

**Department of Philosophy**  
**Knowledge and ideas in early modern philosophy**  
**PHIL 198; 2011**

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In this course, we will consider the fundamental question of the relation between thought and its object: how do ideas represent reality? The philosophers we will consider—Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume—had different accounts of what ideas are and how we come to have them. These differences in turn led to different accounts of the relationship between the way things appear to the senses and the way they really are ‘in themselves’. We will consider the implications of these different views for what we can claim to know.

The course will focus on several associated skills: the ability to read a text both charitably and critically; the ability to write a philosophical essay; the ability to construct and reconstruct arguments with the appropriate level of rigour; and the ability to engage in philosophical debate.

**Texts:**

Descartes’ *Meditations*, Locke’s *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Berkeley’s *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*: all available at The Word bookstore on Milton Street.

**Requirements:**

Two short papers (3 pages) worth 15% and 25% respectively, one longer paper (5 pages) worth 30%, and an in-class final exam worth 30%. The second paper will include an exercise in peer-evaluation.

The University Senate has passed a resolution requiring that the following notes be attached to the course syllabus:

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures; see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information.*

*In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.*

Week 1: September 1 Introduction

Week 2: September 6,8 Background, Descartes' *Meditations* 1,2

Week 3: September 13,15 *Med* 3-5

Week 4: September 20, 22 *Med* 6

Week 5: September 27, 29\* Locke's *Essay*: "The Epistle to the Reader" and I.i, I.ii, I.iv.1-6, 20-22, 25. (Note: For readings from *Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, reference will be to book (capital Roman numeral), chapter (lower case Roman numeral), and section (Arabic numeral). So, for example, I.i.1 refers to the first book, the first chapter, the first section of the *Essay*.)

**\*First short paper due in class September 29**

Week 6: October 4, 6 Locke's *Essay*: II.i.1-5, 25; II.ii-iii; II.vi-vii; II.xii.1-7; II.ix., II.xi

Week 7: October 11, 13 Locke's *Essay*: II.viii, II.xxiii.9-12, II.xxxi.1-2, IV.ii.11; III.iii

Week 8: October 18\*, 20\*\* Locke's *Essay*: II.xxxi.6, III.vi, III.ix.11-17, IV.iii.22-6;

IV.iv.1-7; IV.iv.11-12; Berkeley's *Principles*: Introduction

**\*Second short paper due in class October 18**

**\*\*Comments on second papers due in class October 20**

Week 9: October 25\*, 27 Berkeley's *Principles*: §§1-24

**\*Revised second paper due in class October 25**

Week 10: November 1, 3 Berkeley's *Principles*: §§25-48

Week 11: November 8, 10 Berkeley's *Principles*: §§54-9, 85-91

Week 12: November 15, 17 Hume's *Treatise*: Introduction; I.i.1-7; I.ii.6; I.iii.1-2

Week 13: November 22, 24\* Hume's *Treatise*: I.iii.3-8,14,16; I.iv.1-2

**\*Third paper due in class November 24**

Week 14: November 29, December 1\* Hume's *Treatise*, cont'd

**\*Final exam in class December 1**