

**FALL TERM 2022**  
**PHIL 4A03/PHIL 6A03, Early Modern Philosophy**  
**Title: Leibniz and the English Speaking World (Hobbes, Locke, Newton & Clarke)**

Instructor: Dr. Filippo Costantini

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 11.00 am - 1.00 pm (or by appointment)

Office: UH 316

Class meets: Monday, 2.30 pm- 5.20 pm; Room: UH 112

**Course Description:**

This course is a close study of Leibniz's philosophy, with particular regard to the relationship with the most prominent English philosophers. From the early engagement with Hobbes' philosophy to the critical assessment of Locke's *Essay* and the correspondence with Samuel Clarke on Newton's physics and metaphysics, the relationship with the English philosophical world played a central role in the development of Leibniz's theories. We will examine topics such as the role and nature of language, logic, and mathematics, the theory of knowledge, the mind-body problem, the notion of substance, the nature of space-time, both in Leibniz and in his English discussants.

**Objectives:**

By the end of this course, you will be familiar with several profound views of some important early modern thinkers, with a particular focus on Leibniz.

In addition, you should also have developed your ability to:

- Read, understand and analyse complex philosophical texts;
- Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of arguments, formulate and defend your own positions, both orally and writing;
- Be aware of the level of specificity required for a successful tackling of philosophical issues and historical influences;
- Communicate your thoughts and ideas to your peers;
- Write clearly and effectively in support of your claims

**Required Texts:**

1. THOMAS HOBBS, *The Metaphysical System of Hobbes*, ed. and trans. Mary Whiton Calkins. BiblioLife, 2009. Free available here:

<https://books.scholarsportal.info/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks5/ia5/ebooks/oca3/25/themetaphysicals00hobbuoft>

2. R. T. W. ARTHUR, *Leibniz*, Polity Press, 2014.

Please do purchase this book. We will use it quite extensively along the class (we are going to read 6 chapters on a total of 9). It contains a fresh and comprehensive interpretation of Leibniz's philosophy. It is also modestly priced (I suggest the paperback edition, not the more expensive hardcover edition). Print copies can be purchased through the campus store. I am not aware of the existence of digital copies; but if you happen to find a digital copy that will work too.

3. GOTTFRIED LEIBNIZ, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Free available online at Mill Library. Students may want to consider to buy a hard copy of this book, since we are going to use it quite extensively.

4. G. W. LEIBNIZ AND SAMUEL CLARKE, *Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew. Hackett, 2000.

The text of the Correspondence can be freely downloaded from here:

<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/leibniz1715.pdf>

On Avenue I shall upload the Appendix which has been published in the Roger Ariew edition.

5. P. PHEMISTER & S. BROWN (ED.) *Leibniz and the English Speaking World*, The New Synthese Historical Library, Springer 2007. (Only one chapter which I shall upload on Avenue to Learn)

6. Further papers by Leibniz (I shall upload them on Avenue to Learn)

### Course Website

I will be using a course website on Avenue to Learn (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>) as the main “hub” for this course. In addition to this course outline, you will find there: regular announcements about what is happening in the course, discussion boards for posing and answering questions about the readings and the philosophical issues they raise, supplementary readings, links to additional resources, and information and advice about assessment. You will also submit your written assignments there.

### Detailed Syllabus & Assessment

#### Syllabus:

#### **Week 1      Sept 12    Introduction**

Reading:      If you're keen to get a head start,  
                    Arthur, Chapter 1  
                    Phemister-Brown, Introduction (pp. 1-12, only §1 and 2).

#### **Week 2      Sept 19    Hobbes**

Reading:      Hobbes, *De Corpore*: Part I (chs. I-VI); pp. 3-41 of Calkins's edition.  
                    Arthur, chapter 2.

#### **Week 3      Sept 26      Leibniz (early years)**

Reading:      Arthur, Chapters 2-3.  
                    *De Corpore*: Part II (chs. VIII-IX); Calkins, pp. 52-76

#### **Week 4      Oct 3        Leibniz (middle years)**

Reading:      Arthur, Chapters 3 & 5.  
                    Leibniz/Clarke: Appendix A, pp. 88-95

#### **Week 5      Oct 17        Empiricism and innate ideas**

Reading:      Leibniz/Locke: *New Essays*: Preface, and pp. 69-133.

#### **Week 6      Oct 24        Substance and identity**

Reading:      Hobbes, *De Corpore*, Part II, ch. 11: Calkins, pp. 80-86  
                    Leibniz/Locke: *New Essays*: pp. 145-6, 212-252

#### **Week 7      Oct 31    Midterm test (tentatively) + Mathematical Philosophy**

                    Arthur, Chapter 4  
                    Leibniz, *Towards the science of infinite*

**Week 8      Nov 7      Ideas and definitions**

Reading:      Leibniz/Locke: *New Essays*: pp. 140-145, 254-329

**Week 9      Nov 14      Language, truth and knowledge**

Reading:      Leibniz/Locke: *New Essays*: pp. 329-434

**Week 10      Nov 21      God, reason and knowledge**

Reading:      Leibniz/Locke: *New Essays*: pp. 434-496 (Book IV, from chapter X to XVII)

Leibniz/Clarke Appendix B: Newton's *General Scholium*, 101-105

**Week 11      Nov 28      God's relation to the world**

Reading:      Leibniz/Clarke Appendix B: 105-110

Leibniz/Clarke *Correspondence*: Letters 1 & 2, pp. 1-14

**Week 12      Dec 5      Space and time**

Reading:      Hobbes, pp. 43-52

Leibniz/Locke: *New Essays*: pp. 146-159

Arthur, Chapter 7

The syllabus may vary during the course. Each modification will be advertised on Avenue to Learn.

