

Philosophical Perspectives on the Humanities
Winter 2005
T, TH 9:00-10:20

Instructor: Michael Kremer

My office is 119 Wieboldt Hall. I will hold office hours Tuesday and Thursday, 4:00-5:30. If these times are not convenient we can make an appointment for another time. My office phone is 834-9884; my home phone is 643-1223. I can be reached by e-mail at kremer@uchicago.edu.

The writing intern for the course is Ryan Coyne; his e-mail address is rcoyne@uchicago.edu.

Ryan will meet with you individually at several points during the quarter to discuss your papers. He will also hold office hours in the Classics Café at a time to be announced later.

Course objectives and format:

The focus of this course is an introduction to some of the main currents of early modern thought – that is, European thought of the period following the Middle Ages, up to the end of the eighteenth century. We will approach this period through the reading of philosophical, scientific, and literary texts. We will begin, however, with a reading of one of the classic texts of the preceding, medieval, period, Augustine's Confessions.

The course is intended to run as a seminar, with active participation from all members. In order for this to work, it is essential that all members of the class come prepared, having done the assigned reading, thought about it, and with things to say about it.

In order to assist you in preparing for class, I will be making study questions for the readings available on the chalk website for the course. You will be expected to have thought about these study questions and to be prepared to talk about them (of course it is perfectly alright for you to be prepared to talk about other things as well). You should be prepared to be called on in class.

Texts:

The following texts are available in the Seminary Co-op bookstore: Aurelius Augustine, Confessions; Michel de Montaigne, Essays; René Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy; David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding; William Shakespeare, Hamlet. Selections from Blaise Pascal's Pensées will be made available on the chalk website for the course.

Please buy these books, even if you already own other editions of the same works. It is important that we all have the same editions so that we can refer to them in class discussion. I have made an effort to obtain inexpensive editions of all the books we will be reading.

Course Website:

This course has a chalk website (go to chalk.uchicago.edu). The syllabus, assignments, study questions, and possibly other announcements and links of interest, will be posted from time to time on that website. There are two discussion boards available there: one for general discussion of the course material (see below) and a second which you can use to anonymously communicate with me about how the course is going.

Work of the Course: There are two requirements for the course, which will be weighted as indicated in determining the final grade.

(1) **Participation in discussions:** (25%) All students are expected to participate in our ongoing discussion of the works we are reading together. Contributions to this discussion can take one of two forms: (a) oral participation in class; (b) contributions to an on-going discussion board which can be accessed through the chalk website.

Contributions to discussions will be evaluated based on the evidence they give of your having done the assigned readings, and thought about them. I am not looking to evaluate your participation in discussion as “right” or “wrong.” Nor do I require frequent contributions to the discussion board; you can receive a good grade on this part of the work of the course simply by participating regularly in class. However, participation on the discussion board can raise your grade in this segment of the course.

Study Questions for each day’s reading will be posted on the chalk website for the course in advance. You should print out these study questions, read them, and think about them as you do the reading. You should also bring them with you to class, as the day’s discussion will often revolve around them. You may also post responses to them on the discussion board.

(2) **Papers:** (75%) You will write three essays, on assigned topics, during the course of the quarter. I will distribute essay topics at least two weeks in advance of the due date.

Policy regarding grades:

Grades of “A+” may be assigned on some papers, and on class participation, and will be taken into account in determining final grades (so an A+ and an A- average to an A).

Grading will be shared by the writing intern and the instructor. The first essay will be graded by both the instructor and the intern. For the second and third essays the instructor and the intern will each grade half of the essays. Each student will receive comments on two of the three essays from the instructor, and on two of the three essays from the writing intern. The final responsibility for all grades rests with the instructor, and any questions about grades should be addressed to him.

Policy regarding due dates:

Your essays are to be turned in in class on the assigned date. If you cannot meet the deadline you must ask for an extension before class. Work turned in late will be subject to the following

penalties:

1-2 days late: 1 “notch”(B+ is reduced to B), maximum grade is A (not A+).

3 days late: two “notches” (B+ is reduced to B-), maximum A-.

4 days late: four notches, maximum B.

5 days late: seven notches, maximum C.

6 days late: ten notches, maximum D.

7 days late: failing

But reasonable requests for extensions will not be denied. Please ask! Do not penalize yourself unnecessarily. Also, please do not fail to come to class because you have not completed your essay!

If an extension is granted and work is turned in after the extension due date, the above penalties will apply.

Policy regarding plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged presentation of another’s thoughts or words as your own.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. For further information you should consult the

book, Doing Honest Work in College, distributed to you in the fall quarter, as well as the

document Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement, available on-line at

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Esources/>. Note, however, that if the only sources that you cite

are our primary sources (in the editions used in this class), it is fine with me if you cite as

follows: “(Augustine, 38-9).”

ROUGH Schedule of Readings

1/4 Introductory

1/6 Augustine, Confessions 1-4

1/11 Augustine, Confessions 5-8

1/13 Augustine, Confessions 9-10

1/18 Montaigne, "On Repentance"

1/20 Montaigne, "On Physiognomy"

1/25 Montaigne, "On Experience"

1/27 Shakespeare, Hamlet, Acts I-II

2/1 Shakespeare, Hamlet, Acts III-IV

2/3 Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act V

2/8 Descartes, Meditations Dedication, Preface, Synopsis, I-II

2/10 Descartes, Meditations III-IV

2/15 Descartes, Meditations V-VI; also Discourse on Method, Part V, pp. 31-33

2/17 Pascal, Pensées, selections (chalk website)

2/22 Pascal, Pensées, selections (chalk website)

2/24 Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, I-V

3/1 Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding VI-IX

3/3 Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding X-XII

3/8 Wrap-up

DUE DATES:

1/25: Paper 1

2/15: Paper 2

3/8: Paper 3