Phil 5210.69451: Descartes Seminar  
Syllabus and Daily Schedule  
Fall, 2020

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**Description:** This seminar will cover the main writings of Descartes (including several not published in his lifetime) in chronological order from his earliest musings c.a. 1618-19 through the *Passions of the Soul* written the year before his death in 1650. Special emphasis will be placed on attempting to determine whether there are continuing themes recurring throughout his lifetime, and how both earlier and later writings relate (or not) to the more familiar philosophical positions provided in the *Meditations* and the *Discourse on Method*. We will be more concerned than most seminars on Descartes with the historical context in which he lived, thought, and wrote, as well as with his science. We will, however, present and discuss several standard (and some non-standard) interpretations of parts of the *Meditations*, since it is this work that receives most philosophical attention.

**Requirements:** Students are expected to attend regularly, to have read the relevant materials before they are covered in class, and to participate in class discussions. Failure to perform these expected functions will be reflected in their grade. Barring problems here,…the grades will be determined on the basis of two assignments.

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| August | 17 | Intro, Early Writings  
CSM I, 2 - 5 |
| | 24 | Rules 1 – 11  
CSM I, 9 - 39 |
| | 31 | Rules 12-14  
CSM I, 39 - 65 |
| September | 14 | Treatise on Light; Treatise on Man  
CSM I, 81 - 108 |
| | 21 | Discourse on Method  
CSM I, 111 - 151 |
| | 28 | Finish Discourse; Discussion  
(Paper Topics due) |
| October | 05 | Meditation I  
CSM II, 12 - 15 |
| | 12 | Meditation II  
CSM II, 16 - 23 |
| | 19 | Meditation III  
CSM II, 24 - 36 |

a) A Midterm Examination… distributed after the 1st 3 *Meditations are covered…… 35% of the final grade*

b) Term Paper…dealing with any topic relating to Descartes… *Topics approved by 10/10*: Paper due during Finals Week.

c) Term Paper…dealing with any topic relating to Descartes… *Topics approved by 10/10*: Paper due during Finals Week.

................................. 65% of the final grade

August 17 Intro, Early Writings CSM I, 2 - 5
24 Rules 1 – 11 CSM I, 9 - 39
31 Rules 12-14 CSM I, 39 - 65

September 14 Treatise on Light; Treatise on Man CSM I, 81 - 108
21 Discourse on Method CSM I, 111 - 151
28 Finish Discourse; Discussion (Paper Topics due)

October 05 Meditation I CSM II, 12 - 15
12 Meditation II CSM II, 16 - 23
19 Meditation III CSM II, 24 - 36
26  Finish Med. III, Med. IV… CSM II, 37 – 43

(Midterm Distributed)

November  02  Meditation IV; Med V CSM II, 44 - 49

(Midterm Due)

November  09  Meditation V; Med. VI CSM II, 50 - 62

16  Med VI; Objections & Replies. CSM II: 75-76; 96-105; 110-113;
    121-124;159-162; 269-271; 294-300

23rd – 27th  HOLIDAYS

30th  Letters to Elizabeth (CANVAS); Passions of the Soul,
    CSM I, 328-348; 362-365; 381-382; 384-85; 403-404

Papers due by 4:00 pm, Friday December 11th