

PHILOSOPHY 2160.01

HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY TO HUME

Winter 2011

Course Outline

MWF 12:30-1:20 am

MacKinnon 223

Instructor: Peter Loptson
MacKinnon 363
519-824-4120 extension 53228
ploptson@uoguelph.ca

Office hours: Mondays and Thursdays 2:00-3:00 or other times by appointment

T.A. for course: Christian Stevens
cstevens@uoguelph.ca
MacKinnon 325

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:00

Texts: (1) Forrest E. Baird, ed., *Philosophic Classics*. Volume III. *Modern Philosophy*. (Pearson/Prentice Hall). 6th Edition, 2011.

(2) Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*. Edited and with an Introduction by Peter Loptson. 2nd Edition (Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints), 1998.

Course assignments and evaluation: (1) two one-page assignments, providing a summary and evaluation of the central ideas of the readings for Fri 28 Jan, and Fri 11 March, respectively—each worth 5% of the course grade (the idea in each case is that the one-page assignment is to be prepared and submitted *before* the class in which the reading is discussed; there will be a 10% per day late penalty for assignments submitted after the due date); (2) midterm test—Fri 11 Feb. (20% of course grade); (2) term paper (10 pages, typed double-spaced), due Wed 23 March (30%—note that there will be a 1% per day late penalty for essays submitted after that date); topics for the term paper will be given out by Wed 2 March; (3) final examination (40%).

The 'Modern' period in the history of European philosophy is usually regarded as the period which developed with the Renaissance, or 'rebirth' of knowledge and culture, at the end of the Middle Ages. This was also the age of the printing press, and the European explorations and eventually conquests of 'new worlds' in the Americas, Africa, the Pacific, and parts of Asia. It

subsequently developed into the age of the rise of modern science, and the so-called 'scientific revolution' of the seventeenth century. Cultural and intellectual periods are not easy to give chronological precision, but we may date the Modern period in philosophy as from approximately 1515 to approximately 1875. That span is in turn conventionally divided into Early Modern and Late Modern stages. At the boundary between the two is the so-called 'critical' philosophy of Kant (which began with the publication of the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, in 1781).

Although some interesting philosophical work was done in the sixteenth century, the most importantly original, and still-influential period of Early Modern Philosophy starts about 1600. That is where our readings will begin, with selections from the writings of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), often regarded as the founder of philosophy of science, and of philosophy of technology. We will then read and discuss selections from fourteen further important philosophers from the period before Kant: Descartes, Elizabeth of Bohemia, Hobbes, Pascal, Spinoza, Malebranche, Conway, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Paley, Hume, Reid, and Rousseau.

The aim of the course will be to understand, discuss, and evaluate central philosophical ideas and arguments presented by the thinkers with whom we will be concerned. We will also seek to place these philosophers within the historical and cultural circumstances in which they lived and wrote.