

Philosophy 111 History of Philosophy: Early Modern

UC San Diego—Winter 2015

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Class: MWF 1:00-1:50 pm, History and Social Science Bldg (HSS) 1128A

Course Description

This course focuses on the development of early modern metaphysics and epistemology through the works of René Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-1776). The early modern period is characterized by a turn away from the doctrines of Aristotle, as incorporated in the theological framework articulated by medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and toward a new way of looking at the world that is compatible with the mathematized conception of nature developed by Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and others. It is common to think of the main figures of the period as divided into two camps: rationalists (Descartes and Leibniz), for whom some ideas are innate and reason by itself can discover fundamental truths about reality, and empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume), for whom there are no innate ideas and all significant knowledge is founded on sense experience. But the interplay between these five philosophers reveals a more complex story, one in which the rationalist/empiricist divide is only one of many. We will see, for example, that Leibniz is sympathetic to Aristotle in ways that Descartes is not, that the main thesis of Locke's empiricism derives from Aristotle, that Berkeley's view of the natural world is arguably more similar to Leibniz's than to anyone else's, and that all the figures other than Hume are rationalists at least in believing that unaided reason is capable of demonstrating the existence of God. Understanding the development of metaphysics and epistemology in the early modern period is critical for understanding the views of later philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, one of the main figures studied in Philosophy 112.

Prerequisites

Philosophy 111 is the second in the three-course history of philosophy sequence required of all Philosophy majors. It is assumed that you have already taken Philosophy 110.

Required Texts

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, tr. Cottingham (Cambridge)

Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*, tr. Ariew and Garber (Hackett)

Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett)

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Hackett)

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Knowledge* (Hackett)

All these texts are required in the editions indicated. They may be purchased at the UCSD Bookstore. Other assigned readings will be made available via the class TED site.