

Early Modern Moral Philosophy  
PHIL 251

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To gain a familiarity with the major ethical theories of the periods of modern moral philosophy.

To increase critical thinking skills by learning to analyze arguments.

To increase ability to express ideas in written form, both in essays and in shorter, concise answers to homework questions.

Assignments

25% a 4-6 page paper.

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25% final exam. The final exam will be held during the examination period, at the time specified by the registrar. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Do not assume that this means the exam will be easy.

10% contributions to class. Your grade on this will be based on how much your presence adds to or subtracts from the class. If you regularly bring up interesting points or useful questions and steer the class in a positive direction, you'll receive a high grade. If you regularly disrupt class, sleep during class, arrive late, steer class discussions onto irrelevant topics, or generally diminish the quality of the class, you'll get a low grade. If you come regularly and seem to mostly pay attention, you'll get a medium grade (in the mid to upper 70s). Note that your participation grade is separate from the deductions that you can get from your overall course grade if you disrupt class (I discuss this below).

15% short assignments. You'll have approximately fifteen to twenty short assignments of various kinds—writing VERY short answers outside of class to questions I ask about the readings, doing in-class short writing assignments to help initiate discussion, or quizzes. Short assignments will usually just be given a grade of  $\checkmark$ , or a 0 if you don't turn it in, or sometimes a + or a --. If you get solid grades of  $\checkmark$  on the assignments, this amounts to a grade of 78.

Because of the nature of these short assignments, you will NOT be allowed to make them up. But instead, you will be allowed to drop your two lowest short assignment grades. This dropping of two grades is NOT a way to let you skip assignments for no good reason, but rather a way to build in a way for you to miss some assignments without penalty if you have a good reason. So please don't ask to make up a short assignment. But if you have an extended medical problem or other emergency that will cause you to miss a lot of assignments, talk to me as soon as you recognize the problem (not, e.g. three weeks later). For some assignments, it also will be possible to turn them in early if you know you can not come to class for some good reason.

## Readings

Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 531-552, (ch. 13-18)

Hume, Treatise of Human Understanding, p. 692-714 (book II, part III; book III, Part I, sections 1 and 2; book III, part II, sect.1 and 2), also, in the coursepack, further selections from Treatise, and three or four pages about the “sensible knave” from Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals

Joseph Butler, Five Sermons, preface and sermon 1 and sermon 2, from coursepack

Rousseau, “On the Social Contract,” p. 771-830

Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, entire book, p. 833-873

Thomas E. Hill, Jr. , “The Rationality of Moral Conduct,” in coursepack

Rousseau, “On the Social Contract,” p. 771-830

LATE WORK: As mentioned above, short assignments will not be accepted late. Papers will be accepted late, but 3 points will be deducted for each day it is late (each day, including weekends, not just class days), unless the lateness is prearranged or excused.

## Disruptive Behavior

Each time I must ask a specific student to stop disrupting class, one point will be deducted from that student’s overall grade for the course. This is besides the fact that your grade for class contribution will be affected if you disrupt the class. For more details on possible grade penalties for inappropriate behavior, see the separate sheet that I will hand out on the first day of class. You must sign that separate sheet and return it to me, or you will be dropped from the course.