

**WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE**  
**LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION**  
**GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE**

PHI Course Prefix	232 Course Number	History of Philosophy: Modern Course Title	3-0 (Lec-Lab)	3 Semester Hours
-------------------------	-------------------------	---	------------------	------------------------

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Surveys the major figures and schools in Western philosophical tradition from the 15th to the 20th centuries. Emphasizes interpreting philosophical reflection in light of the social, political, religious, and cultural context from which it arises. IAI H4 902

Prerequisite: A course in Philosophy or consent of instructor.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE**

- I. The Transition from Medieval to Renaissance and Modern Philosophy
  - A. General characteristics of the time
  - B. Medieval backgrounds
  - C. Renaissance humanism: Machiavelli, Erasmus, Thomas More
  - D. The rise of natural science: Francis Bacon
  - E. The reformation
- II. Rene Descartes--The Father of Modern Philosophy
- III. Continental Rationalism
  - A. Spinoza
  - B. Leibniz
- IV. British Empiricism
  - A. John Locke
  - B. George Berkeley
  - C. David Hume
- V. The Enlightenment: Kant
  - A. Characteristics of the enlightenment
  - B. Voltaire
  - C. Rousseau
  - D. Immanuel Kant
    - 1. Kant's heritage from his predecessors
    - 2. The modern problematic: Epistemology
    - 3. The synthetic a priori
    - 4. The Critique of Pure Reason
    - 5. The Critique of Practical Reason
    - 6. The impossibility of metaphysics
    - 7. The significance of Kant
- VI. German Idealism
  - A. The legacy of Kant
  - B. The romantic reaction
  - C. Fichte
  - D. Schelling
  - E. Hegel
  - F. Others -- Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, Karl Marx
- VII. Existentialism
  - A. General characteristics
  - B. Nietzsche
  - C. Kierkegaard
  - D. Century existentialism

1. Heidegger
2. Sartre
3. Others

VIII. French and English 19th Century Philosophy

- A. Utilitarianism of J.S. Mill and Jeremy Bentham
- B. Spencer's Evolutionism: Darwin
- C. Henri Bergson
- D. British Idealism

XI. American Pragmatism

- A. General characteristics
- B. C.S. Pierce
- C. William James
- D. John Dewey
- E. The speculative cosmology of A.N. Whitehead

X. Anglo-American Analytic Philosophy

- A. General characteristics
- B. Roots in empiricism
- C. G.E. Moore
- D. Bertrand Russell
- E. Logical positivism
- F. Ludwig Wittgenstein

XI. Phenomenology

- A. Edmund Husserl and the phenomenological movement
- B. Existentialist appropriations of the phenomenological method

XII. Recent trends in Philosophy

METHODS OF PRESENTATION

1. Lecture/discussion method
2. Films, A-V units, visiting lecturer, when appropriate and available
3. Student presentation, when appropriate

STUDENT OUTCOMES: (*The student should . . .*)

Attitudes:

1. learn to be appropriately skeptical.
2. be willing to learn from a variety of sources.
3. have a respect and tolerance for different views, especially views that are at variance with his/her own.
4. take personal responsibility for learning.
5. develop a sense and understanding of the historical importance of modern traditions.

Skills:

1. read, write, and speak critically and effectively about those issues which were of particular concern to Western philosophy from the 15th to the 20th centuries.
2. work maturely with diverse and conflicting views.
3. identify the specific positions of modern philosophers on such subjects as epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, religion, and political theory.
4. explore the consequences and historical importance of modern and contemporary philosophical viewpoints.

Content:

1. be able to articulate the philosophical traditions of British empiricism, Continental rationalism, American pragmatism, analytic philosophy and logical positivism, existentialism, etc.
2. be able to identify the position of at least one philosopher within each of the above traditions.
3. be able to identify and explain the social, political, religious, and cultural contexts in which the above philosophical traditions arise.
4. be able to compare and contrast different philosophical traditions.

5. be able to identify some common criticisms of the above philosophical traditions.
6. write at least ten pages, of approximately 300 words each, of college-level writing in the process of demonstration the accomplishment of the other outcomes.

#### METHODS OF EVALUATION

1. Written examinations, primarily interpretive and critical essay
2. Short term papers on approved topics
3. Class participation

#### TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Ayer, *Language, Truth & Logic*

Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Wittgenstein*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Routledge Classics, 2001

Descartes, *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy*

Dewey, *Common Faith*

Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

PREPARED BY: Colleen Burns

Semester Fall Year 2015