PHL 402: Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy

University of Toronto, Spring 2020, lightly revised

Instructor: Dr. Owen Pikkert, owen.pikkert@mail.utoronto.ca
Lecture hours: Thursdays 3:00 to 6:00 in BA B025
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00 to 3:00 in JHB 433

Course description

This course is a seminar on the philosophy of Leibniz. We will focus particularly on his metaphysics and philosophy of religion. Some of the topics to be discussed include the principle of sufficient reason, the existence of God, the relation of God to the world, necessitarianism, the theory of monads, and Leibnizian ideas in more recent philosophy. Throughout the seminar we will also examine how Leibniz responds to ideas advanced by other early modern philosophers, such as Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Locke.

Logistics

Evaluation: A presentation at 20%, participation at 20%, a research paper at 30% (due 2 Apr), and a final exam at 30% (date determined by the Registrar's Office for Apr).

Readings: All of the readings will be available via Quercus. These include weekly handouts of relevant passages from Leibniz's works, links to secondary sources, and so on.

Presentation: Each student will have to lead a discussion on an assigned text for approximately half an hour. The manner of presentation is up to you, though it is probably a good idea to provide material for discussion on the blackboard, in a handout, or in some other format.

Participation: Participation is determined by attendance and engagement in class (including engagement with student presentations). This presupposes that you have done the readings and given them some thought. It might be a helpful practice to write down some questions about the readings before class.

Research paper: The research paper is to be 12 to 20 pages double-spaced. It may be on any topic on Leibniz's philosophy, though you will need prior permission if you want to write on some topic that was not covered in class. Further instructions will be posted to Quercus.

Final exam: The final exam is designed to make sure that you have a broad understanding of the course material. It does not require that you come up with original arguments on the spot.

Attendance in the first class: It is departmental policy that students in 400-level courses must attend the first class or explain their absence to the instructor. Otherwise they risk removal from the course.

Late submissions and extensions: Late papers will be penalized at 5% for each calendar day, and papers more than one week late will not be accepted. To request an extension, you must submit one of the following types of documentation deemed official by the University: a [Verification of Student Illness or Injury Form](#), a Student Health or Disability Related Certificate, a College Registrar's Letter, or an Accessibility Services Letter.

Email: Only use email for short logistical questions that are not already answered on the syllabus. Philosophical and textual questions are best saved for office hours.

Turnitin.com: Normally, students will be required to submit their papers to Turnitin.com (now incorporated into Quercus) for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their papers to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Academic integrity

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other [institutional resources](#).

Schedule

9 Jan	Topic	Summary of Leibniz's system
	Article	Mates (1986: chp 2)
16 Jan	Handout	The principle of sufficient reason
	Presentation	*On the Elements of Natural Science* (L 277-289)
	Article	Look (2011: 201-209)
23 Jan	Handout	The cosmological and ontological arguments
	Presentation	*The Confession of Nature against Atheists* (L 109-113)
	Article	Blumenfeld (1995)

30 Jan	Handout	Divine voluntarism vs. divine intellectualism
	Presentation	*Discourse on Metaphysics* §1-9 (L 303-308)
	Article	Newlands (2013)
6 Feb	Handout	Two theories of contingency
	Presentation	*Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas* (L 291-295)
	Article	Adams (1994: 9-31)
13 Feb	Handout	God's choice of the best
	Presentation	*Two Dialogues on Religion* (L 213-220)
	Article	Rescher (1996: 148-162)
20 Feb	Reading week	
27 Feb	Handout	God's non-intervention
	Presentation	*On Nature Itself* (L 498-508)
	Article	Rutherford (1992)
5 Mar	Handout	Arguments against matter
	Presentation	*A Specimen of Discoveries* (MP 75-86)
	Article	Garber (2009: 70-90)
12 Mar	Handout	The theory of monads
	Presentation	Correspondence with De Volder (AG 171-186)
	Readings	*New System, etc.* (AG 138-149), *Monadology* (AG 213-225)
	Article	Jolley (2019: chp 3)
19 Mar	Topic	Leibnizian ideas today (1)
	Presentation	*On free will*, *On freedom and spontaneity*, *Conversation about freedom and fate* (SLT 91-103)
	Article	Dasgupta (2016)
26 Mar	Topic	Leibnizian ideas today (2)
	Presentation	*Reflections on the Common Concept of Justice* (L 561-573)
	Articles	Adams (1972), Strawson (2019)
2 Apr	Topic	Remaining presentations/Envoi, **Research paper due**
	Presentation	*On the happy life*, *Happiness*, *A Dialogue* (SLT 166-173)
	Presentation	*A Vindication of God's Justice* 1-59 (S 114-127)
	Presentation	*A Specimen of Dynamics*, part I (AG 117-130)