Great Philosophers
PHIL 125C | Fall 2019
Washington University in St. Louis

Instructor: Nicholas (Nic) Koziolek
Email: nkoziolek@wustl.edu
Office: 101 Wilson Hall
Office Hours: Mon 11:00–12:00
Tues 10:00–11:00
Other: by appointment

Class Meetings: Section 01 MW 8:30–9:50am Somers Family 249

Required Texts: René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy (Hackett, Third Edition, 1993)
John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Hackett, 1996)
Immanuel Kant, Prolegromena to Any Future Metaphysics (Hackett, Second Edition, 2001)

Assignments: Attendance (10% of final grade)
Quizzes (daily, 15% total)
Papers (three, 25% each)

Grading: A+ ≥ 97 > A ≥ 93 > A− ≥ 90 > B+ ≥ 87 > B ≥ 83 > etc.

1 Course Description

In this course, we will read and discuss the writings of four especially important figures in the history of modern philosophy: René Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. We will focus, in particular, on what each of these philosophers have to say about the human mind, and, relatedly, about the nature, limits, and scope of human knowledge. The course thus provides a kind of pre-history of what we now know as the sciences of the mind (the cognitive sciences). Among the central questions we will be investigating: what is a mind? how do minds operate? how do they relate to the “external” or physical world? and how do they relate the brain?
2 Assignments

2.1 Attendance

Attendance is strictly required. For each class you miss, you will forfeit one-tenth of your attendance grade (i.e., 1% of your final grade).

2.2 Quizzes

Before each class (which is what I mean by “daily,” above), you’ll be required to complete an open-book short-essay Canvas quiz. These quizzes are meant to serve two purposes. First, they’re designed to encourage you to engage thoughtfully with the course material before you come to class, and thereby to prepare you for participation in class discussions. Second, they’re designed to provide you with relevant practice for your three papers. To that end, you should think of them as opportunities to practice putting your thoughts and reactions on paper (so to speak); explaining arguments and concepts from the reading; answering specific questions about the reading; and, in some cases, generating questions of your own about what you’ve read. You should generally use class discussion as a source of feedback on what your quizzes, but I also encourage you to compare answers with your classmates outside of class (either by sharing your written answers or simply by discussing your answers more informally). I also encourage you to come talk with me in office hours if you want additional feedback, or if you just want to talk in more depth about any of the material.

Quizzes will be graded only for completion: if you answer the questions, you’ll receive full points. I do, however, reserve the right to take points if it looks to me as if you aren’t taking the quizzes seriously. What I’m looking for, though, is nothing more than serious engagement with the material. Simply getting things wrong will never cost you points on the quizzes.

2.3 Participation

Instead of punishing you for not participating, I’ll be rewarding you for participating. So: by consistently participating thoughtfully in class discussions throughout the semester, you can improve your final grade by as much as 5%. (Note that this is the only extra credit I’ll be offering this semester.)

2.4 Papers

You will be required to write three short papers, of 3–4 pages each. You will have considerable flexibility in choosing topics and deadlines for your papers. I’ll post paper prompts at regular intervals (approximately once a week). Papers on those prompts will be due within 10 days of the posting of the prompts. You can write on
at most one prompt from each set of prompts (i.e., those posted together), but you can otherwise write in response to whichever prompts most interest you and/or are most convenient for your schedule. You’re also welcome to propose a paper topic of your own devising, but you must have the topic approved by me in advance. The only other restriction is that you must have submitted at least one paper by October 25.

Additionally, if (and only if) you have submitted at least two papers by October 25, you will have the option of submitting a fourth paper and then dropping your lowest paper grade.

3 Policies

3.1 Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you will fail the course, and your case will be recommended to the student judicial board. To review the university’s policies on academic integrity, please consult:


If you still have questions about what is and isn’t permissible for you to do in your papers, please talk to me.

3.2 Technology in Class

You may bring a computer or tablet to class for use in viewing course material or taking notes, but you are allowed to use it only for course-related purposes. If you are caught using your computer or tablet for any non-course-related purpose, you will be marked absent for the day. Similarly, if you are caught using your phone for any reason at all, you will be marked absent for the day; in other words, you are not permitted to use your phone even for course-related purposes.

3.3 Disabilities

Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 314-935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. I will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and personal delivery. If you have already been
approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester. For more information, please visit http://cornerstone.wustl.edu/disability-resources/.

3.4 Assistance

I encourage you to email me and to come to office hours to discuss course material or assignments. My general attitude is: if you have questions, ask them. There are also some university-provided services that you might find useful:

3.4.1 Cornerstone

Academic peer mentors, study skills workshops, and other useful services, plus Disability Resources and the university’s TRiO program:

http://cornerstone.wustl.edu

3.4.2 Writing Assistance

Free one-on-one tutoring:

https://writingcenter.wustl.edu

3.4.3 Diversity and Inclusion

The center’s staff supports and advocates for students from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized populations and creates collaborative partnerships with campus and community members to promote dialogue and social change:

https://diversity.wustl.edu/framework/center-diversity-inclusion

3.4.4 Peer Counseling

https://unclejoe.wustl.edu
4 Schedule of Readings

Readings other than those from the required texts (Kelly and Foucault) will be available on Canvas. This schedule is subject to change; changes from the original schedule will appear in blue.

Course Overview

Aug 27 No reading

Descartes

Aug 29 René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Meditations One and Two (focus on Two)
Sep 3 Meditations Three and Four (focus on Four)
Sep 5 Meditations Five and Six (focus on Six)

Locke

Sep 10 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book I, chapters i–iii
Sep 12 Book I, chapter iv
Sep 17 Book II, chapters i–viii
Sep 19 Book II, chapters ix–xii
Sep 24 Book II, chapters xiii–xx
Sep 26 Book II, chapter xxi
Oct 1 Book II, chapters xxii–xxvi
Oct 3 Book II, chapters xxvii–xxxiii
Oct 8 Book IV, chapters i and ii
Oct 10 Book IV, chapters iii and iv
Oct 15 NO CLASS – FALL BREAK
Oct 17 Book IV, chapters v–viii
Oct 22 Book IV, chapters ix–xi
Oct 24 Book IV, chapters xvii and xviii
Oct 29 Book IV, chapter xx
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 5</td>
<td>§3, “Of the Association of Ideas”</td>
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<td>Nov 7</td>
<td>§4, “Sceptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding”</td>
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<td>Nov 12</td>
<td>§5, “Sceptical Solution of these Doubts”</td>
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<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>§7, “Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion”</td>
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<td>Nov 19</td>
<td>Immanuel Kant, <em>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</em>, “Preface” and “Preamble on the Peculiarities of All Metaphysical Cognition”</td>
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<td>Nov 21</td>
<td>“First Part of the Main Transcendental Question”</td>
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<td>Nov 26</td>
<td>“Second Part of the Main Transcendental Question”</td>
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<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 3</td>
<td>“Third Part of the Main Transcendental Question”</td>
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<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>“Conclusion” and “Solution of the General Question”</td>
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