

Time & Location:

Tuesdays & Thursdays
12:00-1:15 PM
CULC 262

Instructor:

Dr. Ruth Poproski
CULC 457
ruth.poproski@gatech.edu

Course Website:

<https://canvas.gatech.edu/>

Office Hours:

Thursdays, 3-5 PM
(or by appointment)*

*Announcements for changes to office hours will be posted in the Canvas announcements section; to make an appointment please first see my free-busy calendar at bit.ly/ruthscalendar; I will also be available via the Canvas "chat" feature during office hours.

Course Description:

During the 16th & 17th centuries, as the Scientific Revolution took root in the West, new questions arose about the origin and nature of knowledge, the nature of existence, and best ways to organize society. In this course we will study how thinkers of this "Modern Era" approached these questions, while simultaneously attempting to trace connections to our current lived experience. Philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Hume will be our teachers, as we seek to untangle how in the world we know anything at all. And perhaps also how we know that we know anything at all...

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of this semester you should be able to:

- articulate and critique the positions held by our selection of modern era philosophers, on the key issues they discuss;
- assess the contributions of modern era thought to a variety of trends in contemporary practice and thought;
- apply insights from modern era discussions to contemporary debates and phenomena;
- formulate (at least a sketch of) your own theories of knowledge and existence.

Grading Criteria:

Item	Portion of Grade	Due Date
Attendance & Participation	15%	N/A
Homework Assignments	30%	Beginning of each class (ongoing)
Paper	20%	Thursday, Feb. 8 th , 11:59 PM
Final Project Proposal	5%	Thursday, March 15 th , 11:59 PM
Final Project	30%	Thursday, April 19 th , 12 noon

**All work should be submitted as a digital copy through Canvas

Assignment Details:**Attendance & Participation (15%):**

Since in-class discussion is an important part of the learning experience in this course, you are expected to attend and actively participate in class on a regular basis. However, in order to accommodate your schedule and life, you are welcome to miss up to three classes during the semester. If you foresee the need to miss more than three classes during the semester, please discuss your conflicts with me by the end of the second week of classes, so that we can develop an alternative plan for your completion of the course requirements.

There is in general no need to provide me with documentation related to your absences from class. However, if you miss more than three classes during the semester and wish to have an exception made regarding your attendance and participation grade (e.g., you were ill or faced some other personal emergency), you will need to provide documentation for *all* of your absences, to show that each was in fact worthy of an exception.

Attendance will be taken during class, and you will earn points according to the following scale:

2 points	attended class and showed signs of engagement (e.g. taking notes, participating in discussion, etc.)
1 point	attended class but was disengaged, or missed 20+ minutes
0 points	did not attend class, or missed 20+ minutes of class time & was disengaged (e.g. sleeping, reading, doing other work, etc.)

At the end of the semester your Attendance & Participation grade will reflect your average points earned across all classes (allowing for three absences). You are welcome to ask about your Attendance & Participation grade at any point during the semester, and I will aim to provide you with a mid-semester update to help keep you on track.

Reading & Reflection Assignments (30%):

These exercises are meant to assist you in your preparation for in-class discussion each day, to help you interpret and understand the reading you are doing, and to help you synthesize the overall narrative in the course. They are also designed to give you some practice presenting your own ideas, thoughtfully and clearly. Prior to each class you will have an assigned reading (Tuesdays) or an assigned set of reading+watching (Thursdays), and you will turn in responses to homework questions associated with that reading and/or watching.

You will earn grades based on clarity, sophistication of thought, and how well your answers reflect the fact that you have thoughtfully read and/or watched the assigned material. For more information about how your assignments will be graded, see the "Sidenotes" section of any homework assignment, where I've included a link to my rubric. Please also feel free to ask any time you are not sure how to proceed.

Paper (20%):

For this 4-5 page paper you will be asked to discuss the importance of critical thinking, bringing in specific material read and discussed during the first several weeks in the course. You will earn grades based on the clarity and organization of your paper, the quality of your exposition and evaluation of primary sources, and your presentation of

connections to contemporary phenomena. More details will be distributed in class and via Canvas.

Final Project (35%):

In your final assignment for this course you may choose to write a 5-7 page final paper, or design an alternative form of assessment, according to your own interests, training, and strengths. In either case you will be required to submit a proposal for your project, worth 5% of your course grade. You will also be given the opportunity to submit a draft of your final project, if you would like feedback on it before final submission. The final submission for your final project is worth 30% of your course grade.

Final Grade: Your final grade will appear as a letter grade according to the following scale:

90-100%	A	70-79%	C	0-59%	F
80-89 %	B	60-69%	D		

Text & Readings:

Fortunately for us, there are some great (and legal!) sources of Modern Era texts available online. As a result, no textbook needs to be purchased for this course. All assigned reading can be accessed alongside the assignment prompt for each homework assignment.

