

Phil320x

University of Southern California
 School of Philosophy
 Fall 2010

PHILOSOPHY 320
HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: MODERN PERIOD

12-1:15 MW, SOS B44

Instructor: Dallas Willard

Office hours: 5:30-7 PM MW and by appointment

The aim of this course is to aid the student in understanding the main currents of philosophical thought leading up to **the now generally accepted contemporary outlook on reality, knowledge, truth and moral values. By that we mean the outlook that is assumed by the general character of our secularized public institutions and social life.** Our discussions range from René Descartes to Friedrich Nietzsche (1600-1900), but most of our time will be spent working through texts from Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, and Nietzsche. We begin with the attempt to replace the Medieval system of Authority with a method that will allow individuals to arrive at truth about reality, and we conclude with that attempt long abandoned, and replaced with efforts to explain why we represent the world and the self the way we do and why we form the beliefs about them that we actually have.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Descartes, René, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, translated by Donald Cress, Hackett Publishing Company, 4th edition.

Cahn, Steven M., Classics of Western Philosophy, 7th edition, Hackett.

Jones, W. T., A History of Western Philosophy: Hobbes to Hume, 2nd edition, Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1980.

Jones, W. T., A History of Western Philosophy: Kant and the Nineteenth Century, 2nd edition, revised, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books (Random House), 1989.

Humanist Manifesto I & II, edited by Paul Kurtz, Prometheus Books.

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FORMAL REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance on lectures, on time, prepared to discuss topics and passages assigned for the day.

One mid-term as designated below and a two-hour final, both on questions selected by the instructor from pre-announced lists.

Four short papers as indicated below, and

An occasional one-page “*précis*” on a few pages of text.

Activated beepers and telephones are not permitted in class, thank you!

Pleeeeeeeze!

Use of laptops or other electronic devices permitted *only* for taking notes on *the lecture in progress*.

If you come in late or leave class early, please be as unobtrusive as possible. E.g., Sit near the door or where you will have to clamber over or interrupt as few people as possible.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

I

INSTITUTIONAL RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY FAILS. DOUBT AND ITS LIMITS.

THE REDISCOVERY OF THE MIND.

THE TRIUMPHS AND EXCESSES OF “REASON”

Aug. 23, Lecture 1: The work of philosophy, philosophy and life, the ‘map’ that is in your mind, philosophy and reason, the ‘visible’ world and beyond, the uses of history of philosophy

The rise of the “new knowledge” and its effects on tradition, Luther’s innovation, remarks on Montaigne’s response, and Descartes’ response by comparison. The idea of method and methodology.

Corresponding readings:

Jones, A History of Western Philosophy: Hobbes to Hume, read as much as you can as soon as you can of Chapters 1-3, but especially xvii-13, 34-40, 54-66, 68, 74-76, 88-94, and 114-117. Look at the attached “Study Guide” to Montaigne’s Apology for Raymond Sebond to get the drift of that book. (If you wish to obtain the book: study especially pp. 1-15 and the two “objections against Sebond” stated in these pages, then study pp. 121-164.)

Aug. 25, Lecture 2: Descartes on method, the use of “doubt” (not really doubt), and the end of doubt at the thinking self. Cogito ergo sum. The self: center of gravity in Modern Philosophy, and the accompanying curse.

Assigned reading:

Descartes, Discourse on Method, pp. 1-44.

Cahn, Classics of Western Philosophy, pp. 484-496b

Jones, Hobbes to Hume, chapter 5

Descartes, Meditations, pp. 51-63. <Please note that you have two different translations of Descartes' Meditations, one in Cahn pp. 484ff. Please read them comparatively, paragraph by paragraph, and note the differences in how the points are worded.

Aug. 30, Lecture 3: Descartes on what is "in" the mind, the nature of "ideas," the piece-of-wax argument (Cahn 494c-496b). The mind is better known (even without "images" of it) than physical objects are. The three kinds of "idea," the idea of God, "objective" and "subjective" ("formal") reality. (498c-500) "Innate" ideas of self and God. (502c) Representation/belief in "things outside of me," including God.

