PHI 306-01: Modern Philosophy
Time and location: TuTh 10:00am-11:20am, Frey 317

Syllabus

Instructor Information

Instructor: Andrew Russell Platt
Office: 242 Harriman Hall
Philosophy Department phone: (631) 632-7570
Email: andrew.platt@stonybrook.edu
Office hours: TuTh 2:30-3 pm, W 10:00 am-Noon, or by appointment
Course website: Available at www.blackboard.stonybrook.edu

Course Description, Objectives & Prerequisites

Description from the course catalog: “Advanced studies in selected thinkers such as Descartes, Vico, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.”

This course is about the philosophical outcasts, troublemakers and rebels of the early modern period. One focus of the course will be on women philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway, Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft, who have been until recently excluded from the historical cannon of Western philosophy. We will examine how these thinkers challenged, and sometimes contributed to, the work of male philosophers such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, G.W. Leibniz and John Locke. We will also see how these now-canonical thinkers were themselves seen as intellectual rebels or outcasts in their own time.

Course Objectives: Students in this course will (1) gain a better understanding of the metaphysical and moral theories of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe; (2) become familiar with the works of women philosophers of the early modern period; (3) reflect critically on the significance of gender and social class in the philosophical cannon.

This course satisfies Diversified Education Curriculum (D.E.C.) Category I European Traditions. According to the D.E.C., Category G courses “consider the Western cultural tradition through specialized study of a European nation or area from one or more viewpoints (e.g., historical, artistic, social, political).”

Prerequisites: Two courses in philosophy
Advisory Prerequisite: One of the following: PHI 200, 206, 208, 247, or 300
Required Texts


Additional readings will be made available on the course website on BlackBoard.

Course Requirements

**Attendance:** Your learning experience in this class will depend on your being present and intellectually engaged during class sessions. Attendance may be recorded with a sign-in sheet. Attendance will not count directly as part of your grade; but excessive absences will seriously undermine your ability to satisfactorily complete the course.

**Participation:** No individual student is expected to speak in class on a given day. However, the class as a whole will be expected to raise questions and make comments that contribute to understanding the course material. If the class as a whole is unresponsive, each individual’s grade may be negatively impacted.

**Regular reading assignments:** Class sessions will consist of in-depth discussions of the reading assigned for that day. The quality of this course will depend on your ability to speak in an informed manner about the readings.

**Portfolio Writing Assignments:** Each week, you must submit a paragraph in which you reflect on the topics or material covered in the course. Your submission should not exceed one page in length.

**Midterm exam:** The midterm will be administered in class during the semester. It will consist of approximately ten short-answer questions.

A **final exam, or an optional term paper** in place of the final exam. The final will be administered during finals week. You may choose to submit a 15-20 page term paper instead of taking the final. (Students who are considering graduate studies are strongly encouraged to opt for the term paper.) You must either submit a short prospectus, or meet with the instructor to discuss your proposed topic, no later than April 22nd if you want to submit a term paper.
Policy on Academic Honesty

Citing Sources

You should not need to use sources other than the course texts and lectures when completing your writing assignments for this course. When you quote from any of the course texts, you should cite your quotation. You do not need to cite definitions, theories or arguments presented in lectures. If you use any other sources – e.g. books, journal articles or websites – you need to cite your sources. I will consider any failure to do so plagiarism. Any student caught plagiarizing will be reported in accordance with SBU policy. For further information see the university’s statement on academic integrity, printed below.

Collaborating with Other Students

Students are encouraged to discuss course materials with each other, however each student is responsible for composing his or her own written work. You must cite any collaboration with another student on your writing assignments. A failure to use your own words is unacceptable, even if you cite the writing as the work of another student. In such cases, you will be required to rewrite the relevant material.

Electronic Communication Statement

Email and especially email sent via Blackboard (http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu) is one of the ways the faculty officially communicates with you for this course. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read your email in your official University email account. For most students that is Google Apps for Education (http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud), but you may verify your official Electronic Post Office (EPO) address at http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo.

If you choose to forward your official University email to another off-campus account, faculty are not responsible for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts. You can set up Google Mail forwarding using these DoIT-provided instructions found at http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/setting-up-mail-forwarding-in-google-mail.

If you need technical assistance, please contact Client Support at (631) 632-9800 or supportteam@stonybrook.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.
Academic Integrity:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

Critical Incident Management:

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.