

NEGLECTED VOICES OF EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY
PHIL 400

COURSE
DESCRIPTION

Standard surveys of early modern philosophy omit many worthy voices. Moral philosophers, women, and scholastics tend to be sidelined, to take three disparate examples. In this course we will read some of their underappreciated texts. Part of the goal is to help correct a distorted picture of early modern philosophical activity. But mainly we will simply focus on engaging philosophically with some fascinating texts that we happen not to read often. That is, we will read authors such as Mary Astell or Arnold Geulincx just as we would read Descartes or Leibniz. Along the way, we will occasionally pause to consider questions about who makes it into the canon and why, what the advantages and disadvantages of a clearly delineated canon are, and so forth.

Exact readings will be determined in part by the interests of course participants, though I will ensure exposure to a diversity of texts. Readings will come from the following texts (though I may consider other suggestions, if there are any):

- Mary Astell and John Norris. *Letters Concerning the Love of God*.
- Lady Anne Conway. *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*.
- Claude Frassen. *Scotus Academicus*, tract. 4, disp. 1–2 (on natural law and obligation).
- Arnold Geulincx. *Ethics*.
- ———. *Metaphysics*.
- Augustín de Herrera. ‘On Moral Necessity in General’.
- William King. *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*.
- Lady Damaris Masham. *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God*.
- Samuel Pufendorf. *On the Duty of Man and Citizen according to Natural Law*.
- Francisco Suárez. *On Real Relation*.

Prerequisites: If you have not already taken a couple of philosophy courses, you should talk to me before enrolling in this course. Having previously taken a standard introduction to early modern philosophy will help you get the most out of this course, but it is not a requirement.

READINGS

To be determined.

COURSE
REQUIREMENTS

Weekly preparation: All seminar participants are expected to have read the assigned readings for the week carefully and critically and to come to seminar prepared to contribute pertinent questions and critical comments on the readings.

Reading responses: These 2–3 page papers should identify one of the main claims being made in a reading, succinctly spell out the reason or reasons the author has for making the claim, and provide a brief critical response. You will be expected to submit six reading responses over the course of the semester. You will be free to choose which weeks to do so.

Short paper: A 5–8 page paper on an assigned topic. Due the 8th week.

Term paper: A longer paper (10–15 pages) in two drafts on a topic chosen by the student and approved by me. The first draft is due the 13th week; the final by the end of term. Your grade will be based not only on the quality of the final draft, but also on the first draft and on how well you address my comments on the first draft.

GRADING	Class attendance and participation — 15%
	Reading responses — 25%
	Short paper — 25%
	Term paper — 35%
SCHEDULE	To be determined.