

Leibniz and Early Modern Philosophy

Graduate Seminar

Course Description

This course is a detailed investigation of the philosophy of G.W. Leibniz. Leibniz sought to reconcile the best ideas of philosophical schools including Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Scholasticism, and the modern mechanical philosophy, and his thinking ranges over metaphysics, epistemology, natural philosophy, logic, mathematics, religion, history, and politics. This course reconstructs Leibniz's philosophy by tracing its development in concrete philosophical controversies on topics including substance, nature, matter, space-time, knowledge, God, and freedom. Further, it examines Leibniz's correspondence with contemporary female philosophers and his interest in the Chinese intellectual traditions to shed light on the wider context of Leibniz's philosophy

Learning Outcomes:

Understanding of core Leibnizian ideas and arguments as responding to wider intellectual and global contexts. Ability to conduct original research in the history of Early Modern Philosophy and the capacity to analyze ideas in the context of concrete philosophical controversies.

Required Texts:

Leibniz. 1982. *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Translated and Edited by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leibniz. 1985. *Theodicy*. Translated by E.M. Huggard. La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Leibniz. 1989. *Philosophical Essays*. Translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Leibniz. 1997. *Leibniz's 'New System' and Associated Contemporary Texts*. Edited by Roger S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks. Oxford: Clarendon.

Instructor will provide additional reading materials.

Recommended non-Leibniz Primary Literature:

Plato: *Timaeus, Phaedo*; Aristotle: *Physics II*; Descartes *Principia Philosophiae*

Spinoza. 1985. *The Collected Works of Spinoza Volume I*. Edited by Edwin Curley. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Recommended Secondary Literature:

Adams, Robert. 1994. *Leibniz: Determinist, Idealist, Theist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Antognazza, Maria Rosa. *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Arthur, Richard T.W. 2014. *Leibniz*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fichant, Michel. 2004. "L'Invention métaphysique." In *G.W. Leibniz: Discours de Métaphysique Suivi de Monadologie et Autres Textes*, edited by Michel Fichant, 7-140. Paris: Gallimard.

Garber, Daniel. *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Jorati, Julia. 2017. *Leibniz on Causation and Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lærke, Mogens. 2008. *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza: la genèse opposition complexe*. Paris: Éditions Honoré Champion.

McDonough, Jeffrey. 2013. "Leibniz's Conciliatory Account of Substance." *Philosopher's Imprint* 13, no. 6: 1–23.

Mercer, Christia. 2002. *Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Phemister, Pauline. 2005. *Leibniz and the Natural World: Activity, Passivity, and Corporeal Substances in Leibniz's Philosophy*. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.

Perkins, Franklin. 2004. *Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rutherford, Donald. 2005. *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. "Leibniz on Spontaneity." In *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*, edited by Donald Rutherford and J. A. Cover, 156–80. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Smith, Justin E. H. 2011. *Divine Machines Leibniz and the Sciences of Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schedule of Topics and Readings (Fifteen Weeks):

- [1] Historical Background I: The Platonic and Aristotelian Heritage
Selections from: Plato: *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*; Aristotle: *Physics II*,
- [2] Historical Background II: Descartes: Mechanism and Innovation
Descartes: selections from *Principia Philosophiae*; Leibniz:
- [3] The Growth of Knowledge: Leibniz's Universal Characteristic and General Science
Leibniz: selections from *Philosophical Essays*; selections from *The Art of Controversies*
- [4] Leibniz and Arnauld: Metaphysics, Logic, Freedom, and Necessity
Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics*, selections from *Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence*
- [5] Leibniz and Spinoza: A Complex Opposition
Spinoza: *Ethics I*; Leibniz: selections from *De Summa Rerum*, *Comments on Spinoza's Philosophy*
- [6] Leibniz's New System and Encounter with Pierre Bayle
Leibniz: *A New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances*; Pierre Bayle, Rorarius;
Leibniz: *Clarifications of the Difficulties which Mr. Bayle has found in the New System*
- [7] On Nature Itself: Leibniz against Occasionalism
Malebranche: selections from *Search After Truth*; Leibniz: *De Ipsa Natura*
- [8] Empiricism and Innate Ideas: Leibniz vs. Locke
Leibniz: selections from *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*
- [9] Women in Early Modern Philosophy: Leibniz, Sophie, and Sophie Charlotte
Selections from "Leibniz and the Two Sophies"; *What is Independent of Sense and Matter*
- [10] Souls and Organic Bodies: Leibniz and Georg Ernst Stahl.
Selections from *Leibniz-Stahl Correspondence*
- [11] The Best of all Possible Worlds: God's Justice in the *Essais de Théodicée*
Leibniz: selections from *Theodicy*
- [12] Leibniz and Malebranche on Chinese Philosophy and Religion
Malebranche: *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence and Nature of God*; Leibniz: *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese*
- [13] Physics and Philosophy: Leibniz and Newtonianism
Newton: *General Scholium*; Leibniz: *Against Barbaric Physics*; *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*
- [14] Leibniz's Final Metaphysics?
Leibniz: *Principles of Nature and Grace, Monadology*
- [15] Review and Concluding Remarks