so that we may determine whether the course can be completed or not. Withdrawal from the course may be necessary, but that will be determined on a case by case basis.
Student athletes should be especially careful not to miss any classes except those which their athletic events require. Otherwise, they may quickly find themselves over the allowed number of absences.

Please come to class on time and do not leave until class is over. For every 3 times a student comes in after I have taken roll, or leaves before class is over, 1 absence will be counted.

Anytime class falls on a day when a student is religiously obligated not to attend class (for example, if it is considered work in one’s religion and class falls on a work-restricted day) the student will receive an excused absence if he or she notifies me of the religious obligation. More than 6 absences will still generally not be allowed. Please plan ahead, so that you do not have too many absences already when a work-restricted religious day occurs.

(3) Class Participation: You will be graded on your active participation in class. I will ask you questions in class, and if you have a question about the material, ask about it in class. There will also be time for classroom discussions. Don’t be shy, and utilize my office hours. If you come to my office with a real philosophical question, or even just to share some philosophical thought, you will receive points towards your participation grade. Emailing me with questions/comments will also count towards your participation grade.

(4) Papers: One paper will be assigned in this class. The primary requirement for this paper is coherence and structure of thought—i.e., having a thesis and supporting it rationally—but you will also be graded for citation of sources, correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style. Please submit a hard copy of your paper in class on the day it is due. In cases of hardship only, if you are unable to attend class that day, you may submit your paper as a Microsoft Word document or PDF to my email address (shieldsd@xavier.edu) by the time the class period in which they are due starts (e.g., if class starts at 3:00 PM and the paper is due that day, email me your paper no later than 3:00 PM.) For every class-period or portion thereof that the paper is late I will subtract one letter grade. For example, if you turn in your paper after it is due but before the next class period, and you turn in a B paper, you will receive a C. Since you will be graded on grammar, punctuation, and spelling, I recommend you take advantage of the Writing Center. They can help you with the mechanics of writing a paper, although not with the philosophical content. If you have any questions about that, or what it means to have and support a thesis, please see me after class or during my office hours.

Please format your papers according to the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS).

(5) Midterm: There will be a take-home midterm exam, covering all the material from the first half of the semester. Do not miss the midterm deadline. If it is absolutely necessary to miss it, you must talk to me about it ahead of time, and I will make a decision as to whether you can re-schedule. The only exception would be an unexpected emergency. Otherwise, you will receive an F on the exam.

(6) Final Exam: There will be a final exam. The final exam will be comprehensive. Do not miss the exam. If it is absolutely necessary to miss it, you must talk to me about it ahead of time, and I will make a decision as to whether you can re-schedule. The only exception would be an unexpected emergency. Otherwise, you will receive an F on the exam.
Accommodations will be made for students with learning disabilities. Please visit the Learning Assistance Center (Suite 514 in the Conaton Learning Commons, phone: 513-745-3280, online: http://www.xavier.edu/lac/student-disability-services.cfm) for more information.

Policies:

The use of any electronic devices, such as smart phones, cell phones, laptops, e-readers, iPod’s, tablets, etc., is not allowed in this class, unless there is a documented need, such as a learning disability. (Learning disabilities will be fully accommodated as long as I have the proper documentation.) Please turn all electronic devices completely off; do not put them on vibrate. Do not let your phone ring in class, and do not text. The use of electronic devices in the classroom is distracting to oneself and others, and hinders one from learning. **If a phone rings or vibrates in class, or if I see a student texting, surfing, or otherwise using an electronic device, I may subtract 1 point out of 100 from his grade for each offense.** If you have any questions about what is acceptable, ask.

Please obtain physical copies of the required books. Do not bring e-books to class.

Campus Resources:

When needed, be sure to take advantage of some of the student support services offered by Xavier (this list is far from exhaustive):

The Writing Center: Room 400 in the Conaton Learning Commons (Phone: 513-745-2875, Online: http://www.xavier.edu/writing_center/)

Learning Assistance Center (tutoring or disability services): Suite 514 in the Conaton Learning Commons (Phone: 513-745-3280, Online: http://www.xavier.edu/lac/)

Psychological Services Center: Sycamore House, at 3818 Winding Way, next to Schmidt Fieldhouse (Phone: 513-745-3531, Online: http://www.xavier.edu/psychologicalservices/services-to-xavier-students.cfm)

Grading Policies:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Excellent
Academic Dishonesty:

“The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.”

Please be aware that you also may not resubmit work, or parts of work, that you have submitted for another class without explicit permission from me to do so. In other words, do not cut and paste from papers you have written in the past. This is sometimes referred to as “self-plagiarism” and sometimes as “inappropriate use of one’s own work.” It is considered a form of academic dishonesty, and will be treated as such.

Class Schedule:

1/15 – Introduction; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.1–2 (e-handout)
1/17 – Aristotle, *Physics* II.1 (up to 193a8); II.2 (up to 194a33); II.3 (up to 195a26); II.8; (e-handout)

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1/31 – Descartes, *Discourse*, parts 1–3 (p. 1–18)

2/5 – Descartes, *Discourse*, parts 4–6 (p. 18–44)

2/7 – Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. II, ch. 1, 1–9; ch. 26, 1–2; bk. IV, ch. 10, 1–10; ch. 11, 1–2 (e-handout)

2/12 – Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Advertisement & Sec. 1–5 (p. 0–37)

2/14 – Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sec. 6–7 (p. 37–52)

2/19 – Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sec. 8–9 & 12 (p. 52–72, 102–114)

2/21 – Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7 (e-handout); Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, q. 94, a. 2 (e-handout); Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sec. 1–3 (p. 13–34)

2/26 – Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sec. 4–6 (p. 34–61); Take-Home Midterm Handed Out

2/28 – Catch-up Day; Take-Home Midterm Due

3/5 – Spring Break – No Class

3/7 – Spring Break – No Class

3/12 – Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sec. 7–9 (p. 61–82)


4/2 – Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Epithet & B Introduction, I–IV (e-handout)

4/4 – Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B Preface (e-handout)

4/11 – Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, First Section (p. 9–17)

4/18 – **Good Friday, No Class**

4/23 – Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section (p. 27–33)
4/25 – Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section (p. 33–41); **Paper Due**

4/30 – Kant, *Grounding, for the Metaphysics of Morals* Second Section (p. 38–48)
5/2 – Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Third Section (p. 49–62)

5/6–5/9 – Final Examinations

This schedule is subject to change, as circumstances warrant. Any changes will be announced prior to class on Blackboard via e-mail.