

PHIL 1000 DE INTRO PHILOSOPHY: MAJOR TEXTS

Instructor: Nahum Brown

Brief Course Synopsis:

This course introduces some of the most important figures in the history of philosophy through a close examination of one fundamental philosophical problem: where is truth? Is it in the consciousness of the subject? Is it in the objects of the world? Or is the truth located in some combination of the subject and the world? Although Western Philosophy began in Ancient Greece, we will begin our journey into this debate by analyzing the 17th Century French philosopher René Descartes, his method of doubt, and his theory of rationalism. We will then contrast John Locke's version of empiricism with George Berkeley's radical version of idealism. Through a juxtaposition of Locke and Berkeley, we will have outlined the extreme sides of the debate: from naïve realism, where the truth is simply in the things of the world, to indirect realism (Locke's position), where the truth is located in the world but still filtered by consciousness, to Berkeley's idealism, which proposes that all of reality is *only* in the mind. The historical section of this course will culminate in the Scottish philosopher David Hume, his problem of induction, and in the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, and his transcendental version of idealism. The second half of this course will focus on certain 20th Century developments of the debate, in two distinct ways. First, we will read seminal essays from the analytic tradition concerning the philosophy of mind. Second, we will introduce the method of phenomenology as a critical response to the debate. Edmond Husserl, who founded phenomenology at the turn of the 20th Century, argues that consciousness is always consciousness *of something*. This principle of phenomenology, that consciousness is not isolated *from* the world, but rather always already *in* the world, presents a radical attempt to re-evaluate this fundamental philosophical question, where is truth?