Where to find information about this course: all course information including the syllabus, assignments, and any additional announcements or changes to the schedule will be posted on the Blackboard site for this course. You should also check your GMU email regularly for class announcements.

COURSE SYLLABUS

This course examines philosophical questions surrounding the modern philosophical subject, self or ego. Through readings from philosophy, psychology, literature and film we will ask what it means to be human, what we mean when we say ‘I’ about ourselves and what role the world and society play in this. A close reading of Descartes’ Meditations establishes the foundation for thinking about the modern subject. Readings from Locke explore the role of memory and consciousness in thinking the self. We look at Freud in order to problematize the traditional readings of the self and consciousness while introducing new ways to think about the self. Not only does Freud introduce us to the body as a crucial element in understanding the self, his work also introduces us to questions of sexuality and gender that are absent from the prior accounts. Freud will also introduce the idea of civilization into the discussion. The films Memento and Suture as well as Kafka’s novella Metamorphosis present puzzles for thinking about identity and the role of others. We close the semester with a close reading of The Passion According to G.H. and ask what it means to be alive.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND READING

There are FIVE texts you are expected to acquire for the course:

Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald Cress, Hackett, 1993
- Other editions of this text exist but it is essential that you get the Cress translation


NB: e-books are not acceptable for scholarly work unless they include page numbers for reference purposes.

In addition, there are two texts posted on Blackboard as pdf (please download and print these --- see below):

- Freud, S. “The Infantile Genital Organization” & “Medusa’s Head”
- Locke, J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (selections from Book II)
There are also two films that are required viewing for the course. You will be responsible for downloading, streaming or purchasing the physical copy for:


I may post additional short texts to Blackboard as the semester progresses.

**Readings on BB:** Beginning in Week Four we will be using texts printed from Blackboard. Unless you have copies of the original source material (i.e. books), you will be responsible for printing off each of the readings listed above so that you have a paper copy to work with in class.

**Please note: this is a course requirement.** We will be doing close work with the texts both in class and for assignments. In addition, *all laptops, phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class time*, so you must have a paper copy of each class reading with you.

A proportion of your participation grade will be attached to producing your own portfolio of readings (see section on participation below). Checklists for the portfolio will be distributed at the first class.

**Course Reading Expectations**
The schedule of readings is given below. I will expect you to have done the set reading before the relevant class. This means reading through the set text or texts at least once; going back and re-reading either the whole text, or the passages that seem especially important/difficult/puzzling/interesting to you; and writing down your thoughts and questions on the text (I recommend keeping a notebook just for your reading notes for this course that you can bring to class, as a reminder of what you want to ask or comment on).

- If you don’t have questions, you’re not reading properly! If you do the reading in advance, you will get a lot more out of classes, because you will have a lot more to put in.

**Questions and Problems:**
If you have a question about the course, or a problem with a class or assignment, please do one or more of the following:

- ask in class (often others will have the same question/concern, so this will help everyone)
- email me with a question or query: kbrandho@gmu.edu
- come and see me in my open office hours or email me for an appointment

I will respond to emails as soon as I reasonably can, though as a general rule I will not answer emails in the late evening or between Saturday morning and Sunday evening. This means you need to plan ahead – *please don’t leave questions about assignments or reading until the last minute!*

**COURSEWORK AND GRADING**

Basic breakdown:

1. Attendance: 0%
2. Participation: 5%
3. Memento Quiz 5%
4. Lispector Quiz 5%
5. Descartes and Freud Worksheets 10% each
6. Two Response Papers: 15% each
7. Mid Term Exam

8. Final Exam:

1) Attendance:

There are no points for showing up. However, showing up has value for all other aspects of assessment and you should not expect to do well on the course if you miss classes. **In addition, points can be lost for not showing up:** we only have 28 class meetings on the material of the course; every absence after the second will result in a 10% penalty in the participation grade. Hence 12 absences would result in a 100% reduction of the participation grade. Regarding the penalty, extenuating circumstances will be considered in line with University policies but cannot make up for the effect that an absence has in understanding the material.