At class, hand in précis on Cahn pp. 490-492b**Assigned reading:**

Jones, chapter 5 continued

Descartes' Meditations, pp. 63-81.

Cahn, pp. 492c-503a

Sept. 6, No Class (Labor Day)

Sept. 1, Lecture 4: Why God must exist, and what kind of God. Where falsity comes from. "Clear and distinct" ideas. The threat of a "Cartesian Circle." Science itself must be secured by God and knowledge of God. (How Theology is still "Queen of the Sciences" for Descartes.)

Assigned reading:

Jones, chapter 5 continued.

Descartes, Meditations, pp. 81-92.

Cahn, pp. 503-509.

First short paper due Sept. 13 at class:

TOPIC: How does Descartes (he thinks) know that trees, etc.—in general, physical objects or the material world of nature—exist? (5-6 double spaced pages)

Sept. 8, Lecture 5: That material objects exist and can, after all, be known to exist. The difference between the mind and the body. The "real distinction." The immortality of the soul. Why perceptual error and illusions are **not** a reproach to God's ("my Maker's) goodness and perfection. The "Theodicy" project. "I wasn't dreaming after all!"

Assigned reading:

Descartes, Meditations, pp. 92-103.
Cahn, pp. 509d-516.

Sept. 13, Lecture 6: From Descartes to Leibniz—The meaning of “Rationalism.” Illustrated in Spinoza’s thought. (More Geometrico) The ‘logic’ of relations and identity drives to MONISM. Or to the denial that relations are “real.” (Leibniz’s “Monads”) A look at Spinoza’s “deductions” and his “necessary truths.” Compare St. Thomas’ method <see Cahn, pp.442ff>.

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE AT CLASS TODAY

Assigned reading:

Jones, Hobbes to Hume, pp. 193-208
Cahn, pp. 549-555

Sept. 15, Lecture 7: Spinoza’s “ethics.” Why **ethics**? Rationalism on the good person and the good life. Substance in Spinoza and in Leibniz. Leibniz’s “Monadology. Why no possibility of interaction between substances (Monads). “Pre-established harmony.” Models of mind-body relationship or correlations. (R. Taylor’s diagrams, handout.)

Assigned reading:

Jones, pp. 210-218
Cahn, pp. 591-595 (Spinoza) and 596-619 (Leibniz)
Jones, pp. 319ff, Chapter 7 (On Leibniz)

II

“REASON” NOW TO BE CHASTENED BY “EXPERIENCE,”
AS SENSE PERCEPTION

Sept. 20, Lecture 8: The meaning of “*Empiricism*.” John Locke’s philosophical and practical concerns. The “historical, plain method” and the “new way of ideas.” Innate ideas totally rejected. Why. On ‘ideas’ in general and their main types. Ideas of sensation.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Hobbes to Hume, chapter 8.
Cahn, pp. 627-640.

Sept. 22, Lecture 9: Locke on primary and secondary qualities. Ideas of “reflection.” Complex ideas (of sensation and reflection), and especially that of Power. The meaning of liberty and freedom in Locke.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 8 continued.

Cahn, pp. 637-652.

Second short paper, due Oct. 4 at class:

TOPIC: The relationship of an “idea” to its mind (the mind “containing” it) and to its object, according to John Locke.

Sept. 27, Lecture 10: Locke on substance, identity, the identity of man. Spiritual substance. The human self and its prospects (rather glum) under Empiricism.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 8 continued.

Cahn, pp. 653-662a.

Sept. 29, Lecture 11: Locke on words and essences. The problem of Universals or abstract entities. How “general words” are “made.” “Abstract” ideas. Essences and substances. “Nominal” essence. No idea of “real” essences in anything.

Assigned reading:

Cahn, pp. 662-679b.

Oct. 4, Lecture 12: Locke on the nature of knowledge. The extent of knowledge. Knowledge of existence, of God, and of other finite beings.

