

**Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus**

Course Code: HUMA 3900
Course Title: Philosophical Inquiry into the Modern World
Course Offered in: Spring 2018
Course Instructor: Dr. Nahum Brown
Class Schedule: Tuesdays, 13:30- 16:20 PM
Classroom: 2504, lift 25-26
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00- 12:00 (by appointment)
Office: 3334
Email: hmnahumbrown@ust.hk

1. Course Description:

This course focuses on the role that subjectivity has played in the emergence of the Modern world. One of the most important differences between the Ancient Greek worldview and the Modern worldview comes from a Modern preoccupation with the tensions between subjectivity and objective reality. Is experience a reliable source of knowledge? Do things exist objectively beyond the consciousness that perceives things? Or is the mind the basis for all of reality? This course traces these specifically Modern questions about subjectivity back to Descartes' *Meditations* and then explores some of the most significant breakthroughs in the debate: from Pre-Kantian arguments about realism and idealism with Locke and Berkeley to the problem of induction in Hume, from the Copernican turn with Kant's transcendental idealism to the phenomenological turn with Husserl's intentionality, and finally to critiques of idealism in the contemporary work of speculative realism.

*This syllabus may go through modifications during the semester so please look for further versions on Canvas.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs): Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1	Discuss the problem of subjectivity in Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant
2	Explain criticisms of Modern Philosophy from Phenomenology and Speculative Realism
3	Develop argumentation and reasoning skills

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4	Develop clear writing and clear thinking skills
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3. Course Outline:

Class	Date	
1	Feb 6	Course Introduction; Plato's Allegory of the Cave
2	Feb 13	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (chapters 1-3)
3	Feb 20	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (chapters 4-6)
4	Feb 27	Locke, <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
5	Mar 6	Berkeley, <i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> ; In-class Quiz
6	Mar 13	Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>
7	Mar 20	Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> ; Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
8	Mar 27	Midterm Exam
10	Apr 3	Holiday
11	Apr 10	Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
12	Apr 17	Moran, <i>Introduction to Phenomenology</i> ; Sartre's "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology"
13	Apr 24	Meillassoux, <i>After Finitude</i> (Chapter 1)
14	May 1	Holiday

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15	May 8	Final Exam
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4. Requirements

Students are expected to read each week's assigned text carefully and in advance. There will be a number of group exercises that combine with class lectures.

5. Readings:

Descartes, *Meditations*

Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*

Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*

*All course material will be available online.

6. Assignments:

Attendance:	14%
In-class Quiz	12%
Midterm Exam:	37%
Final Exam:	37%

7. Attendance and Lateness Policy

Students are expected to attend classes regularly and on time. Attendance will be checked only at the beginning of class. Missing one or more classes makes it increasingly difficult to keep up with the material. Attendance and punctuality will affect your grade (cf. course evaluation). As a general rule, there will not be any make-up exams or quizzes. In severe and justified cases, a make-up exam might be offered, which will be at least as difficult as the original exam.

8. Academic Honesty

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Plagiarism and cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in immediate failure of the assignment or exam. I also reserve the right to take further appropriate steps, including consultation of the dean, with the possibility of expulsion from the University.