Humanities 11600: Philosophical Perspectives

Meets: T, Th, 3:00-4:20, Cobb 430
Instructor: David Finkelstein

In this course, we’ll read and discuss texts that played significant roles in the shaping of modern (as opposed to medieval) worldviews in Europe in the 16th-18th centuries, texts by Shakespeare, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, and Hume, among others.

There are three required books available at the Seminary Coop: Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Descartes’ Meditations on First Philosophy, and Hume’s Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. Other readings will be available online or at the copy center on the first floor of Classics.

Your grade will be based on two short papers and a final examination. In addition, participation (or lack thereof) in class can raise or lower your final grade by half a grade i.e., from a B up to an B+ or down to a B-.

Reading Schedule:
Thursday, 1/8) Bacon, Novum Organum, Preface and Aphorisms Concerning the Interpretation of Nature and the Kingdom of Man. These texts can be found at http://fly.hiwaay.net/%7Epaul/bacon/organum/preface.html and at http://fly.hiwaay.net/%7Epaul/bacon/organum/aphorisms1.html.


Tuesday, 2/3) Meditations 5 & 6.


Tuesday, 2/17) Pascal, excerpt from Pensées. Bayle, excerpt from his Dictionary. Hamlet, Act 5. The Pascal and Bayle readings will be available at the copy center in Classics.

Tuesday, 2/24) Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Parts I-VI.

Tuesday, 3/2) Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Parts VII-XII.

Tuesday, 3/9) TBA