

**McGill University**  
**Department of Philosophy**

**Major Philosophers: Leibniz and Deleuze**

Winter 2024, PHIL 450-001  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 04:05 pm - 05:25 pm  
Trottier Building, Room 0070, in person

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**Course Description**

This course stages a philosophical theatre, a dialog between Leibniz, the significant Early Modern figure, and Deleuze, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher who marked remarkable posterity not only in philosophy but also in literature, social and political theory, feminism and Marxism, cinema, architecture, psychoanalysis, and so forth. The first half of this course will focus on Leibniz's metaphysics and his contribution to the invention of Differential Calculus. We will see the way Leibniz pushes rationalism to its extreme limits and how it leads, as Deleuze puts it, to a *rational delirium* and an insane creation of concepts. The analysis of his conception of primitive motive force, substantial form, and monad will show how his system stands midway between the formal and the material. In parallel, Leibniz's labyrinthine universe, which affirms infinity, will be traversed by scrutinizing his account of truth, harmony, mind-body concomitance, individual notion, inclusion, and expression. As possibility and contradiction are not adequate for a Leibnizian world to pass into existence, he creates the notion of *compossibility*, which would imply the possibility of infinite worlds in God's mind but the *exclusion* of impossible worlds from existence. This will mark a point of tension and divergence, a critical moment to shift to Deleuze.

In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze reconstructs Leibniz's system around the Baroque trait of the *fold*. We will engage with Deleuze's account of the fold and his treatment of some Leibnizian tensions, like the double-antecedence of the subject/world and the affirmation of divergence, which would elucidate his own project. Being equipped with this neo-Leibnizian conceptual apparatus, we will approach the fourth and fifth chapters of Deleuze's *magnum opus*, *Difference and Repetition*. We will delve into the notions of *Idea* and *intensity* and their Leibnizian motifs, while showing how Deleuze goes beyond classical phenomenology, by centralizing *difference*, *virtuality*, and *immanence*. With certain references to cinema and literature, we will examine Deleuze's concept of *dramatization* and will suggest a new notion called *poeticization* to show how Deleuze's metaphysics is structured like an artistic experience. This will evoke certain political implications and clarify Deleuze's allusions to Marx. By the end of the course, it will become clear why Leibniz is indispensable for Deleuze's philosophy of genesis which strives to account for any formation and describe the actualization of different spheres, like nature, society, language, art, and so forth.

NOTE: This term, PHIL 450 (Major Philosophers) counts for group D (Modern History of Philosophy) of the Major, group 4 of Honours/Jt Hons, and group E of the Minor. If you need it to count towards Group B (Continental Philosophy) of the Major, Group 2 of Hons/Jt Hons, Group C of the Minor, please consult the UPD and they will give permission.

## **Other Thinkers:**

This course will draw on different figures like the Stoics, Kant, Husserl, Sartre, Bergson, Marx, Nietzsche, Ruyer, Tarkovsky, Borges, and Blanchot.

## **Course Objectives**

This course has five main objectives. By successfully completing this course you will

1. acquire knowledge of Leibniz and Deleuze and how they have realized significant shifts in philosophy;
2. acquire a deep understanding of intricate philosophical concepts;
3. come to learn, inspired by Deleuze, a creative method of approaching the history of philosophy;
4. be in a position to approach other Early Modern or contemporary figures, on your own;
5. hone important philosophical skills. These include reading and analyzing highly difficult philosophical texts; composing and assessing arguments; articulating and communicating complex ideas; and composing philosophical essays.

## **Main Required Readings:**

The lectures will engage closely with the original texts of Leibniz and Deleuze. The readings will be indispensable as the lectures aim to enable the students to approach the complicated texts independently. The information regarding the availability of resources will be provided accordingly.

### **Leibniz**

*Philosophical Essays*, Translated and edited by Ariew and Garber (AG)

- On Freedom and Possibility (1680-82)
- On Contingency (1686)
- Discourse on Metaphysics (1686)
- Letters to Arnauld (1686-87)
- On Freedom (1689)
- A New System of the Nature (1695)
- On Nature Itslef (1698)
- Letters to Johann Bernoulli (1698-99)
- Letters to de Volder (1699-1706)
- Principles of Nature and Grace (1714)
- Monadology (1714)

*Philosophical Papers and Letters*. Translated by Loemker (L)

- Letter to Varignon; Justification of the Infinitesimal Calculus by That of Ordinary Algebra

### **Deleuze**

- *Difference and Repetition* (Columbia, 1994)
- *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Continuum, 2006)