2) Participation:

Class discussion is an essential feature of the course and I will regularly invite participation. Please come prepared to discuss the material as assigned and be ready to take part in classroom activities. This means both reading and thinking about the texts in advance of the class meeting. Participation is distinct from both presence and mere talk. There may be short reading quizzes from time to time and I will be using Blackboard to set reading/discussion questions each week. You will be expected to participate in these Blackboard discussions: post a serious and meaningful comment for at least 8 of the 14 weeks to receive participation points.

**Portfolio of readings:** as noted above, from Week 4 onwards you are responsible for printing off the set readings for the class when appropriate (all readings will be available on BB). A checklist of the required readings will be provided in class 1. As having a paper copy of the text to work with in class is essential, 2 points of your of your participation grade will be dependent on producing your own portfolio of course readings. Once you have printed off the readings for the course, you should ask another member of the class to check your portfolio is complete, sign off the check list for you, and hand it to me. **This must be completed by the end of class on Wednesday February 7th (week 3).**

3) Memento Quiz:

There will be a quiz to accompany the film *Memento*. This will be comprised of a take home and an in class component.

4) Lispector Quiz

There will be a short quiz on the final day of discussion for Lispector.

5) Descartes & Freud Worksheets:

There will be two take-home worksheets on the texts of Descartes and Freud. These will be 5 or 6 short answer questions. Answers are expected to be text based.

6) Response Papers:

During the course of the semester 2 response paper topics will be assigned (see course outline below for dates) The responses will be essays of 3-4 typed pages and will involve no more than 25% summary of the assigned text: analysis, evaluation and critical explication are expected (this is an occasion for you to demonstrate thought as well as understanding). These assignments will have firm due dates and no responses will normally be accepted late without specific extenuating circumstances --- please contact me if you are not able to meet the deadline. **NB: I will answer content and formal questions about these papers in advance of the due date but under normal circumstances I will not read drafts for these papers --- this is a matter of volume and fairness; I may, however, propose to you as an individual that you should submit a draft. My office hours (see above) are a good time to meet to discuss your ideas and pose questions.**
7) Mid Term Exam:

At the conclusion of our classes on Locke, there will be a take-home Mid Term exam. This will be assigned on Wednesday the 21st of February and will be due on FRIDAY the 23rd of February.

8) Final Exam

The Final Exam will be held during the normal exam period and will cover material from the whole course. Further information about the format of the exam will be available later in the semester.

*) Plagiarism

This is a major violation of trust and academic integrity. Do not present others’ work as your own. Passive Plagiarism (failing to cite sources) is as bad as Active Plagiarism (downloading an essay off the internet). For acceptable citation models, see Purdue University Online Writing Lab (Purdue OWL), “Research and Citation”: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/.

Also, work submitted for this course must be uniquely created for this course. If I suspect plagiarism I will inform you and the university administration in writing. NB: I reserve the right to conduct an oral examination on any piece of work.

The Honor Code: "All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review."

Submitting Written Work
All written assignments must be submitted on the Blackboard site for this course by the relevant deadline (see course schedule below). There will be a clearly marked section on Blackboard for each assignment.

One paper copy must also be handed in at class or to the course essay box in the Philosophy Office (Robinson B 465) during office hours (9am-4pm, weekdays). The paper copy should normally be handed in by 4pm on the day of the deadline.

Please note:
- The date of submission will be taken from when you upload the work on Blackboard. If there is a system problem that means you can’t upload the work, email me and let me know.

- Once a paper copy is submitted, you can expect feedback/comments and notice of your grade. For paper copies submitted on the due date, I make every effort to mark and return this work within 2 weeks. Paper copies submitted after the due date but before the end of the semester go to the end of the grading queue (note that I have 4 classes this semester) and will be returned as soon as possible. If no paper copy is submitted by the end of the semester a grade will still be entered but you will not get feedback/comments on your work.

Extensions can be arranged in exceptional circumstances if you have a good reason for submitting work late but you must let me know (by email is fine). Extensions cannot be given beyond the last day of the exam period. Whenever possible it is much better to try to arrange an extension with me in advance. This will make things less stressful for all concerned: you will be able to plan your assignments more effectively; I will be able to plan my grading and give better (less rushed) feedback.

