The early modern period was a time of ferment, filled with imaginative and creative approaches to the great questions of philosophy. In this period, the philosophy taught in the universities was highly theological and quite out of touch with the exciting new developments abroad in the world: the growth of the new sciences, the discovery of the new world, the breakdown of feudal society, and the shocks of the reformation. So philosophy moved out of the universities, not to return until Kant. Never has philosophy been more vibrant, more entwined with the progressive thought of the day, pushing the cutting edge of scientific, mathematical, and political thought and action. As we look back, we can see a continuous conversation among the leading thinkers, an evolving dialectic concerned with the roles of reason, sense, and faith in our knowledge and our practice.

The principal themes of the era include:

- The role of God in the world, in our knowledge, and in our morality
- The sources and extent of our knowledge
- The reality of the physical world and our knowledge of it
- The nature of the human soul or self and our knowledge of it
- The grounds of moral obligation
- The origin, justification, and structure of a well-ordered civil society

The thought of the era is too rich to be fully explored in a semester course, so I have made several choices about how to focus the course. The first choice is to concentrate on Metaphysics and Epistemology. Phil 436 and 530 usually include the moral, social, and political thought of this era. Much of the conversation about M&E in the 17th and 18th centuries can be understood as a dialogue between two generally coherent approaches to these themes: Rationalism and Empiricism. Their dialogue is capped by Immanuel Kant’s magisterial attempt to reconcile them within his vast and complex critical system. The second choice in this course is to focus on only three major figures: René Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, a great Rationalist; David Hume, the greatest of all philosophers to have written in English and the crowning glory of Empiricism; and Kant, perhaps the greatest philosopher of them all. The intention is to understand these outstanding thinkers in some depth, rather than surveying numerous philosophers superficially.

The objectives of this course are several; when we’re finished students should:

1) be familiar with the historical and cultural background that shaped
philosophy in this era;
2) be able to distinguish and characterize the major schools of thought that emerged during this period;
3) know the concerns, systematic doctrines, modes of argumentation, and philosophical styles of several major figures of the period;
4) be able to give a close reading to the texts of these philosophers and write intelligible, well-grounded exegesis and critique of those texts.

My further hope is that this will be a course in which the focus will be on doing philosophy, not simply learning about philosophy. What's the difference? If you learn about philosophy, you come to know who said what in response to whom, what the arguments are, what the standard criticisms of them are, etc. If you do philosophy, you do all these things as well, but it is part of your own effort to find the truth—not just about philosophy, but about the world. If you are doing philosophy in this course, each concept, thesis, and argument you encounter will be "tried on for size." You will probe each concept and principle to see whether it helps you understand better "how it all hangs together," you will be looking for new perspectives that might enhance your understanding of the world.

Pedagogically, you can learn about philosophy by reading and listening to lectures; you can do philosophy only by engaging in philosophical dispute, both verbal and written. Therefore, while I will talk about basic who, what, when, where issues, I expect participation in the class discussion from each student. You should come to class each day ready to challenge the material, myself, and your colleagues. Notice that part of your grade is attendance and participation. Perfect attendance will get you a B for your A&P; to get an A, you must contribute to the class discussion. Each absence subtracts 3 points from the attendance grade, so the more you miss, the more substantially you will have to contribute to class.

About Me
My office is Nesmith 308. My scheduled office hours are TTh 9:00-11:00 & 1:00-3:00, and by appointment (please take the “by appointment” part seriously—I mean to be available). My office phone is 2-3077; home phone is 942-7510. You are welcome to contact me at home, using discretion about the hour of the day. My email is willem.devries@unh.edu. Coming to talk to me about problems and question is always preferable to letting them fester and then mushroom. Of all the things I do, talking philosophy is my very most favorite thing, so do not hesitate to drop in.
Texts
The three principal texts required for the course are:


These are the standard scholarly versions of these texts. Others, often cheaper, are available, but they are rarely as good. And some other versions are downright bad. Caveat emptor! If you have questions, ask me.

