

## University of London BA Philosophy Course Schedule 2001-2

Course: History of Modern Philosophy from Bacon and Descartes to Kant.

Convenor: J. R. Milton Intended audience: 2nd and 3rd Year Undergraduates

### **Aims of Course:**

The Modern Philosophy course contributes to the general aims and objectives of the Philosophy Department by enabling students to develop a critical understanding of the metaphysical and epistemological views of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant.

### **Objectives:**

Students will study for this course by means of tutorials, independent study and intercollegiate lectures. Students completing the course will:

- (a) Through attention to the primary texts come to a basic understanding of the thought and arguments of some of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant, and to have made a detailed study of at least two of these thinkers.
- (b) Acquire an appreciation of how the problems under discussion were motivated for these thinkers, and will have considered the question of which of these problems remain alive in the contemporary world.
- (c) Acquire an ability to relate the questions discussed to the work of philosophers studied on other papers.
- (d) Have been encouraged to read with great care and reflect upon some difficult texts, as well as introductory and secondary material, and to give some attention to questions of interpretation.
- (e) Answer questions in Finals on both rationalist and empiricist thinkers.

### **Number of Lectures: 20**

This is a compulsory course, and second- and third year undergraduates are expected to attend the lectures in both years. It is presumed that students will already have attended college-based lectures on this subject during their first year. Students are also recommended to attend the lectures given on the Critique of Pure Reason for the optional paper on Kant.

### **Semester 1**

Lecturer J. R. Milton (8 weeks)

Topic: Locke

The Essay concerning Human Understanding and Locke's philosophical project. The attack on innate principles and its consequences. Ideas and empiricism. The corpuscularian philosophy and the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Difficulties about substance. Personal identity, and identity in general. Universals, particulars and abstract general ideas. Real and nominal essences. The limits of human knowledge.

Lecturer: Tim Crane (2 weeks, continuing next semester)

Topic: Leibniz

The principles underlying Leibniz's metaphysics. The proofs of the existence of God. The necessity that there be simple substances. The character of simple substances. The relation between simple substances, complex substances and phenomena. How Leibniz accounts for contingency. The sense and proof of the claim that the actual world is the best world possible.

## **Semester 2**

Lecturer: Tim Crane (5 weeks, continuing from first semester)

Topic: Leibniz (topics as above)

Lecturer: Janice Thomas (5 weeks, continuing from first semester)

Topic: Berkeley

Berkeley's philosophical writings. The attack on the notion of material substance, and the case for idealism/immaterialism. The likeness principle. Ideas and spirits: *Esse est percipi aut percipere*. Causation and the laws of nature. The role of God in Berkeley's system.