Commitment to Diversity
In keeping with the general ethos of the University, this class seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across differences. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age
and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

NB This does not mean not being critical: respecting others’ views means taking them seriously, and taking them seriously means thinking about their strengths and weaknesses, asking questions, and offering constructive criticisms or alternative viewpoints where appropriate. It also means thinking about where the views of others challenge our own, and being open to what they have to teach us. Valuing diversity is not just an attitude – it is a matter of developing an active practice. Amongst other things, this practice involves:

- learning to listen to other perspectives;
- being open to criticism of one’s own views;
- being willing to evaluate different positions while being unsure where one stands;
- having good reasons for one’s views, but being willing to change one’s mind;
- not rushing to judgment;
- basing critical comments or questions on as good an understanding of another person (or text or theory) as one can manage;
- and being willing to accept that there will always be things one cannot see or understand;
- learning to express criticisms and differences of opinion in ways that are not personal or hurtful and that leave space for other voices.

Never be afraid to ask a question or to risk saying something that might be wrong – that is how we learn. But equally, never be afraid to listen to the questions and answers of others, and to let their views challenge and change how you think.

**Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination, and we are committed to a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202 Sexual Harassment and Misconduct (http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/) speaks to the specifics of our process, our resources, and the options available to you.

Confidential student resources are available on campus at the Student Support and Advocacy Center (http://ssac.gmu.edu/), Counseling and Psychological Services (http://caps.gmu.edu/), and Student Health Services (http://shs.gmu.edu/).

All other members of the University community (including faculty, except those noted above) are **not** considered confidential resources and are **required** to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator. For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact Dr. Jennifer Hammat, Title IX Coordinator, at http://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix, at 703-993-8730, or in the Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics office in the Aquia Building, Suite 373.
COURSE OUTLINE
NB: The reading schedule is subject to change

WEEK ONE
Reading: Course Syllabus
Descartes, Meditation One

Jan 22: INTRODUCTION
Jan 24: The Method of Doubt

WEEK TWO
Reading: Descartes, Meditation Two

Jan 29: The Cogito
Jan 31: Substance

WEEK THREE
Reading: Descartes, Meditations Three & Four

Feb 5: God
Feb 7: Descartes: Will

Descartes Worksheet Assigned

WEEK FOUR
Reading: Locke, Locke BK II, Ch. i & xxiii (pdf)

Feb 12: Locke: Ideas

Descartes Worksheet Due

Feb 14: Substance

WEEK FIVE
Reading: Locke, Locke BK II, Ch. xxvii (pdf)

Feb 19: Identity
Feb 21: Personal Identity

Mid Term Exam Assigned

Feb 23: Mid Term Exam Due

WEEK SIX
Reading: Memento (to be viewed prior to class)

Feb 26: Memento

Film Quiz

Feb 28: Memento and Identity
WEEK SEVEN
Reading: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Ch. I-II

Mar 5: The Unconscious

Mar 7: The Id and the Ego

SPRING BREAK

WEEK EIGHT
Reading: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Ch. III
Freud, “Infantile Genital Organization & Medusa’s Head” (pdf)

Mar 19: The Super Ego

Mar 21: The Body, Sexuality and Gender
Freud Worksheet Assigned

WEEK NINE
Reading: Kafka. *The Metamorphosis*

Mar 26: Becoming an Insect
Freud Worksheet Due

Mar 28: Being a human

WEEK TEN
Reading: *Suture* (to be viewed prior to class)

Apr 2: Transformation

Apr 4: Implicating the Viewer
Response Paper 1 Assigned

WEEK ELEVEN
Reading: Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (pp. 23-101)

Apr 9: Civilization and the problem of Happiness

Apr 11: Love, sex and civilization
Response Paper 1 Due

WEEK TWELVE
Reading: Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (pp. 103-149)
Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (pp. 3-43)

Apr 16: *Love and Death*
Response Paper 2 Assigned

Apr 18: *The Passion According to G.H.*
WEEK THIRTEEN
Reading: Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (pp. 45-139)

Apr 23: *The Passion According to G.H.*

Apr 25: *The Passion According to G.H.*
   Response Paper 2 Due

WEEK FOURTEEN
Reading: Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (pp. 141-189)

Apr 30: *The Passion According to G.H.*
   Lispector Quiz

May 2: Review

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday May 9th