

Syllabus
Fall '09

History of Early Modern Philosophy
TR 9:30-10:45 104 WH

PHI-3080
Dr. Ari Santas

Course Description:

An examination of the period of Western Thought commonly designated as "Early Modern Philosophy," which spans across the 17th to the 18th centuries. A study of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and political thought from this period. Authors include: Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, Rousseau, and Kant.

Go to Online course syllabus at <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Syllabus/Fall/3080f09.doc>

Course Learning Outcomes¹ (Objectives):

- to get a comprehensive grounding in the history of early modern philosophy (D1; U2, U6, U8)
- to develop critical skills in reading historical texts (D2; U7)
- to develop critical skills in writing scholarly articles (D4; U4)
- to develop critical skills in oral presentations (D2; U3, U4)

Text:

The following text is available at VSU bookstore:

Kolak and Thomson, *The Longman Standard History of Modern Philosophy* (ISBN: 0321235126)

**other materials will be made available through the main course index at <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/3080 Index.htm>

Grades:

Final grades will be determined on the following basis:

Short Papers and Presentations	(30%)
Midterm and Final Exams	(20%)
Term Project	(30%)
Class Attendance and Participation	(20%)

Office Hours:

My office is located in 148 Farber Hall (the old Student Health Center). The times you may find me there are M-F 11:00-12:00. You can reach me there or leave a message at 333-5949. You can also reach me through e-mail at asantas@valdosta.edu

Special Needs:

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (voice) and 219-1348 (tty).

Readings:

There's no way around it: some of this stuff is hard. You'll have to read the selections at least 2 or 3 times to get it. I'll be around to help, and I encourage you to also seek help from your classmates. I have online background notes for several of the moderns on the main course index <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/3080 Index.htm>. Also see my "Guidelines for Philosophy" at <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Study/guide.html>.

Participation and Attendance:

Attendance is required. I will be taking roll every day and assign **part of your grade** on the basis of **how many days** missed. The rest of your participation grade will be determined partly by your peers, and partly by me. What I'll be looking for, besides regular attendance, and encourage each of you to look for as well, are the following:

conscientious class presentations	responsible attitude towards learning
contribution to discussion	respectful treatment of your peers
effort to improve and grow	attentiveness to the course materials and to each other

1. Corresponding Departmental and University Outcomes are indicated with letters 'D' and 'U' respectively.

Short Papers and Presentations:

Each student will be required to submit two or three short (4-6 page) papers with accompanying presentations. These can be done individually or in small groups. More details will be forthcoming.

Presentations: The purpose of the presentations is to (1) give you practice in communicating difficult ideas to your peers and (2) help you get used to working in teams. All presentations should follow this three-section format; in the case of group work, each component should be presented by a different group member:

(1) **Exposition**--a concise presentation of the article(s) or section(s) assigned. Your goal here is to present the content of the section without interpretation (to the extent that it's possible) or evaluation. This portion should include outlines and summaries. There is no need to cover everything, but your audience will need to know about all of the components essential to understanding the material.

(2) **Interpretation**--a representation of the material from some outside perspective. Your goal here is to reconsider the material from some point of view with which you are familiar. For instance, if you know well the historical context in which this author wrote, you may recast the section in the light of that history. Or if you see parallels to some other thinker (philosopher, satirist, etc...), you may reconstrue the material in light of those parallels.

(3) **Criticism**--an evaluation of the author's ideas in the assigned section. Keeping in mind (1) and (2) above, take a stand on whether this thinker got it right. Remember, no one is likely to be all right or all wrong. It is just as much a sin to agree with everything someone says as it is to prop up a straw man and knock him down.

Your reports, including all three components, should last 20 to 25 minutes. When there are two or three of you reporting, I expect continuity between the components of the presentation. Each report should come off as a coherent whole. If it doesn't, something has gone wrong.

Presentations will be graded for *both content and delivery*. Conscientious effort and improvement will be noted in the participation evaluation.

Short papers: You'll be asked to complete a short paper for some or all (but not more than three) of your oral reports. Written versions will follow the same basic format and will be graded using the following criteria:

Clarity and Development (grammar, structure, style)

Command of Material (completeness, accuracy)

Critical Reasoning (originality, logic, imagination)

See class [Schedule](#) for deadlines: <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Syllabus/Fall/3080%20Schedule%20F09.doc>

See [Guidelines](#) Web Page <http://www.valdosta.edu/~asantas/Study/guide.html> for more details on writing and oral reports.

Exams:

There will be a midterm and final exam, both take-home essay assignments designed to help you draw out themes in this period and trace connections between the authors. Students with a 'B+' or higher average on presentations and short papers will be exempt from the final. Details will be discussed as the term progresses.

Term Projects:

The term project will be the culmination of your efforts during the term and will be graded with that in mind. There will be two components: one oral and one written. You will be asked to make an oral report to the class near the end of the term what your project is and the progress you're making. Some of you may be asked to present your papers at a departmental colloquium. The written version will be submitted in drafts throughout the last part of the term and the final draft will be due during the exam week (see schedule for exact deadlines). With my help and the help of the class, by the end of the term you should have a polished piece of work that you can be proud of. The topic of the paper may be anything related to the history of Early Modern Philosophy.

All topics must be approved of by me before the oral report to the class. See schedule for deadlines. Failure to complete either the oral or written component of the term project by the date assigned is grounds for failing the course.

Undergraduate Research Symposium:

As you may already know, the College of Arts and Sciences conducts every year a symposium that showcases undergraduate student research. Given the research nature of this course, I'd like to see someone from this class have a paper accepted for presentation at the symposium. If you're interested in doing this, please come see me for details.