**Assessment**

Undergraduate students

- **Reflective comments on the readings:** For each week's required readings you are required to compose 2 comments (between 5 to 10 lines each) on points of interest which you think will stimulate class discussion (N.B. NOT a Reflective Summary or Reading Notes). When called upon in class to share your observations, you must have something interesting to offer, or you will lose credit. A copy of the two comments is to be submitted via Avenue to Learn before the beginning of each class. (The comments are each graded as follows: 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = adequate, 2 = not of sufficient interest to stimulate discussion, 1 = not done; I will take your **8** best pairs of comments and divide by 2)      **(20%)**
- **Active attendance:** your participation in the course will be rated not only on number of classes attended, but also on your responses (+) or failures to respond (–) to requests for comments or reflections, and on the quality of your participation in class discussion. Failure to attend three or more classes without documented excuse will result in a 0 for attendance.      **(10%)**
- **Midterm exam:** 50 minutes in class exam consisting of multiple choices and open questions on the texts read so far. **(30%)**
- **A research paper** (about 3000-4000 words or 8-10 typed double-spaced pages), due via Avenue to Learn by 11.59 pm December the 15th      **(40%)**

Graduate students

- **Reflective comments on the readings:** For each week's required readings you are required to compose 2 *comments* (between 5 to 10 lines each) on points of interest which you think will stimulate class discussion (N.B. NOT a Reflective Summary or Reading Notes). When called upon in class to share your observations, you must have something interesting to offer, or you will lose credit. A copy of the two comments is to be submitted via email before the beginning of each class. (The comments are each graded as follows: 4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = adequate, 1 = not of sufficient interest to stimulate discussion, 0 = not done; I will take your **10** best pairs of comments and divide by 2) **(20%)**
- **Active attendance:** your participation in the course will be rated not only on number of classes attended, but also on your responses (+) or failures to respond (–) to requests for comments or reflections, and on the quality of your participation in class discussion. Failure to attend three or more classes without documented excuse will result in a 0 for attendance. **(10%)**
- **Midterm exam:** 50 minutes in class exam consisting of multiple choices and open questions on the texts read so far. **(30%)**
- **A research paper** (about 4000-5000 words or 12-14 typed double-spaced pages), due via Avenue to Learn by 11.59 pm, December the 15th **(40%)**

### Instructions for Submitting Written Assignments

- You will be asked to submit your comments and the final paper electronically, using the "Assignments" tool on Avenue. Folders will be there with labels and instructions.
- All written assignments should use **12-point font** and be double-spaced, with regular (1 inch) margins. Please number your pages and include a word count (excluding your bibliography).
- Please submit all files in one of two formats: MS Word or pdf.
- Assignments submitted on Avenue may be checked automatically by Turnitin.com to reveal plagiarism. If this check occurs, your work will be added to the Turnitin database. If you do not wish to have your work added to the Turnitin database, please send it to me as an e-mail attachment instead. No penalty will be assigned if you submit your work this way. To see the university's Turnitin.com policy, click [here](#).

### Policies on Late Work, Extensions and Accommodations

- Late written assignments (both critical reflections and essays) will be penalized at the rate of 4% for the first day or part day late, then 2% for each subsequent day or part day (this includes weekend days), up to a maximum penalty of 10% for essays up to one week late. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted, except where there are appropriately documented compassionate or medical grounds, or with explicit prior permission from me.
- I will be generous with short extensions (say, 2-3 days) for the final essays, so long as you make your request prior to the due date and provide some reason.
- I understand that students are sometimes unable to complete a piece of assessment on time (or at all) for legitimate medical or personal/compassionate reasons. If you find yourself in such a situation, please contact me as soon as possible to let me know. Once I have been made aware of the situation, I can grant an extension or take other steps to ensure you are not unduly penalized for the late or missed work. Note that in some cases supporting medical or other documentation may be required. All medical documentation should be directed to SGS, not to me.
- If you find yourself struggling in this course for any reason, don't hesitate to reach out.

### Additional Notes:

1. You will have the opportunity to evaluate my teaching, and the course as a whole, towards the end of the term.

2. E-mail policy: In accordance with university policy, you should use your own McMaster e-mail account for all e-mail correspondence with me. This protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. See below for the official language on this policy. (I won't really delete emails from non-McMaster email accounts, as it says there! But please do use your McMaster account all the same.)
3. Academic integrity policy: See below for the official language. Please acknowledge your sources, and generally avoid presenting the words, ideas or arguments of others as if they were your own. Don't copy material from websites without acknowledgement. I will be providing further guidance about using and citing sources in class and on the course website.

## *Please Note the Following Policies and Statements:*

### **Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

### **Courses with an On-Line Element**

Some courses use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **Online Proctoring**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lockdown their browser during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the exam begins.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

## **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) e-mail to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

## **Email correspondence policy**

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

## **Modification of course outlines**

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

## **Request for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

## **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in

which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.