

**PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:**

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen Organisation page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

**You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.**

**COURSE CO-ORDINATOR/COURSE TEAM**

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Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key institutional policies which have been made available within MyAberdeen (<https://abdn.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/Policies>). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and how seriously the University takes your feedback.

These institutional policies should be read in conjunction with this course guide, in which School specific policies are detailed. Further information can be found on the [University's Infohub webpage](#) or by visiting the Infohub.

## **TIMETABLE**

Students will attend two one-hour lectures and one one-hour tutorial per week. Lectures begin in week 1. Tutorials begin in week 2.

*Students can view their university timetable at*

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php>

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How does the human mind relate to the world? This course introduces two major systems of thought from the history of philosophy that take different approaches to answering this question. Students will first learn about 17th century rationalism by focusing on Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Through reading this text, students will learn about Descartes' rationalist approach to knowledge and reality, including his method of doubt, his doctrine of the separation of mind and body, and his argument for the existence of God. We will then turn to David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* as a key text of 18th century empiricism. Students will learn how Hume criticized rationalism and turned to experience to provide a foundation for knowledge. We will look at Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas, the problem of induction, his account of causality, and his naturalism about the mind. Throughout the course we will critically

compare and examine Descartes' and Hume's texts and arguments by drawing on their readers and critics.

We also work on developing the skills of reading philosophical texts and writing philosophy essays. While especially useful for students on Philosophy degrees, these skills are beneficial for students in all disciplines.

### **COURSE AIMS**

- To introduce key philosophical questions about experience, knowledge, and reality
- To introduce students to the texts and arguments of historical and/or contemporary rationalist and empiricist philosophers
- To develop students' skills of reading and engaging critically with primary texts
- To develop students' skills of reasoning, argumentation, and debate
- To develop students' philosophical essay writing skills

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Students will have acquired knowledge of central topics in historical and/or contemporary variants of rationalism and empiricism and of key philosophical questions about experience, knowledge, and reality
- Students will understand the main ideas of the philosophers studied, and will be able to explain the major differences between their philosophies
- Students will have critically engaged with primary texts
- Students will have articulated the results of their learning clearly and systematically in written form and discussion

### **LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME**

The table below indicates the topics and readings to be covered each week.

Full details of the texts are listed under "Texts to buy" below.

**A detailed course timetable will be provided on MyAberdeen.**

Week	Topic	Required Reading
1	Introduction	Descartes: Preface
2	Being doubtful	Descartes: First Meditation and selected Objections and Replies
3	Thinking and the existence of the mind	Descartes: Second Meditation
4	Thinking and the existence of God	Descartes: Third Meditation and selected Objections and Replies
5	Thinking truly and erroneously; thinking about material things	Descartes: Fourth and Fifth Meditations
6	Thinking and the existence of material things	Descartes: Sixth Meditation, and selections from the Correspondence with Princess Elisabeth
7	The empiricist account of ideas	Hume: Sections I, II, and III
8	Causality and inductive inference	Hume: Section IV
9	Following custom and forming beliefs	Hume: Sections V, VI, and VII
10	Naturalism and scepticism	Hume: Sections IX and XII
11	Experience, intuition, reason, and bias	Selections from Kahnemann, <i>Thinking Fast and Slow</i>

### TEXTS TO BUY

Students are expected to have done the week's required reading in advance and to bring the text to every tutorial. **You should therefore buy your own copies of the two main course texts.** Please buy these editions so we all follow the same pagination.

Blackwell's bookshop on campus sells these two texts as a "bundle", which will save you money. They will also price-match if you find comparable books listed cheaper elsewhere.

- Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, with selections from the Objections and Replies, edited by John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford World Classics edition), edited by Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

For the writing skills component of the course, you are strongly advised to buy the following book, which will be useful throughout your time at university:

- Bryan Greetham, *How to Write Better Essays* (Palgrave Study Skills series) (London: Palgrave, 2013)

## **SECONDARY READING**

A list of suggested secondary reading will be provided on MyAberdeen. Students may find it helpful to get one or both of the following introductory guides. These are designed to be read alongside the main course texts listed above (they are not a replacement for reading the main texts!):

- Kurt Brandhorst, *Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy: an Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
- Angela Coventry, *Hume: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2007).

## **ASSESSMENT**

First attempt: Two 1500 word essays (50% each)

Resit: One 1500 word essay (100%) completed during the resit period

In addition, students will be required to complete non-assessed formative assignments for tutorials.

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to **MyAberdeen- Organisations- Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates**.

The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.

**PLEASE NOTE: In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.**

If you submit your work on time, you can expect that feedback will **normally be provided within three working weeks** (excluding vacation periods) of the submission deadline.

## **ESSAYS**

Essay topics will be provided on MyAberdeen.

Essays should be approximately 1500 words long and must be double-spaced. The word count includes footnotes but excludes bibliography.

Students will be penalised for essays that are too short or too long by 20% or more.

## **ASSESSMENT DEADLINES**

**Essay 1 deadline:** Tuesday 16 October (week 6), 3:00 PM

**Essay 2 deadline:** Tuesday 27 November (week 12), 3:00 PM

## **SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS**

Submit a .doc or .docx file and include the word count.

Submit by the due date through [MyAberdeen](#). No hard copy will be required unless directly requested by the course coordinator.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student id number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 PHxxxx Essay 1.

When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. 59999999 PHxxxx Essay 1. To help us comply with our anonymous marking policy, please remove any immediately identifying information (e.g. your name) from your work.

**Please note: failure to submit by the due date (unless a prior arrangement has been made) will result in a deduction of marks. Where no submission is received, this will result in a mark of zero.**

**Please note: *Safeassign* text matching software will be used, however the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy reserves the right to also submit material to *TurnitinUK* when deemed necessary.**