

PHIL 3210: Women in the History of Philosophy F15



(Margaret Cavendish)

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:00 or by appointment

This course will examine the works of several early modern women philosophers: including Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, Mary Astell, Damarais Cudworth Masham, Anne Conway, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Lady Mary Shepherd. Each of these women made an original contribution to the dominating philosophical debates of their time. These women are noteworthy not only for the fact that they wrote philosophy under adverse conditions, but also for the fact that their writings challenged the views of some of the most important thinkers of their time. We will begin with a consideration of women's lives in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—this will provide important context for appreciating not only the small numbers of women writing in this period but also the philosophical accomplishments of those who did write. We will follow by examining, in turn, the relevant arguments of major seventeenth and eighteenth century thinkers and the critical responses of the women philosophers under consideration. Through this course I hope to provide you, generally, with an appreciation for the dominating debates of the early modern period and, in particular, for the contributions women made to those debates.

Texts:

*Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period, edited by Margaret Atherton (Hackett, 1994)

*Selected web-based readings to be posted on Courselink

Requirements (see course schedule for relevant dates)

*2 Critical Summaries	45% (#1 worth 20% x #2 worth 25%)
**Quizzes (Courselink-based)	20% (5 x 4%)
***Final Exam	35%

***Critical Summaries (2 x 20%):** A critical summary is a method of critical analysis, which requires a precise formulation of the argument of a given piece of text, in your own words, along with a critical analysis of its relative strength or weakness. You will be asked to write two critical summaries; each on an assigned piece of text. Detailed guidelines on writing critical summaries will be handed out in class and made available on Courselink. The submission dates for critical summaries are clearly indicated below on the Course Schedule. *These assignments will be submitted via Dropbox. Late assignments will not be accepted, except on medical or compassionate grounds. You must speak to Professor Sheridan to arrange for late submission of assignments.*

****Quizzes (25%):** These will be made available, and will be completed, on Courselink. They will be made available on specific dates, for a window of 48 hours. The dates for the quizzes are indicated below on the course schedule. Each quiz will deal with a portion of course material, which will be specified in class prior to the quiz date, and will consist of a variety of question types (e.g. short answer, multiple choice, true-false) that will also be specified prior to each quiz.

*****Final exam (35%):** This exam will consist of two essay questions. The exam will be distributed on the last day of classes; three questions will be distributed and two questions will appear on the final exam.

Course Reading and Assignment Schedule

September 10: *Introduction*

Section I: Princess Elizabeth—The Mind-Body Problem

September 15: *Descartes's Mind-Body Theory: the Meditations*
See Courselink for reading

September 17: *Elizabeth's objections to Descartes*
Reading: Elizabeth's letters [in Atherton, p. 11-21]

September 22: *Elizabeth (continued)*
****Critical Summary #1 topics handed out**

Section II: Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway: Vitalism and Materialism

September 24: *Cavendish's materialism*
Reading: Cavendish's letters [Atherton, 25-45]
****Quiz #1**

September 29: *Conway's vitalism*
Reading: Conway, Ch. VI [Atherton, p.48-61]

October 1: *Conway's theory of the natures of spirit and body*
Reading: Conway, Chs. VIII & IX [Atherton, p.61-76]

Section III: Damarais Masham—the limits of theory and Leibniz's metaphysics

October 6: *Leibniz: a (very) general introduction to his metaphysics*
See Courselink for reading
****Quiz #2**

October 8: *Masham's response to Leibniz—with reference to Bayle and the Journal des Savans*
Reading: Masham, Letter II, IV [Atherton]
****Critical Summary #1 due (submit via Dropbox)**

October 13: Holiday; no class today

October 15: *Masham—Monads and Pre-established harmony: the limits of theory*
Reading: Masham, Letters [Atherton, p. 80-95]

Section IV: Mary Astell: the limits and extent of human knowledge

October 20: *Astell—on truth and knowledge*
Reading: Astell, [Atherton, p. 99-112]

October 22: *Astell—Method of thinking*
Reading: Astell, [Atherton, pg. 112 - 125]
****Quiz #3**

Section V: Catharine Trotter Cockburn: moral sense and reason

October 27: *John Locke's moral theory and Burnet's response*
See Courselink for reading
****Critical Summary #2 handed out**

October 29: *Cockburn's moral theory: obligation and sentiment*
See Courselink for Cockburn readings

November 3: *Cockburn's moral theory (cont'd)*

November 5: *Cockburn and the Bluestockings: a feminist morality*
See Courselink for reading
****Quiz #4**

Section VI: Mary Wollstonecraft

November 10: *Rousseau's Emile and Sophie*
See Courselink for reading

November 12: *Wollstonecraft's feminist perfectionism*
See Courselink for reading
****Critical Summary #2 due (submit via Drobox)**

November 17: *Wollstonecraft's radical liberalism vs. Burke's conservatism*
See Courselink for reading

November 19: *Wollstonecraft cont'd*
****Quiz #5**

Section VII: Lady Mary Shepherd's anti-idealism

November 24: *Berkeley's Idealism*
See Courselink for selections

November 26: *Mary Shepherd's anti-idealism*
Reading: Shepherd, Section I [Atherton]

December 1: *Shepherd cont'd*
Reading: Shepherd, Section II [Atherton]

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counseling Office:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>