Note that if you are interested in further reading there are several good anthologies available. In addition, most of our readings come from larger bodies of work, and each of those is typically available as a stand-alone book you can read.

If you would like suggestions for a future reading list, please do not hesitate to ask!

Other Course Materials:

In this class we will be using TurningPoint Clickers as an aid to discussion. Happily, Georgia Tech has a site licence for Clickers, so you can use the app for free. If you would prefer not to use the app, you will need to purchase a physical clicker device in order to participate in this portion of our class discussion. Please see <http://www.ctl.gatech.edu/it/clicker/student> for more information, and stay tuned to Canvas for an upcoming announcement about getting your device ready for clickers use.

Course Policies:

I, like many at Georgia Tech, believe it is important to continually strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between myself and my students. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22> for an articulation of some basic expectations that you can have of me, and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. In other words, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech, while in this class, and I will strive to do the same.

Our Communication Outside of Class

Announcements: In general, announcements related to this course will be posted in Canvas and communicated verbally in class. In cases where announcements are urgent or especially important, I will also use Canvas to send you an e-mail.

Email: You are welcome to contact me via email (ruth.poproski@gatech.edu). In general I will aim to reply to you within one business day, but often it will be much quicker than that. Note, however, that I generally attempt to keep my “work” day to M-F, 9 AM – 5 PM. Emails received outside of that time will often not be responded to until I return to my office the following weekday.

Office Hours & Canvas Chat: I have set aside time in my schedule each week to make sure you have the opportunity to discuss course-related items with me outside of class. If you cannot come to my office hours, please look at my free-busy schedule (found at <http://bit.ly/ruthscalendar>) and message me with a suggested time to meet.

In addition, there is a “Chat” feature in Canvas that may be of some use to us. During my Office Hours I will turn that feature on, and you should be able to chat with me through that interface without coming to my office. Note that if someone comes to my office while we are chatting I will need to give priority to the in-person visitor. Note also that this is an experiment: Canvas is new to all of us, so we’ll just have to find out together how well the Chat feature works!

Your Presence in Class

Accommodations for Learning Needs: If you have learning needs that require some adaptations for you to succeed in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/> as soon as possible: the staff in that office are well-equipped to identify your particular needs for this class, and I am happy to arrange to accommodate your learning needs based on their recommendations. Please also feel free to discuss your needs with me after class, during my office hours, or via e-mail.

Attendance: Since in-class discussion is an important part of the learning experience in this course, you are expected to attend and actively participate in class on a regular basis. However, in order to accommodate your schedule and life, you are welcome to miss up to three classes during the semester. If you foresee the need to miss more than three classes during the semester, please discuss your conflicts with me by the end of the second week of classes, so that we can develop an alternative plan for your completion of the course requirements.

Class Discussion: You are encouraged to share personal experiences and opinions with respect to the topics covered in this class. However, please keep in mind that our purpose in this class is to think critically about the issues. In an environment of mutual respect we should be able to engage in well-rounded and constructive discussion that is beneficial to all of us.

Food: You are welcome to eat your lunch during class, but please clean up after yourself, and try to bring things that won’t distract you or others from participation and engagement during class.

Mobile Devices: In general I prefer that you leave your mobile devices (including laptops and cell phones) turned off and in a non-distracting position. However, there are two exceptions to this rule:

- Since we are using TurningPoint Clickers in class, you are welcome to access that from the mobile device of your choosing. What I ask is that you be respectful of the rest of the class by setting your device aside (e.g., closing laptop lid, turning cell phone over) when you are not responding to a clickers question.
- If you prefer to use a mobile device for taking notes, please discuss it with me first. I'll definitely say yes, but first I'm going to remind you how much harder it is to pay attention when you have the entire internet at your fingertips, and how it will be up to you to keep yourself and your neighbours on track.

Your Academic Work

Academic Integrity: tl;dr Don't cheat, steal ideas, or copy stuff. And cite your sources.

Honesty and transparency are important features of good scholarship. On the flip side, plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behaviour in this course, I will follow Georgia Tech guidelines and report the incident to the Office of Student Integrity – after which an appropriate penalty will be assessed. For more information about your rights and responsibilities under Georgia Tech's Honour Code, please visit <http://osi.gatech.edu/>.

In this class you are welcome to discuss your ideas with others, and to make use of campus resources like the Center for Academic Success and the Communication Center to assist you in your pursuit of academic excellence. However, please note that your work should be your own: consider taking a half hour break after discussing ideas with others, in order to avoid simply regurgitating someone else's thoughts as if they belong to you.

If you have questions about my integration of the university's policy into this course, please do not hesitate to ask: my aim is to foster an environment where you can learn and grow, while ensuring that the work we all do is honest and fair.

Assignment Re-Grading: If you have a concern about a grade on an assignment, or would like more feedback than you have received, please return your graded assignment to me within two class periods, along with a written explanation of your question(s)/concern(s) – aiming to articulate your thoughts respectfully and as clearly as you can. I will take another look at your assignment, and will make every effort to respond within one week of receipt, to address your concerns.

