

# Philosophical Perspectives II

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**Student Hours:** Thursday, 1-3 pm, Stuart 222, or other times by request.

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**Summary:** This course will examine the development of modern philosophy in the Western world. Two questions will guide our course this term: First, what is the basis of knowledge? Second, what is the nature of causation? We will begin with a careful reading of Descartes's *Meditations* in the light of some of its medieval sources. We will then consider three responses to its account of causation: Princess Elisabeth's worries about mind-body interaction, Malebranche and Cavendish's occasionalism, and Anne Conway's account of the relation between creatures and God. Next, we will consider Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and examine Mary Shepherd's objection to his worries about causation. Finally, we will bring the questions of the term together with a discussion of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*.

**Texts:** The following books are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op. All other readings will be supplied through Canvas.

1. René Descartes, *Meditations* (Cambridge, trans Cottingham). Also available for free from the library: <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=f33c82a2-629c-4dc3-9756-cdb58cb62af8%40sessionmgr4007&vid=0&format=EB> or <http://pm.nlx.com.proxy.uchicago.edu/xtf/view?docId=rationalists/rationalists.02.xml;chunk.id=div.descartes.v2.3;toc.depth=1;toc.id=div.descartes.v2.3;brand=default>.
2. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett). Also available for free: <https://davidhume.org/texts/e/full>.
3. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Please use these translations for our class. If purchasing these books involves any hardship, please send me an email. I have spare copies of most of these books that I can lend out to some students. Unfortunately, I do not have any extra copies of Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

## Course Requirements:

1. 15%: Course Participation and Attendance: Attendance is mandatory, and any unexcused absence will significantly harm your participation grade. In this course, you will also be graded on the quality of your participation. Good participation is a matter of both making positive contributions in class and serving as a good classroom citizen. We will spend time in the first session discussing participation and setting norms for the class.
2. 10%: Reading Questions: By 9 pm the night before each class, please email me a question or thought you have about the reading for the next day's class. Most days I will provide a recommendation about what you should think about. Your responses should be 2-4 sentences, and please put them in the body of the email. Each class, we will discuss some of these reading questions. You have two "free" reading questions that you do not need to submit over the course of the quarter. However, if you do choose to take advantage of this, please send me an email noting that you are using your "free" question that day.

3. 35%: 5–6 page midterm paper: A 5–6 page midterm paper, double spaced, on a topic to be distributed on Canvas, due Feb 10 at 5 pm.
4. 40%: 6–7 page final paper: A 6–7 page final paper, on your choice of topics to be distributed on Canvas, due March 13 at 5 pm.

### Policy Statements:

1. Late Papers and Extensions: For each day that a paper is late, it will be penalized 2/3rds of a letter grade. Late papers will only be accepted up to four days after the assignment is due. For reasons of fairness, extensions will only be granted in cases of clear need. Please contact me as soon as you think that you may need an extension so we can work out an appropriate plan.
2. Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be treated according to university policy. It is your responsibility to make sure you have turned in a readable pdf or docx for all paper assignments.
3. Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me or email me by the end of the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential.
4. Laptops: Laptops and tablets will be permitted in class so you can have access to our readings. However, note that electronics use has been shown to decrease class performance (cf. Ravizza et al, “Logged in and Zoned Out,” *Psychol Sci.* 2017 Feb, 28(2):171-180). You should feel free to use a laptop or tablet to look up a section of our reading, but I encourage students to take notes with pencil and paper.

### Tentative Schedule: (subject to change)

1. Jan 7: Intro: Form and matter, religion and science (no reading)
2. Jan 9: *Meditation 1*
3. Jan 14: *Meditation 2*; Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.12.21
4. Jan 16: *Meditation 3*; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.2.3
5. Jan 21: *Meditation 4–5*; Anselm, *Proslogion 2*
6. Jan 23: *Meditation 6*
7. Jan 28: Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth
8. Jan 30: Malebranche, *Search After Truth* 6.2.3; Cavendish, Letter 30
9. Feb 4: Anne Conway, *Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*: Chapters 4, 6, 8–9
10. Feb 6: *Enquiry 1–3*

*Feb 10, 5 pm: Midterm paper due.*

11. Feb 11: *Enquiry 4–6*
12. Feb 13: *Enquiry 7*
13. Feb 18: Mary Shepherd, *Essay Upon the Relation Between Cause and Effect*, Chapter 2 (pp. 27–98)
14. Feb 20: *Enquiry 8–9*
15. Feb 25: *Enquiry 10–11*
16. Feb 27: *Enquiry 12*; Hume, *Treatise* 1.4.7 (<https://davidhume.org/texts/t/1/4/7>)
17. Mar 3: *Frankenstein*, pp. 47–110
18. Mar 5: *Frankenstein*, pp. 111–160
19. Mar 10: *Frankenstein*, pp. 161–221

*Mar 13, 5 pm: Term paper due.*