

Metaphysics



Gary Banham

Metaphysics

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Core Option: Level II Philosophy Course

Credit Value: 20 Credits

Core Topics: Simple Ideas and Simple Modes; Power and Causation; Substance; Knowledge; Primary and Secondary Qualities; Space and Time; Abstraction; Personal Identity; Common Sense.

Learning Outcomes:

1. To ensure that students develop an appreciation and critical grasp of the central debates within metaphysics.
2. To increase understanding of the development of concepts in the history of metaphysics.

Coursework:

Assessment: two 3,000-word essays, one on topics from the first term, one on topics from the second term, each is worth 50% of the total marks on the course.

PENALTIES: Students who submit coursework late may expect to receive a maximum mark of 40% for the work, providing it is of a pass standard. You are advised to see the Programme Handbook (2005/6) for details of the absolutely final deadline after which coursework will not be accepted for formal assessment and will therefore attract a mark of zero.

A WARNING ON PLAGIARISM:

Students are warned that Faculty procedures will be set in motion to investigate suspected cases of plagiarism. The Faculty student handbook defines plagiarism as:

- i. the wilful representation of another person's work, without acknowledgement of the source, as one's own; or:
- ii. the deliberate and unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or otherwise) of another, examples of which are:
 - a. the unacknowledged use of more than a single phrase from another person's work without the use of quotation marks;

- b. the unacknowledged summarising of another person's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation;
- c. the acknowledged and/or unauthorised use of the ideas of another;
- d. copying the work of another person with or without that person's knowledge or agreement or presenting it as one's own.

Students are reminded that the criteria covers electronic sources such as Internet sites – hence all www/http websites should be fully listed.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS:

1. The Course Tutor will make available an alternative page coloured version of this document if you think that this would be more appropriate to your learning needs.
2. Students with Special Educational Needs should make an appointment with the Course Tutor to discuss ways in which lectures, classes and supporting handout material can be effectively organised to meet their educational needs.

INDICATIVE READING:

Bernard Williams (1978) *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harvester Press)
Tom Sorell (2000) *Descartes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press)
Roger Woolhouse (1988) *The Empiricists* (Oxford University Press)

ATTENDANCE:

Important: Seminar/Class attendance is compulsory. Absences should be authorised by the Course Tutor. Any unauthorised absences will be reported to the Programme Leader of your respective degree programme. The University is under a statutory obligation to notify LEA's of regular student absenteeism.

Course Outline:

Term 1:

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Descartes on Simple Ideas (1)
Rules for the Direction of the Mind: Rules 1-10

Week 3: Descartes on Simple Ideas (2)
Rules for the Direction of the Mind Rules 11-14

Week 4: Descartes on Knowledge
Principles of Philosophy Part 1

Week 5: Descartes' Laws of Nature
Principles of Philosophy Part 2, paragraphs 1-44

Week 6: PDP Week

Week 7: Spinoza on Substance
Spinoza *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* Part 1
Spinoza *Ethics* Part 1

Week 8: Locke on the Simple Modes of Space and Time
Essay on Human Understanding Book II Chapters XIII-XV

Week 9: Locke on Power
Essay on Human Understanding Book II Chapter XXI

Week 10: Locke on Abstraction
Locke *Essay* Book 2 Chapter XI and XII + Book 4 Chapter 7

Week 11: Berkeley on Abstraction
Principles of Human Knowledge Introduction

Term 2:

Week 1: Occasionalism
Malebranche *Search After Truth* Book VI, Part 2, Chapter 2 and Elucidation XV

Week 2: Leibniz on Force
Leibniz *New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances*
Leibniz Nature Itself

Week 3: Space and Time in Leibniz and Newton (1)
Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence

Week 4: Space and Time in Leibniz and Newton (2)
Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence

Week 5: Primary and Secondary Qualities
Locke *Essay* Book 2 Chapter XXIII + XXIV
Berkeley *Principles of Human Knowledge* paragraphs 1-25

Week 6: PDP Week

Week 7: Hume on Impressions, Ideas and Abstraction
Hume *Treatise of Human Nature* Book 1, Part 1, Section 1.

Week 8: Hume on Causation (1)
Hume *Treatise* Book 1, Part 3, sections 2-6

Week 9: Hume on Causation (2)
Hume *Treatise* Book 1, Part 3, sections 8-9, 12, 14-15

Week 10 Locke and Hume on Personal Identity
Locke *Essay* Book II Chapter XXVII
Hume *Treatise* Part IV Chapter VI

Week 11: Reid on Common Sense
Reid *Inquiry* Chapters 1 and 2

Essay Questions:

Term 1:

1. How does Descartes' view of simple ideas help us to understand his view of metaphysics?
2. "Locke's account of space shows a central problem with the Cartesian view of body." Do you agree?
3. "Locke's account of power is full of confusions." Do you agree?
4. Critically examine Locke's *positive* account of power.
5. Is Descartes' account of knowledge in the *Principles* similar or different to his account of ideas in the *Rules*?
6. By what method does Descartes arrive at the statement of his three laws of nature?
7. Why is it important for Descartes to distinguish motion from its cause and what is the result of this distinction?
8. How does Spinoza's view of substance respond to Descartes' account of knowledge?
9. Are there such things as "abstract ideas"?
10. Does Berkeley succeed in identifying central problems with Locke's account of abstraction?