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE AT CLASS

Assigned reading:

Cahn, pp. 679c-697

Oct. 6, Lecture 13: Locke’s ethical views and his views on personal property. God in Locke and Berkeley. Berkeley’s attack on skepticism. His basic argument (Cahn 716d-720) that properties of physical things cannot exist independently of a mind perceiving them. The impossibility of “abstract” ideas. “Spirit” is the only substance.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 9 (Berkeley)

Cahn, pp. 715-742b.

Do your 2nd précis, on Cahn pp. 716d-719b, due at class on Oct. 18.

Oct. 11, Lecture 14: “To be is to be perceived.” The difference between the existing and the non-existing in Berkeley. God and the laws of nature. Leaving everything “exactly as it is.” Berkeley’s claim that his Idealism (all is mental/spiritual) does not change anything in the physical world. Foundations of all-pervasive subjectivism and “constructionism.” Nietzsche to Derrida.

Assigned reading:

Cahn, pp. 698-701b & 708b-714, 742b-760

Jones, From Hobbes to Hume, Chapter 10, pp. 296ff.

Mid-term exam on October 13th.

III

UNITY, IDENTITY AND KNOWLEDGE LOST IN 'IDEAS' AND 'FEELINGS'

Oct. 18, Lecture 15: David Hume—thought by many today to have been the greatest of Modern philosophers. Why? Hume as quintessential “Post-Modernist.” Atomistic ‘ideas’ and ‘feelings’ make the identities or ordinary objects of common sense and science impossible, or at least impossible to have *knowledge* of. Hume’s hopes for philosophy. Philosophy compared to Astronomy or Physics. Hume’s theory of “ideas” and “perceptions.” Our knowledge (?) of causes or “powers.”

Assigned reading:

Jones, Hobbes to Hume, Chapter 10.
Cahn, pp. 761-784b

Oct. 20, Lecture 16: Hume on custom (habit) and necessary connections. The nature of belief as a passion or feeling. The difference between existence and non-existence. Reason in animals. Miracles.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 10, continued
Cahn pp. 784c-822a

Oct. 25, Lecture 17: Identity and personal identity: The identity of a person through time. Moral distinctions.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 10, continued
Cahn pp. 829-838 & 846-855.

Third short paper due Nov. 8 at class:

TOPIC: The difference between Locke and Hume on how ideas work, especially with reference to the mind that “has” the idea and to the ideas’ object.

Nov. 1, Lecture 18: Review and glance forward. The significance of Hume’s philosophy in the context of modern and post-modern thought. The “collapse of confidence.” The emphasis in Jones, Kant and the Nineteenth Century, “Introduction,” and Chapter One, especially pp. 9-13.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Kant and the Nineteenth Century, pp. xix-43.

IV

KANT AND THE RETURN TO UNITY AND KNOWLEDGE BEYOND SENSATION THE MIND REDISCOVERED (YET AGAIN!)

Nov. 3, Lecture 19: The re-introduction of the “transcendental” by Kant (compare to Descartes). The “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy. Aposteriori/apriori, and synthetic/analytic, the new theory of “categories.”

Assigned reading:

Jones, Kant and the Nineteenth Century, Chapter 2, pp. 14ff.
Cahn, pp. 903-927

Nov. 8, Lecture 20: Kant and “transcendental logic.” “Synthesis” as a condition of the possibility of knowledge. The Kantian refutation of psychological Idealism. (Cahn, pp. 979-980)

THIRD SHORT PAPER DUE TODAY

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 2 continued.
Cahn, pp. 941-945 & 958d-978.

Nov. 10, Lecture 21: “Transcendental Logic” as doorway to philosophical chaos—or profundity? The excesses of “reason” in Post-Kantian philosophy and in classical rationalism (Spinoza, Leibniz). Can philosophy live with Humean type restrictions on the “synthetic apriori”? Fichte’s reaction: The will and ego over all.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 3.

V

PHILOSOPHICAL ‘EXCESSES’ UNLEASHED BY KANT’S SOLUTION TO HUME’S IMPASS— ROMANTICISMS AND POST-KANTIAN IDEALISMS

Nov. 15, Lecture 22: Schelling’s amazing Rationalism and Hegel’s basic insight, “dialectic” (from Plato to Kant to Hegel to Marx). Reason after Kant. The re-interpretation of religion in Hegel and Fichte, etc. The emergence of “history” and process into philosophical significance. Historical structures and “logic.” Schopenhauer’s ahistoricism and pessimism. Glance ahead to Nietzsche.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Kant and the Nineteenth Century, Chapter 4.
Cahn, 1021-1037.