I have ordered one other required book for you to buy:


There are two recommended books to help in reading our difficult primary texts:


Much other material will be available on Blackboard (or Canvas, if I figure that out in time): take some time periodically to explore the site.

Grades
There are four components to the grades for this course.

First, you are **required** to take and hand in reading notes on the Descartes, Hume, and Kant assignments. Make two copies of them and turn one in (clearly marked as yours) on the day the reading is due. Since I’m a nice guy, I will accept them up to one class late; since I am not that nice and I am concerned that you come to class prepared and ready to learn the material, two classes late earns only half credit; two weeks or more late earns a quarter credit. Don’t bother trying to catch up on these frantically at the end of the course. Reading notes are essential in coming to terms with difficult material, so I am trying to force you into a valuable habit with this requirement. The reading notes will be graded on a simple 5-point scale: 5 for an outstanding job, 4 for done on time, 2 for done, but late, etc. I reserve the right to have sloppy, careless, or inadequate notes done over. Note: *This is a significant part of the grade that steady effort, just getting the job done on time, can guarantee.*
Second, there will be several points in the semester where short papers on assigned topics are indicated. These are maximally 2 pages (700 words). Clarity, analytical acumen, and brevity are significant virtues in these assignments. Third, four papers (1500-2000 words) will be required. I will assign topics for these papers. I do not value prolixity; I always value clarity, concision, organization, and argumentative acuity. I am willing, indeed happy to look at drafts of these papers and make comments and corrections. But if you get comments and corrections from me on a draft, you ignore them in the final draft at your own peril. I do allow papers to be rewritten for a better grade. Rewriting is a good way to improve one’s writing skills generally. (In fact, most good writing is good editing.) Fourth, attendance and participation will count towards the grade. As mentioned above, perfect attendance earns a B, with each absence subtracting 3 points therefrom. Points are given for substantial contributions to class discussion, where “substantial contributions” include good questions, interesting interpretations and theories, helpful explanations, and grounded challenges to my or your colleagues’ claims and arguments.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading notes</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Papers</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>12%</td>
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All papers must be completed in order to pass this course. If a paper is late, hand it in anyway and take a late penalty. Blowing it off altogether will fail the course. My flexibility as a teacher increases with the evidence of your diligence as a student. I accept papers (short and long) in both hardcopy and electronic form. If you submit electronically, please(!) ensure that your last name is the first part of the filename.

**Syllabus**

Jan. 26 **Introductions**
Jan. 28 **Reading:** Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, Prologue and Chapters 1 & 2

Feb. 2 **Reading:** René Descartes, *Meditations*, I (pp. 76-79); *O&R*, pp. 123-26; **Short Paper #1**.
Feb. 4 **Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations*, II (pp. 80-86); *O&R*, pp. 126-31

Feb. 9 **Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations*, III (pp. 86-98); *O&R*, pp. 131-33; Watch Tegrity lecture
Feb. 11 **Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations*, IV (pp. 98-105); *O&R*, pp. 133-35 **Short Paper #2 Due**
Feb. 16  **Reading**: Descartes, *Meditations*, V (pp. 105-10); O&R, pp. 135-43; 150-59
Feb. 18  **Reading**: Descartes, *Meditations*, VI (pp. 110-22); O&R, pp. 143-50

Feb. 23  Continued
Feb. 24  **Descartes Paper (Paper #1) Due at noon**

Mar. 1  **Reading**: Hume, *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 3, i-ix, xii, xiv-xvi.
Mar. 3  Continued

Mar. 8  **Reading**: Hume, *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 4, i-ii, v-vii; *Abstract*, “Appendix”
Mar. 10  Continued. **Short Paper #3 due**