Term 2:

1. “If matter is passive then only God can be a cause”. Does Malebranche present cogent reasons for this conclusion?
2. Does Leibniz succeed in refuting occasionalism?
3. What are the main points of dispute concerning the nature of space and time between Leibniz and Clarke and why is the dispute significant?
4. Does either Leibniz or Clarke offer clearer and better arguments for their view? Which position is preferable?
5. Is there a defensible distinction between primary and secondary qualities?
6. How does Hume radicalize the account of “abstract ideas” he found in Berkeley?
7. Is Hume’s distinction between impressions and ideas a defensible one?
8. What are the main points of Hume’s critique of causation?
9. Critically assess Hume’s *positive* account of causation.
10. Does Hume show that our belief in personal identity is not one that we can justify?
11. How defensible is Locke’s account of personal identity?
12. What does Reid mean by “common sense” and how useful is his appeal to in responding to metaphysical problems?

Further Reading:

R.M. Adams (1994) *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (Oxford University Press)

A.J. Ayer (1980) *Hume* (Oxford University Press)

M. Ayers (1993) *Locke: epistemology and ontology* (Routledge)

J. Bennett (1971) *Locke, Berkeley and Hume: Central Themes* (Clarendon Press: Oxford)

J. Brindley (1973) *Lectures on the Philosophy of Leibniz* (Greenwood Press)

S. Brown (1984) *Leibniz* (Harvester)

V. Chappell (ed.) (1994) *Cambridge Companion to Locke* (Cambridge University Press)

V.C. Chappell (1968) *Hume* (Macmillan)

James Collins (1971) *Descartes’ Philosophy of Nature* (Basil Blackwell)

John Cottingham (1986) *Descartes* (Basil Blackwell)

John Cottingham (1998) *Descartes* (Oxford University Press)

E.M. Curley (1978) *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Blackwell)

- G. Dicker (1998) *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics: an introduction* (Routledge)
- Willis Doney (1968) *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Macmillan)
- G. Fuller *et. al.* (eds.) (2000) *John Locke: an essay concerning human understanding in focus* (Routledge)
- R.J. Fogelin (2001) *Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Routledge)
- Daniel Garber (1992) *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Cambridge University Press)
- D. Garrett (ed.) (1996) *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge University Press)
- D. Garrett (1997) *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford University Press)
- Stephen Gaukroger (2002) *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press)
- R.J. Gennaro and C. Huen (eds.) (1999) *New Essays on the Rationalists* (Oxford University Press)
- Marjorie Grene (1998) *Descartes* (Hackett)
- M. Hooker (1978) *Descartes: Critical and Interpretative Essays* (Johns Hopkins University Press)
- H. Ishiguro (1972) *Leibniz's Philosophy of Logic and Language* (Duckworth)
- J.J. Jenkins (1983) *Understanding Locke* (Edinburgh University Press)
- H.H. Joachim (1901) *A Study of the Ethics of Spinoza*
- N. Jolley (ed.) (1995) *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge University Press)
- N. Jolley (2005) *Leibniz* (Routledge)
- G. Lloyd (1996) *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Spinoza and the Ethics* (Routledge)
- E.J. Lowe (1995) *Locke on Human Understanding* (Routledge)
- E.J. Lowe (2005) *Locke* (Routledge)
- G. MacDonald Ross (1984) *Leibniz* (Oxford University Press)
- J. L. Mackie (1976) *Problems from Locke* (Clarendon Press)

J.L. Mackie "Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities" (SHORT LOAN)

Jean-Luc Marion (1999) *Descartes' Metaphysical Prism* (Stanford University Press)

C. B. Martin (1968) *Locke and Berkeley: a collection of critical essays* (Macmillan)

D.F. Norton (ed.) (1993) *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (Cambridge University Press)

George S. Pappas (2000) *Berkeley's Thought* (Cornell University Press)

D. Pears (1990) *Hume's System* (Oxford University Press)

Andrew Pyle (2003) *Malebranche* (Routledge)

R. Read and K. R. Richman (2000) *The New Hume Debate* (Routledge)

N. Rescher (2003) *On Leibniz* (University of Pittsburgh Press)

B. Russell (1937) *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (George Allen & Unwin)

Roger Scruton (1999) *Spinoza* (Routledge)

Tom Sorrell (1987) *Descartes* (Oxford University Press)

Tom Stoneham (2002) *Berkeley's World* (Oxford University Press)

B. Stroud (1998) *Hume* (Routledge)

James Thomas (1999) *Intuition and Reality: A Study of the Attributes of Substance in the Absolute Idealism of Spinoza* (Ashgate)

G.J. Warnock (1982) *Berkeley* (Basil Blackwell)

Margaret D. Wilson (1978) *Descartes* (Routledge & Kegan Paul)

R.S. Woolhouse (1993) *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: the concept of substance in seventeenth century philosophy* (Routledge)

John Yolton (1970) *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding* (Cambridge University Press)

Internet:

Apart from the resources listed on my website the following are also useful:

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

(articles on Descartes' Physics, Descartes' Theory of Ideas, John Locke, George Berkeley, Baruch Spinoza, Spinoza's Theory of Attributes, Leibniz's Philosophy of Physics, David Hume, Occasionalism, Rationalism vs Empiricism, Continental Rationalism, Thomas Reid)

Spinoza Web <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/4364/SpinozaWeb.html>

Leibnizian Resources <http://www.helsinki.fi/~mroinila/leibniz.htm>