VI

ANTI-METAPHYSICAL REACTIONS TO KANT AND POST-KANTIAN IDEALISTS. MATERIALISMS, POSITIVISMS (COMTE, MACH) AND IRRATIONALISMS, ESPECIALLY NIETZSCHE.

Nov. 17, Lecture 23: Comtean Positivism, Mill, Mach, German Materialism (Feuerbach, Marx, Buchner, Haeckel). Significance of Darwin. The idea of “scientific philosophy” emerges, continuing to this day. The essential limits of “scientific knowledge” Du Bois-Reymond and the world puzzles that are beyond science.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 5.

Du Bois-Reymond (handout)

Nov. 22, Lecture 24: Anti-science and irrationalist tendencies. Kierkegaard. Nietzsche. Existentialism, continuing up to today.

Assigned reading:

Jones, Chapter 6

Cahn, pp. 1048-1055.

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, pp. 9-76

Topic for fourth paper given today, due at final exam.

Nov. 24, Lecture 25: Nietzsche: Main Themes. The meaning of “The Death of God.” Secularism as a historical outcome and a present reality.

Assigned reading:

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

Cahn, pp. 1098-1114

Nov. 29, Lecture 26: The triumph of Nietzsche. Pragmatism, alongside Existentialisms and Positivisms: a concession of failure of the Modern project of attaining knowledge of a real world. Pragmatism as the flight to language as the absolute from which self and the world arise. Why flight to language fails.—It to is in the “world.” Where we now stand. The Revenge of Authority—Remember where we started the course? Humanism the reigning philosophical outlook at the beginning of the 21st Century.

Assigned reading:

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil continued.

Jones, Chapter 7.

Cahn, pp. 1137-1160 (Wm. James)

Dec. 1, Lecture 27: Can Humanism Survive in an Existentialist/Constructionist World? Is Secularism a guide adequate to human existence. Secularism and the problems of authority and knowledge. Public policy issues. Overview of the “Modern” argument.

Assigned reading:

Humanist Manifestoes I and II

Final exam review session, Dec. 6, time and place to be determined.

Final exam, Fri. Dec. 10, 11-1 PM
Fourth paper due at the final.

Phil. 320
Dallas Willard

Features that characterize the intellectual context of the rise of Modern Philosophy around 1600:

1. The failure of authority as a basis of life and outlook:

The Christian Church/Ecclesiastical Institutions

Class authority (political/social)

2. The discovery of the mechanisms of the body, and of an “inside” to the human being.

Andreas Vesalius (1514-1546)

Founds science of human anatomy:

Tabulae anatomicae sex (1538)

De humani corporis fabrica (1543)

William Harvey (1578-1657)

Circulation of blood

Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis
in animalibus (1628)

3. The emergence of the ‘enclosed’ mind.

4. The problem of mind/body interaction focused

By ‘locating’ the mind and ‘deadening’ (Galileo) matter.

5. Knowledge structure specified

Generates the problem of foundations for knowledge.

I. e., What are the truths from which all else can
be established?

Scepticism takes it modern, philosophical form.

Quest for indubitable datum.

6. Emergence of "the problem of the external world."---

Kant said that the scandal of Modern Philosophy was
its inability to prove the existence of the external world.

7. The antithesis or opposition of ‘reason’ and ‘experience’

8. The loss of unity to empiricism

Substance

Universal (Platonic ‘forms’)

9. The loss of the self or ‘soul’ to empiricism

10. The emerging primacy of the Individual: NOMINALISM

Religion: Faith and conscience in Protestantism

Authority and the individual and the Bible

Politics: Consent and Contractarianism (Hobbes/Locke)

Economics: the primacy of self-interest

See Jones, Hist. of Western Philosophy, III, p. 66 on
the new model modern man.

