

CLASSES: Tuesdays 11:30-14:20 p.m. UH 316

OFFICE: UH 305; ext. 23470

INSTRUCTOR: Richard T. W. Arthur <rarthur at mcmaster.ca>

OFFICE HOUR: T 3:00-4:00 p.m.

About the Course

In this course we will be exploring Leibniz's philosophy, taking as our starting point his claim that he introduced his 'monads' in order to resolve the problem of the composition of the continuum. This is the premise of my *Monads, Composition and Force: Ariadnean Threads through Leibniz's Labyrinth*, forthcoming with Oxford University Press, our main secondary source, to be made available on Avenue. Through this text and appropriate primary texts, we will be studying Leibniz's views on the composition of matter, atoms, substance, forms, force, and the infinite. We will also be looking at rival interpretations of his metaphysics in articles by other leading Leibniz scholars, such as Garber, Rutherford, Phemister and Levey.

We will begin with an overview of Leibniz's extremely wide-ranging thought, using my *Leibniz* (Polity Press, 2014), which assumes no prior knowledge of his thought (Leibniz seems to be embarrassingly absent from undergraduate curricula, which is odd given the high esteem he was held in by thinkers as various as Diderot, Cantor, Russell, Feuerbach, Weyl, Whitehead, Borges and Deleuze). This book situates his thought in its historical context, as well as exploring its contemporary relevance. Using it we will also study other aspects of Leibniz's thought, such as his views on language, logic, free will, theology, space and time, and much besides.

Since Leibniz wrote no single magnum opus, we will be reading from a selection of his writings. The Ariew and Garber volume gives a good selection. For other early texts we have the writings I compiled for *Leibniz: the Labyrinth of the Continuum* (Yale UP, 2001); texts from which will be made available on Avenue.

Required Texts

G. W. LEIBNIZ, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and tr. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Hackett, 1989); (hereafter AG).

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

R. T. W. ARTHUR, *Monads, Composition and Force*, (ms., [available on Avenue](#)).

Recommended Text

G. W. LEIBNIZ, *The Labyrinth of the Continuum*, ed. and tr. R. T. W. Arthur (Yale, 2001). [Pieces studied will all be provided online, but you may wish to have the real McCoy.](#)

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 relating 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 (on Avenue) by 11.59 pm December 11th (extensions available on request). (60%)

You are also expected to contribute actively to the **class discussion** each week. (10%)