

0101P212**Early Modern Philosophy****Instructor:** TBA**Time:** May 18, 2026 - June 19, 2026**Office Hours:** By Appointment**Course Meeting Times:** By Appointment**Contact Hours:** 60 (50 minutes each)**Credits:** 4**E-mail:** TBA**Course Description**

In this course we will read the works of some of the major philosophers of the early modern period (17th c. to 18th c.). We will also strive to think along with them through the monumental questions they ask about God, the nature of the world, and the foundations of human reasoning. We will begin by studying the work of Rene Descartes, a rationalist thinker whose work is widely regarded as marking the beginning of this crucial period in the history of philosophy. We will follow our study of Descartes with that of another rationalist thinker, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and the fascinating metaphysical system he developed. After this, we will turn our attention to John Locke, a central empiricist thinker of the period, and then to various criticisms of Locke's system offered by his fellow empiricist George Berkeley. Next, we will direct our focus toward the thought of David Hume, who arguably takes the empiricist tradition to its logical, skeptical conclusion. Finally, we will consider two

thinkers, Thomas Reid and Immanuel Kant, who, in their own way, attempted to escape the sort of skeptical conclusions suggested by Hume's writings.

Required Textbook(s)

Reading materials will be provided by the course instructor.

Course Schedule

Please note that the schedule is meant to give an overview of the major concepts in this course. Changes may occur in this calendar as needed to aid in the student's development. Course materials for the next week will be released after the meeting of the current week ends.

Week 1 / Unit 1: Descartes on God, Doubt, and the Foundations of Human Reasoning
Reading 1: Rene 'Descartes "Meditations I and II" (1641)

- Readings: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*
- *Assignments: 1 Reading Reflection, 5 Lecture Reflections*

Week 2 / Unit 2: Leibniz's Rationalist Metaphysic

- Readings: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*
- *Assignments: 1 Reading Reflection, 5 Lecture Reflections*

Week 3 / Unit 3: Locke's Empiricist Program (and Berkeley's Criticisms)

- Readings: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Bk I, Bk II chs 1-2, 8, Bk IV chs 1, 10, 15.
- *Assignments: 1 Reading Reflection, 5 Lecture Reflections*

Week 4 / Unit 4: Hume's Skeptical Empiricism

- Readings: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections I-VII, X
- *Assignments: 1 Reading Reflection, 5 Lecture Reflections*

Week 5 / Unit 5 Kant's and Reid's Responses to Skeptical Empiricism

- Readings: Kant *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Preface. Reid, *An Inquiry Into the Human Mind*, Conclusion. Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, "Of Judgment," Chapter 2: Of Common Sense.
- *Assignments: 1 Reading Reflection, 5 Lecture Reflections*

Assignments

Your final grade will be determined by a weighted average of the assignments and exams listed below in accordance with the percentage cutoffs also listed below.

Reading Reflections (35%): Each week you are to turn in a written reflection concerning the assigned readings for that week's unit prior to that week's class meeting. The reflection is to be single-spaced in Times New Roman, 12pt font. It is not to exceed 500 words. These reflections should include the following elements: (i) a paragraph length summary of one of the arguments the author gives in the paper that you find objectionable, (ii) a paragraph length explanation of why you find that argument objectionable, (iii) a paragraph length description of how you think the author might have responded to your criticism. Your reading reflection should display

in some way that you actually read the material and did not merely view the lectures. It will be graded for its accuracy, clarity, and depth of insight.

Lecture Videos and Lecture Reflections (35%): You are required to view the video lectures for each unit. On certain occasions in the video lectures, you will be asked to write down a response to a prompt or a question. These assignments will happen at maximum 5 times each week. You are to collect your responses to these prompts for that week's unit into a single document and submit them prior to that week's class meeting. The document you submit should be between 400 and 800 words. The primary purpose of these assignments is to confirm that you have in fact been viewing and understanding the lectures. Your grade will reflect the extent to which it is evident that you have in fact been doing so.

Course Meeting Participation and Attendance (15%): While attending these meetings, you are expected to have your camera on, unless you have received permission from the instructor to do otherwise. You are not expected to speak at every meeting, but you are expected to speak for at least some meetings. Your grade will be based on the consistency of your attendance as well as the quality of your contributions to the discussion. As previously noted, if for some reason, you cannot attend one or more of these meetings, please contact the professor to make an alternative arrangement.

Final Exam (15%): An open book, open notes, essay-based final exam will be released Friday, Week 5 at 12:01am Beijing Time. You will have that entire day to complete it and turn it in by Friday, 11:59pm Beijing Time. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Grading Policy

<i>5 Reading Reflections</i>	35%
Lecture Videos and Lecture Reflections	35%
Course Meeting Participation and Attendance	15%
Final Exam	15%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

The instructor will use the grading system as applied by JNU:

Definition	Letter Grade	Score
Excellent	A	90~100
Good	B	80~89
Satisfactory	C	70~79
Poor	D	60~69
Failed	E	Below 60

Academic Integrity

As members of the Jinan University academic community, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic coursework and activities. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, i.e., misrepresenting as one's own work any work done by another; submitting the same paper, or a substantially similar paper, to meet the requirements of more than

one course without the approval and consent of the instructors concerned; or sabotaging other students' work within these general definitions. Instructors, however, determine what constitutes academic misconduct in the courses they teach. Students found guilty of academic misconduct in any portion of the academic work face penalties that range from the lowering of their course grade to awarding a grade of E for the entire course.

A Special Note About AI

The use of artificial intelligence platforms as a means of producing content for this course is strictly prohibited. Any violation of this prohibition will be regarded as a violation of academic integrity.