

COURSE OUTLINE: PHIL 5600

Topics in History of Philosophy: Scepticism and Knowledge in Early Modern Philosophy Winter 2021: Tuesdays, 11:35-14:25, online

Professor Melissa Frankel

Office: Paterson Hall 3A53 – but for Winter 2021, my “office” will be virtual

Office Hours: virtual, by appointment

Email: Melissa_frankel@carleton.ca, or through cuLearn

Course description:

In Descartes’s first *Meditation*, he famously advances a number of sceptical hypotheses to try to uncover the ground of our knowledge. Is it possible, he wonders, that our senses systematically mislead us – that we are dreaming rather than awake – that an evil deceiver makes it that everything we now believe is false? By the final *Meditation*, however, Descartes thinks that he has put knowledge back on firm ground. Following Descartes, a number of early modern philosophers were equally concerned with the question of scepticism and knowledge; some argued that Descartes was partly successful in grounding knowledge, some that he was unsuccessful, and some that he was approaching the question of knowledge in the wrong way altogether. In this seminar, we will look at a number of early modern approaches to these topics, by consulting primary texts from such philosophers as Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, Berkeley, and Shepherd, among others. Our primary focus will be on knowledge of the external world, but we may also consider self-knowledge and knowledge of other minds.

Required text (available at the Carleton bookstore):

There is no required text for this course.

We will be consulting a variety of primary texts. If you were an undergraduate at Carleton, you may have taken either PHIL 3002 (17th c Philosophy) or PHIL 3003 (18th c Philosophy); in this case, you will already own an anthology of early modern primary texts entitled “Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources,” edited by Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins, published by Hackett. This text contains many (but not all) of the sources that we will be looking at. If you do not own this book, however, I will not require you to purchase it.

Because we will be consulting so many different primary sources, I will not require you to purchase any of them individually, either. Instead, I will make readings available on cuLearn, e.g. by linking to the library’s e-resources (typically the “Past Masters” database), but also through the Ares reserve system.

Note: many of these primary texts are also available in full in various places online. However, some online sources are abridged or otherwise altered. If you wish to consult an online source other than the Past Masters database, you must discuss this with me, so that I can help you to evaluate whether or not the source is appropriate.

Sometimes I may ask you to consult secondary sources. In particular, you will be asked to consult at least one secondary source when you give your presentation (see the section on

evaluation, below.) Whenever I ask you to consult secondary sources, I will make those sources available on cuLearn, again, either through a link to the library's e-resources, or on Ares.

If you *do* want to purchase the individual texts that we will be looking at, they are all available for purchasing online. If you decide to do this, let me know, and I will send you references for the standard academic version of the texts. If you intend to do your graduate work (e.g. MA thesis or research paper work) in the history of philosophy, and especially in early modern philosophy, this may be a good idea for you.

Technology requirements:

This course will be a synchronous course. That is to say, we will be meeting live every week by videoconference (using Zoom) during regularly scheduled course hours (Tuesdays 11:35-2-25), unless otherwise indicated.

Because this is a synchronous course, you will need access to a computer or to some other device that allows you to access the internet, and you will also need to have steady internet access during our regularly scheduled course times. Your computer or other device will need to have a microphone, as one element of the seminar will involve giving presentations (see the evaluation section, below). It will also be helpful if your computer or alternate device also has a camera, as my preference is that we be able to interact visually as well.

If you anticipate having any problems with technology or internet access, please email me so that we can discuss possible solutions.

cuLearn:

This course will be supported by the cuLearn Course Management System. You can access your cuLearn account by going to www.carleton.ca/culearn and entering your MyCarletonOne username and password.

Because we are online this semester, it is especially important for you to regularly check the cuLearn page for the course. It is on cuLearn that you will find the most up-to-date information regarding schedules of readings, which are open for revision through the semester.

The cuLearn page for this course will be divided into weekly segments. In each of these weekly segments, you will find a list of the resources and activities that are meant to be either begun or completed during that week, as well as links to those resources and activities. On a weekly basis this will include readings, links for our Zoom meeting for that week, and recordings of those meetings, when available.

Students will be fully responsible for reading and responding appropriately to all information distributed through the cuLearn Course Page. Information provided on cuLearn will be considered to have been provided to all registered students within 24 hours of posting.

Zoom:

In this course, we will be meeting live online on a weekly basis (**including on the first week**) using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. You can find Zoom at <https://zoom.us/>. To use Zoom, you do not need a Zoom account; you only need a Zoom meeting ID, or a link to a Zoom meeting.

There will be a stable meeting ID / a single link to the Zoom meetings for the entire semester. That meeting ID and link will be provided on cuLearn, at the top of the page, where it will remain through the semester.

These meetings are an integral part of the course; I expect all students to be present on a weekly basis. That said, I understand that sometimes circumstances may make it difficult to attend a meeting, so I will also be recording these meetings. Recordings will be made available on cuLearn within about 24 hours of the meeting.

Evaluation:

1. Presentation (30%)

You will be asked to present a topic to the class at least once during the semester. Presentations should be about 20-30 minutes long, including time for discussion, and typically will involve using a secondary source to provide a framework for discussion of a primary text. You should meet with me virtually at least one week before your presentation, in order to discuss the presentation.

For your presentation, you should produce either a detailed handout or a slideshow (on powerpoint, or whatever other software you feel comfortable using.) It's genuinely up to you to decide whether you would like to produce a handout or a slideshow; I have no preference. You should email me the handout or slideshow **before the beginning of class** on the day of your presentation. If you decide to produce a handout, I will email your handout to the rest of the class when I receive it. (You can also do this yourself, if you like.) If you decide to produce a slideshow, I will be asking you to use the share screen function of Zoom to share the slideshow while giving your presentation.

I will ask you to sign up for a presentation topic by the **third class** of the semester (**Jan 26th**) at the very latest. Your presentation plus handout / slideshow will be worth **30%** of your final grade.

2. Participation (10%)

As graduate students, you are expected to come to class having read the material and being prepared to discuss it. Participation will be worth **10%** of your grade. Note: participation will be judged by quality, not by quantity. I.e., it is not necessary that you constantly participate in class discussion, but in order to count towards the 10%, your comments should be relevant to the material or discussion at hand.

3. Final take-home 'exam' (60%)

A mid-length paper (**15-20 pages**) on a topic of your choosing, due on the last day of exam period for the Winter Semester (**April 27th, 2021.**) You must consult with me on your topic at least two weeks before final papers are due. Topics *must be approved*. This paper should be submitted on cuLearn and will be worth **60%** of your grade.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2020-21)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Sept. 9	Classes start.
Sept. 23	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 12	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 26-30	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 27	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 11	Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 12-23	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 23	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 11	Classes begin.
Jan. 25	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 31	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 2	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 14	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses. Classes follow a Friday schedule.
Apr. 15	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 16-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735