11. The later re-emergence of the 'transcendental' or non-individual,
especially in Kant through Derrida.

'Custom,' habit, authority say the final word.(?)

"Society" constructing and constructed.

Guide to the argument in An Apology for Raymond Sebond

by Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), the Screech translation, Penguin Books, 1993

1. Montaigne's concern is with the stabilization of belief as a foundation of Life. This is one of the deepest human needs.

He believes that the traditional Catholic faith is the best belief system that we can have, and that it is supernaturally assisted in those open to it.

But it can be destabilized, and Luther (1483-1546) had set afoot forces that would lead to atheism in the masses. (p. 2)

The cause is reliance on individual judgment.

2. Sebond's book, Natural Theology, undertakes "to show by human, natural reasons the truth of all the articles of the Christian religion." (p. 3) Montaigne thinks he did the best possible job of this. --- Though, as he notes, the essence of the thought may have come from St. Thomas Aquinas.

3. Montaigne attempts to defend Sebond's book against two charges:

I. "Christians do themselves wrong by wishing to support their belief with human reasons: belief is grasped only by faith and by private inspiration from God's grace." (p. 3-11)

His answer is in two parts:

1. There must indeed be more to faith than reason. (3-4)
2. But we must use all our abilities to good ends, and in particular our capacities to reason to aid faith in whatever way possible.

Especially when we see how weakly faith is affecting our lives.

The ideal relation of faith and reason, & its effect.(10-11)

II. "His (Sebond's) arguments are weak and unsuited to what he wants to demonstrate." (p. 11)

The ones who make this objection, says Montaigne, must be dealt with more roughly, since they are both more dangerous and more malicious.

Montaigne's method is to crush the presumption of unaided human ability to know: "to trample down human pride and arrogance, crushing them under our feet,...wrenching from their grasp the sickly arms of human reason, making them bow their heads and bite the dust before the authority and awe of the Divine Majesty, to whom alone belong knowledge and wisdom...."(p. 12)

He will demonstrate that it is not in man "to arrive at any certainty by argument and reflection." (p. 12-13)

He, supposedly, shows tht the human is no higher than animals. pp. 13ff

So called "learning" or knowledge is vain. pp. 53ff

It does not bring happiness. pp. 53-81

The true wisdom of the Pyrrhonians. pp. 70-74

Claims about the god's are ridiculous. pp. 81-113, 104

Claims about human nature are also hopeless. See 113-114 and 140.

General conclusion on "learning," p. 141-142.

Practical advice based on that conclusion:

Moderation in making changes. p. 142

No "natural laws." pp. 161-163

Authority of law based on custom. 164-168

Manifold relativism. pp. 167-168

Gives rises to follies of divination. 168

The senses cannot save knowledge. pp. 170ff

Everything is in transition, flux. 186-190

Except, of course, **God!**

Phil. 320
Fall 2010

SECOND SHORT PAPER TOPIC

Evaluate Locke's account of how his "ideas" are related to the mind, on the one hand, and to their (the ideas') object, on the other. Describe a particular case—e.g. the 'idea' of an apple. You will need to start by giving his account of what the idea is and of what its properties are. Are there any serious problems with his account? What are they? (Just two.) Explain.

Due Oct. 11 at class. Note change of due date.

Review Questions for Final Exam in Phil. 320, Fall 1993

You will be asked to write for 30 minutes on each of four questions from six of the following to be selected at exam time. No more than two of the six will be from #1 below.

