PHI 515

Early Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant

Fall 1997

Professor Ken Richman

Required texts:

- Hand-outs from Malebranche and Kant will be distributed during the term.

Course goals:

This course is a survey of Western philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It will offer an introduction to the Enlightenment period from a philosophical perspective. Because it would be impossible to examine all of the important contributions made by philosophers during the early modern period, we will focus this term on early modern theories of causation. We will pay particular attention to early modern developments in the relationship between science and religion, and in the accepted understanding of what it is to be a human being. The texts we will examine continue to be influential in philosophy and psychology. They are also important documents in the history of physics. A background in philosophy is recommended for students in this course. By the end of this course, you should be familiar with the questions addressed by philosophers of the early modern period, and have a thorough acquaintance with the ways that the philosophers we read answered these questions. You should also have improved your ability to interpret difficult texts by recognizing and analyzing the arguments presented in them and by evaluating the influence of the historical period in which they were written. This improvement should be evident in your writing and in your ability to participate in discussions of academic material.

Requirements and grading:
Your grade will depend equally on three factors: a midterm paper, a final paper and a series of short quizzes. You are required to read the assignments on time, attend all class meetings and participate in class discussions. The frequency and quality of your attendance and class participation will be considered if your average for the course falls between two grades. The midterm paper assignment will be distributed on or about 16 October. The paper will be due in class on 30 October, and should be 5 - 8 typed, double-spaced pages. You will be required to bring a rough draft to class for discussion on a day to be announced. The final paper will be due during the exam period. The final assignment will be distributed before classes end for the term. Late papers will be penalized at one letter grade per day or part thereof after the deadline that they arrive in my hand or at my office. The quizzes will consist of short questions such as definitions and true/false. Quizzes will not be announced, and there will be no make-up quizzes. Quiz grades will be on a percentage basis. Students who miss quizzes because of true emergencies, illness or religious holidays will have their quiz grades computed as a percentage of a lower number of points, depending on how many points were on the quizzes missed.

Readings

You will be responsible for the following sections of texts. Assignments will be announced for each class meeting, and may add up to a bit more or less than what is listed here.

**Descartes:** Rules for the Direction of the Mind, Rules 1, 2 and 3
Principles of Philosophy, Part I (all), Part II, sect.s 1 - 20, 33, 36
Of the Passions of the Soul, Part I, sect.s 1 - 8, 12 - 26, 30 - 45

**Malebranche:** Handout

**Leibniz:** Primary Truths
The Principles of Philosophy

**Berkeley:** A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, Part I (NOT the Introduction), sects. 1 - 33

**Hume:** Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, Sect.s II, III, IV, V, XII

**Kant:** Second Analogy (handout)

This page currently maintained by Ted Toadvine.

Please direct any questions or comments to the Chair of the Department.

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Updated 5 November 1997