

Syllabus

Books:

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.
David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*.
David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*.

Evaluation of Students:

The written work will consist of three papers:

Paper #1: Descartes's first three *Meditations* (4 pages long; worth 25% of the final grade).

Paper #2: topics from Hume's *Enquiry* (4 pages long; worth 25% of the final grade).

Paper #3: topics from Hume's *Dialogues* (6 pages long; worth 35% of the final grade).
(Prof. De Pierris should approve any other topic.)

Participation in class discussion (and attendance) will be worth 15% of the grade and will also settle borderline grades. No late papers.

Schedule

Weeks I-III: Descartes's skeptical arguments in the *First Meditation* concerning sensory knowledge and a priori knowledge. Descartes's "Cogito" (*Second Meditation*) and his proof of the existence of God (*Third Meditation*).

Required reading: Descartes, *First, Second, and Third Meditations*.

Week IV: Paper on Descartes due.

Weeks IV-V: Hume on the origin and association of ideas. Hume's philosophical skepticism concerning the belief in causation (induction, necessary connection, and laws of nature). Hume's skeptical solution to skepticism about the belief in causation.

Required reading: Hume's *Enquiry*, Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Week VI: Hume on miracles.

Required reading: Hume's *Enquiry*, Section 10.

Week VII: paper on Hume's *Enquiry* due.

Weeks VII-IX: Hume on arguments for the existence of God, the cognitive significance of religion, and related topics.

Required reading: Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*.

Recommended reading: Hume's *Enquiry*, Section 11.

Week X: Review of previous topics and class discussion of selected passages from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*.

Required reading: selections from *On Certainty* (to be assigned in class).

Week of Final Exams: Final Paper on Hume's *Dialogues* due (6 pages). (Prof. De Pierris should approve any other paper topic.)