1. Any of the questions on the mid-term review sheet.
2. Discuss the role of CUSTOM or HABIT in Hume's philosophy (Cahn pp. 802-810) and explain why this might be regarded as a reductio ad absurdum of Empiricism.
3. How, according to Hume, do we "form the idea of power or necessary connexion" (Cahn p. 820) and what bearing does this have on the role of experience in the formation of our beliefs? (p. 801, 817) And in "The Reason of Animals"? (p. 835)
4. Explain the emergence of transcendentalism as a response to Hume's "dead end" in the context of Western thought in the modern period. (See mainly your class notes)
5. How does Kant utilize "the <transcendental> conditions of the possibility of knowledge" to secure synthetic apriori truths about the space/time/causal world of ordinary sense perception?
(Jones, notes <remember the `box'>, and Cahn pp. 942-946, 952, 955-960, 964)
6. Explain Hegelian "dialectic," especially in contrast to Kant's "dialectic" and to ordinary linear logic. (Notes and Jones)
7. Explain the "Vocation of Man," according to Fichte, and explain how his philosophy is a version of transcendentalism.
8. Explain the "this (sense-perceptible) world is reality" reaction to transcendentalism, and use the philosophy of Mill, Comte or Marx to illustrate it. (Jones)
9. Fit Kierkegaard and Nietzsche into the anti-transcendentalist reaction. (Jones)
10. How would you explain the overall movement of modern philosophy (Authority, Reason.....) and how do you see where we stand today in relation to it?

The emphasis in your answers should be on exposition, but a few words of sightful criticism here and there will be much appreciated.

Philosophy 320
Spring 2010

FINAL PAPER TOPIC

What does Nietzsche mean by “Beyond Good and Evil”? How does his view involve “Constructionism”? Give and evaluate his reasons for thinking that there is a “beyond good and evil.”

The papers are due at the final exam. December 10, 11-1PM

Please do not email them except in case of extreme emergency. An extreme emergency is not: “I just didn’t get it done on time.” If you wish to turn papers in early, leave them in my box in 113 MHP

Phil. 320
Fall 2010

REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FINAL EXAM

1. Explain the role of knowledge in human life, and the three sources of knowledge discussed in the opening sessions of the course. Why does method become so important for people around Descartes' time? Explain "method." (Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, and W. T. Jones, *Hobbes to Hume*, pp. 155-160.)
2. Descartes' *Meditations* attempts to secure knowledge of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul against a rising tide of skepticism. State and explain what you take to be the two main weaknesses in his line of thought.
3. Descartes and Locke agree that we have no *sense image* of substance. But they take off in exactly opposite directions from this point of agreement. Explain how they do that and state, with your reasons, which one you believe to have a more adequate account of *substance*.
4. Explain Locke's account of secondary *qualities* and secondary *ideas*. Explain what you take to be its weakest or most troublesome point.
5. Berkeley argues for the view that "sensible things" only exist in the mind, and that, with reference to apples, chairs, etc. "to be is to be perceived." State the main stages of his argument for this view and one serious problem with that argument.
6. Hume asks: "What is the nature of that evidence which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact beyond the present testimony of our senses or the records of our memory?" (Cahn 771b) Explain how he goes about answering this question and where he comes out.
7. Kant tries to answer Hume by advancing his account of synthetic *a priori* propositions or judgments. Explain his view of "the conditions of the possibility of knowledge" and how it "solves" Hume's problem of causation. What do you think Hume would reply to Kant?
8. Explain what "Transcendentalism" is, and especially how it is a response to the outcome of Empiricism. Compare and contrast the versions of it given by Kant and by Hegel. What does Hegel's "dialectic" accomplish that Kant's "transcendental logic" does not?
9. Concisely outline the "naturalistic" or anti-transcendentalist reaction to transcendentalism in Kant and following.
10. Discuss "Constructionism" as a response to problems with knowledge of the world and the human self. Why would anyone adopt Constructionism? How is Hume a

Constructionist. Kant? Nietzsche? Can any sense ultimately be made of “constructing” an object or a person?

10. Explain Thomas Reid’s analysis of the fundamental error in Modern Philosophy, and how “Apperception” responds to “Constructionism.”

Review session Dec. 6, 10-11AM, MHP 105

Final exam: Fri. Dec. 10, 11AM-1PM.

Phil. 320
Spring 2008

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Constructionist. Kant? Nietzsche? Can any sense ultimately be made of “constructing” an object or a person?

10. What do you take to be the most important lesson to be learned from the study of Modern Philosophy, Descartes to Nietzsche?

Review session 12-2PM on Fri. the 9th of May. (Last paper due at noon)

Final exam: Monday May 12, 2-4 PM