Late Assignments: Your paper is due at 11:59 PM on its due date, and your final project is due at 12 noon (beginning of class). These items may be turned in after the deadline, but you will be eligible to earn fewer points once the deadline has passed: you will only be able to earn 95% of the total grade if it is submitted within 3 hours of the deadline, and you will lose an additional 10% from the original total for every 12 hour period it is late thereafter (e.g., if you turn your paper in at 3:05 AM it will earn max 85% of the total available). Work that is more than 3 days late will earn a grade of 0.

Late homework assignments will not be accepted, because the point of these assignments is to prepare you for class, and your engagement with the material will have matured and changed by the time the submission deadline has passed. However, in my

experience there are always a few “accidents” that lead to completed assignments not being turned in properly and on time (e.g., accidentally sleep in and miss the deadline; forget to confirm submission; etc.). If this happens to you, please email your completed assignment to me the moment you realize what happened, and explain your situation. In these extreme cases I will – as a one-time exception – grade your late assignment and provide feedback, along with an unfortunate ten percent deduction to the grade you have earned on that assignment. Note that this exception is available to each student once, and additional late assignments will not earn credit.

Note also that extensions will not generally be permitted, but if you think you are subject to an exceptional circumstance, please discuss it with me outside of class (and as soon as possible). Your physical, mental, and emotional health is important to me, and I am happy to provide some flexibility when illness and/or personal emergencies arise.

Use of Outside Resources: I recommend that you do *not* use outside resources for your work in this class. They are often poorly chosen, and they have a tendency to lead good students astray. Notably, Wikipedia tends to be a bad source for interpretation of philosophical thought. In addition, your papers and reading assignments will be graded (in part & to varying degrees) on the basis of *your* ability to develop *your* ideas, so I recommend focussing your efforts on that endeavour instead.

That said, please be sure to cite all outside sources that you use. If you really must, here are 3 good online resources for you to utilize if you find you need them:

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

If you plan to make use of alternative resources for a project or paper, I recommend discussing them with me first, so that I can advise you and help you make good choices.

See next page for Course Schedule

PHIL 3103: Schedule of Classes & Readings

See Canvas for all homework and assignment information, including reading materials.

	Date	Topic & Items Due	Reading Schedule
T	9-Jan	Welcome & Introductions	
Part I: Scientific Reasoning & How We Think About the World			
Th	11-Jan	Barriers to the Discovery of Truth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Francis Bacon, <i>New Organon</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
T	16-Jan	A Method for Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> René Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	18-Jan	Propaganda and Fake News	HW due @ 12 noon
T	23-Jan	Foundations for Our Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	25-Jan	Robots & AI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper assignment discussed in class 	HW due @ 12 noon
T	30-Jan	Non-Empirical Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immanuel Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	1-Feb	What can we know? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical Positivism 	HW due @ 12 noon
Part II: The Nature of Existing Things (and our interaction with them)			
T	6-Feb	What is stuff made of? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galileo Galilei, <i>The Assayer</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	8-Feb	What is the source of sensation?	Paper due @ 11:59 PM
T	13-Feb	Empiricism: Knowledge by Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	15-Feb	Personal Identity: What makes a thing what that thing is?	HW due @ 12 noon
T	20-Feb	Alternate Universes and Necessary Truths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gottfried Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon

Th	22-Feb	The Problem of Evil	HW due @ 12 noon
T	27-Feb	Idealism: Our Ideas are the Source of Existing Things <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Berkeley, <i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i> • Final project assignment discussed in class 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	1-Mar	The Superiority (or lack thereof) of Humans to Animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Singer & Speciesism 	HW due @ 12 noon
Part III: Life with Other Humans			
T	6-Mar	A Machiavellian Way of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niccolo Machiavelli, <i>Discourses</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	8-Mar	Instructor Scheduling Conflict (no class, no homework)	
T	13-Mar	The Social Contract: Agreeing to Live in Peace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	15-Mar	War & Refugees	HW due @ 12 noon Project Proposal due @ 11:59 PM
T	20-Mar	Spring Break (no class)	
Th	22-Mar	Spring Break (no class)	
T	27-Mar	What it Means to be Free <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	29-Mar	Citizenship	HW due @ 12 noon
T	3-Apr	Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	5-Apr	Forming the Perfect Society	No homework due 😊
T	10-Apr	Patriotism & Protest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algernon Sidney, <i>Discourses on Government</i> 	HW due @ 12 noon
Th	12-Apr	Protest & Political Dissent	HW due @ 12 noon
T	17-Apr	Final Discussion & Wrap-Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring device to complete CIOS 	No homework due 😊
Th	19-Apr	Final Project Expo	Final project due @ 12 noon

T	24-Apr	Final Instructional Day (no class; no homework)
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