

CLASSES: Tuesdays 11:30 a.m -2:20 p.m. UH 316	OFFICE: UH 305; ext. 23470
INSTRUCTOR: Richard T. W. Arthur <arthur at mcmaster.ca>	OFFICE HOUR: ?T 11:30-12:30 p.m.

About the Course

In this course we will be approaching modern philosophy from an unusual angle by exploring late Renaissance natural philosophy and its influence on the philosophy of Leibniz. The exploration of 16th and 17th century Scholastic natural philosophy is an emerging field of study that is rapidly changing our understanding of the origins of modern philosophy. For, largely under the influence of the anti-metaphysical ideology of the enlightenment (whether as a result of Baconian scientific pragmatism, brash Humean empiricism or self-congratulatory Kantianism), historians have tended to dismiss the philosophy of the Schools as refuted by the scientific revolution. In this respect, Leibniz is regarded as something of a reactionary, with his insistence on the profundity of some Scholastic thought, and his reintroduction of substantial forms. This has also been deeply puzzling, given the forward-looking nature of so much of his thinking.

We'll begin with an overview of the latter, using my *Leibniz* (Polity Press, 2014). Then we'll proceed to explore some of the exciting new research on late scholasticism, beginning with Kuni Sakamoto's new book on J. C. Scaliger (2016), then Hiro Hirai's masterful *Medical Humanism and Natural Philosophy* (2011), before proceeding to my forthcoming study of Leibniz's theory of substance *Ariadnean Threads* (recently submitted to Oxford University Press), which situates Leibniz's metaphysics in relation to the theory of the plurality of forms he learned from Scaliger and Sennert.

Required Texts

R. T. W. ARTHUR, *Leibniz*, (Polity Press, October 2014).

KUNI SAKAMOTO, *Julius Caesar Scaliger, Renaissance Reformer of Aristotelianism* (2016); pdf version to be made available.

HIRO HIRAI, *Medical Humanism and Natural Philosophy: Renaissance Debates on Matter, Life and the Soul* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011); pdf version to be made available.

R. T. W. ARTHUR, *Ariadnean Threads: Leibniz on substance and the composition of matter*, (ms., [online text](#)).

Course Requirements

Seminar presentation on the topic to be discussed in any given week. You should prepare your presentation in such a way as to maximize class discussion. **(10%)**

Write-up of your presentation outline into a discussion paper (~3000 words), due in class 1 week after discussion. **(20%)**

Term paper (~7000 words) on any topic relevant to the seminar. You should discuss the topic with me to ensure that the topic is acceptable and doable, before beginning writing. Papers are due (e-mailed and in my mailbox in UH 310) by midnight on December 16th (extensions available on request). **(60%)**

You are also expected to contribute actively to the **class discussion** each week. Seriously. If you just sit there and don't say anything, this part of your credit will be in jeopardy! **(10%)**