## Course Schedule

Wk	Date	Class Theme	Readings, Assignments
0	Thu, 4 Jan	Introduction (A Dialogue between Deleuze <i>and</i> Leibniz)	Syllabus
1	Tue, 9 Jan Thu, 11 Jan	Leibniz's Universe: Principles of identity and Sufficient Reason, inclusion, expression, point of view, body, (in)compossibility	<u>Leibniz</u> : On Freedom and Possibility (AG 19-23) On Contingency (AG 28-30) On Freedom (AG 94-98)
2	Tue, 16 Jan Thu, 18 Jan	Truths, possible worlds (Adams) Mind-body problem (Leibniz's mind-body resonance in contemporary Enactivism, Thomas Fuchs)	<u>Leibniz</u> : Discourse on Metaphysics, AG 38 (§ 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 24, 33, 34, 35, 36) To Arnauld, 1686 (AG 77-81)
3	Tue, 23 Jan Thu, 25 Jan	Active motive force, substance and force; substantial forms and living beings (a dialogue between Leibniz and Raymond Ruyer)	<u>Leibniz</u> : A New System (AG 138-145) On Nature Itself (AG 155-167)
4	Tue, 30 Jan Thu, 1 Feb	Leibniz and Ruyer; force and substance; organisms	<u>Leibniz</u> : From the Letters to Johann Bernoulli (AG 167-170) From the Letters to de Volder (AG 171-178)
5	Tue, 6 Feb Thu, 8 Feb	Leibniz's contribution to the invention of Differential Calculus; vanishing triangle (virtual); infinite analysis and calculus, differential unconscious	<u>Leibniz</u> : Letter to Varignon; Justification of the Infinitesimal Calculus by That of Ordinary Algebra (L 542-546)
6	Tue, 13 Feb Thu, 15 Feb	Monadology Life everywhere; plenitude; infinite degrees of life; continuity; folding and unfolding.	<u>Leibniz</u> : Principles of Nature and Grace (AG 206-213) Monadology (AG 213-225)
7	Tue, 20 Feb Thu, 22 Feb	The fold and the Baroque; material and spiritual folds; expression; from inflection to inclusion; point of view. Metaphysical tension in Leibniz	<u>Deleuze</u> : <i>Le pli</i> : Ch. 1: 5-19 = <i>The Fold</i> : 3-14 <i>Le pli</i> : Ch. 2: 24-37 = <i>The Fold</i> : 18-29
8	Tue, 27 Feb Thu, 29 Feb	Logic of the events; genesis of worlds; Borges; bifurcation of worlds; actualization and realization of the world; Differential Calculus (two halves of the world); differentiation and	<u>Deleuze</u> : <i>Le pli</i> : Ch. 4: 55-57 & 70-78 = <i>The Fold</i> : 47-48 & 59 [last paragraph]-66 <i>Le pli</i> : Ch. 5: 79-96 = <i>The Fold</i> : 67-80

		differentiation; Ideas as expressed; affirmation of divergence	<i>Le pli</i> : Ch. 8: 133-142 = <i>The Fold</i> : 114-122
	Break		
<b>9</b>	Tue, 12 Mar Thu, 14 Mar	Idea in <i>Difference and Repetition</i> ; problematic field; work of art; virtual and the possible; actualization	<u>Deleuze</u> : <i>Difference and Repetition</i> : Ch. 4: 182-214
<b>10</b>	Tue, 19 Mar Thu, 21 Mar	Spatio-temporal dynamisms; dramatization; embryology; art; repetition and poetry; field of individuation; intensity	<u>Deleuze</u> : <i>Difference and Repetition</i> : Ch. 4: 214-221 Ch.5: 222 & 228-232
<b>11</b>	Tue, 26 Mar Thu, 28 Mar	Three characteristics of intensity; Ideas and intensity; expressing the totality of Ideas; clear-confused intensity; distinct-obscure Idea; field of individuation	<u>Deleuze</u> : <i>Difference and Repetition</i> : Ch. 5: 222 & 232-254
<b>12</b>	Tue, 2 Apr Thu, 4 Apr	Raymond Ruyer: Leibniz's contemporary disciple – An encounter between Deleuze, Leibniz, and Ruyer	<u>Ruyer</u> : <i>Neofinalism</i> (Optional: excerpts)
<b>13</b>	Tue, 9 Apr	Concluding remarks	

## Assignments and Evaluations

Take-home exam (40%), Final paper (50%), Participation (10%)

**Take-home Midterm Exam:** This assignment due around the middle of the term (40%) will be based on set questions (around 2000 words). The essay must discuss and develop the answer to specific questions, which will be posted on *MyCourses*.

**Final Essay:** This essay should be around 4000 words and the topics will be defined by the students with my consultation. I will provide suggestions and instructions and will be more than happy to meet with you and talk about your topic, recommended readings, and writing in general.

Evaluation of the papers will consider the understanding of texts and concepts, the development of arguments and reasoning, the exposition of conceptual nuances, the establishment of conceptual links, and the quality of writing (clear, concise, coherent, correct grammar, citation, etc.)

Policy for Late Work: Late works will be affected by -5% per day overdue. Requests for deadline extension due to medical reasons should be sent at least two business days prior to the due date.

## Remarks

Students who are facing difficulties for any reason (with respect to assignments, attendance, or any other matter) are absolutely encouraged to contact me.

## **Academic Integrity:**

McGill University values academic integrity. 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 <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

## **Other Notes:**

- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.
- In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.
- As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or the Office for Students with Disabilities, <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd>, 514-398-6009.
- I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name and pronoun you indicate.