Spring Break

Mar. 22  **Reading**: Hume, *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 1, i, Part 3, i-iii; Bk III, Part 1, Part 2, i-ii
Mar. 24  **Hume Paper (Paper #2) due at Noon**
Mar. 25  **Reading**: Kant CPR “Preface”s in A (Avii-Axxii) and B (Bvii-xliv), (pp. 99-124); Kant, CPR, II. Transcendental Doctrine of Method, Chapter 4. The History of Pure Reason (A852/B880-A855-B883), (pp. 702-704); O’Shea, “Introduction” and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-39)
Mar. 31  No Class

Apr. 5  **Reading**: Kant, CPR, “Introduction” in B (B1-B30/A16), (pp. 136-52); O’Shea, Ch. 2.1 (pp. 40-50)
Apr. 7  **Reading**: Kant, CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, First Part: Transcendental Aesthetic (in B) (A19/B33-B73), (pp. 172-92); O’Shea. Ch. 3 (pp. 78-115)

Apr. 12  Continued
Apr. 13  **Kant Paper #1 (Paper #3) Due at Noon.**
Apr. 14  **Reading**: Kant, CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Part: Transcendental Logic: Introduction; Division One: Transcendental Analytic; Book I: Analytic of Concepts; Chapter I (the “Metaphysical Deduction”) (A50/B74-B116), (pp. 193-218); O’Shea. Ch. 4 (116-157)
Apr. 19 **Reading:** Kant, CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Part: Transcendental Logic: Introduction; Division One: Transcendental Analytic; Book I, Chapter II: The Transcendental Deduction (in B) (B116/A84-A95/B129; B129-B169), (pp. 219-226; 245-66)


Apr. 28 **Reading:** Kant, CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Part: Transcendental Logic: Division One: Transcendental Analytic; Book II, Analytic of Principles: Chapter 2: Postulates of Empirical Thought and Refutation of Idealism (A218/B265-B294), (pp. 321-37)

May 3 **Reading:** Kant, CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Part, Division Two, Transcendental Dialectic, Introduction & Book I (A293/B349-A348/B406), (pp. 384-415); CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Part, Division Two, Transcendental Dialectic, Book II, Chapter I: The Paralogisms of Pure Reason (in B) (B406-B432), (pp. 445-458)

May 5 **Reading:** Kant, CPR, I. Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, Second Part, Division Two, Transcendental Dialectic, Book II, Chapter 2: (A405/B432-A425/B453), (pp. 459-469); Third Antinomy (A444/B472-A451/B479), (pp. 484-489)

**Second Kant Papers Due Thursday, May 12th, 2:00pm**

**A note on proper classroom etiquette:** The classroom is a public arena that requires mutual cooperation to function well. The basic rule (fittingly, in a class that covers Kant) is to respect the personhood of all participants in the room. This means recognizing and facilitating the legitimate goals of all the members of the class. In turn, and at the very least, this means not disrupting the class or distracting yourself or others from the task at hand. This excludes back-row whispering, texting, web-surfing
for entertainment, checking Facebook, etc. Please take care of elemental needs before coming to class, so you won’t disrupt the class by leaving during class time. I will not ban computers or other information processing devices, for people are increasingly accustomed to taking notes or reading their texts on such devices. But you are on your honor to use them while in the classroom only in ways relevant to the material under discussion. The principle of respecting your classmates also implies that you pay attention to what is said in class and think about it. It does not imply that you need agree with or silently accept what is said in class. I consider myself bound by these principles as well.

By the same token, plagiarism – the inappropriate and unacknowledged presentation of the work of others as your own – is a betrayal of yourself and your comrades, making a mockery of the notion of education. If you have questions about proper methods of attribution or what needs attribution, please consult me, because violations of intellectual honesty will be dealt with harshly.

If you have a recognized disability that requires special accommodations, please contact me with the appropriate documentation as early in the semester as possible, so that we can make proper arrangements.

This course satisfies a requirement for the Philosophy major; it does not satisfy any University requirement that I know of.