



# Short Syllabus



## Course Title

Introduction to Modern Philosophy

## Lecturer

Tomer Sassonkin-Efron, PhD

## Contact Details

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Office Hours: By appointment

## Semester

Fall 2022

## Short Description

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries marked a significant period in the history of western philosophical thought. Breaking with classical, medieval, and Renaissance philosophies, modern European philosophy – from Descartes's "*cogito*" to Kant's "Copernican revolution" – inaugurated a non-authoritarian, scientifically inflected approach to the age-long philosophical search for truth. The course will offer a critical introduction to key thinkers and their theories in early modern philosophy. Engaging with a selection of seminal works, we will acquaint ourselves with some of the central ideas, questions, and arguments that preoccupied the thought of René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant.

Setting out from the developments in the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution, which set the stage for the modern worldview, we will explore the two primary traditions of modern philosophy, rationalism and empiricism, tracing within and across these traditions the evolution of key concepts, such as substance, causation, and free will. We will pay particular attention to issues of ontology (metaphysics), epistemology, political philosophy, and moral philosophy. Among the questions that we will critically consider: Can we know anything for certain? How do we come to know the things that we know? Can we logically prove the existence of God? Is there a split between mind and matter? Does human nature tend toward conflict and competition or rather toward harmony and cooperation? Is it rational to think that the sun will rise tomorrow since it has thus far risen every day?

## Final Grade Components

### Midterm:

Short essay (2-3 pages), **30%** of final grade.

### Final Requirement:

Final paper (4-6 pages), **50%** of final grade.



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Submission date for the final paper is set by the university and the Liberal Arts program. Extension requests can only be granted by the program's academic committee.

## **Participation:**

Active participation and contribution to class discussions, **20%** of final grade.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three unauthorized absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.\*

## **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.\*

## **Final Assignment**

Exam dates and submission deadlines are published on the Liberal Arts website. Courses with a final exam also have a second make-up exam. Students requiring an extension for a final paper must submit an Academic Committee Request Form to the Liberal Arts office in advance of the deadline. Late papers will be subject to a point deduction.\*

## **Additional Requirements**

While in class, phones are to be silenced.

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\* See Liberal Arts academic handbook for further details