

Professor Kara Richardson Email: kricha03@syr.edu Office hours: by appointment	PHI 617 Proseminar in the History of Philosophy Fall 2025 Tuesdays 2 - 4:30
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Welcome to PHI 617 Proseminar in the History of Philosophy

Catalog Course Description

Analysis of arguments and concepts in the history of philosophy. At least two major philosophical problems, as examined in the works of at least three major philosophers. Writing-intensive.

Additional Course Description

In Fall 2025, we will focus on Aristotelian powers and their reception in Early Modern philosophy and, to a lesser extent, in contemporary philosophy. Topics will include potentiality; causation; the powers of the soul; mind-body dualism; knowledge of powers; and the role of powers in the sciences. Primary text authors will include Aristotle, Avicenna, Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, and Hume.

Course learning objectives:

- Ability to analyze concepts and arguments in the history of philosophy
- Ability to describe and utilize various approaches to interpreting philosophical texts and arguments (e.g., close reading, contextualism and rational reconstruction).
- Ability to describe and utilize the principle of charity in the interpretation of philosophical texts and arguments
- Ability to engage in constructive philosophical discussion

Evaluation:

1. Reading questions (20%) Due one hour prior to the class for which the reading is assigned. * See Blackboard for readings, questions and submission portal.
2. Short papers (2 X 10%) 2-3 pp. * Identify a problem or tension in a primary text and attempt to resolve it. * Topics to be pre-approved by KR.
3. Seminar presentations (2 X 10%) * 20 – 30 min. presentation of key claims from a secondary text.
4. Longer paper (30%) 10-12 pp. * Topics to be pre-approved by KR.
5. Peer-review exercise (10 %) * 1-2 pp. * Constructive feedback on draft of peer's longer paper.

Conduct:

Use of electronic devices of any kind during class is NOT permitted except for class purposes, e.g., note-taking or viewing course readings.

Schedule (subject to change)

All readings are posted on Blackboard. Do not use alternative translations of the primary texts.

Aug. 26	Readings: Aristotle, Physics 1.8-9; II.1-3, De anima II.1-3, Metaphysics I.1-2; IV.2 (1003a33-b18)
Sept. 2	Readings:

	Aristotle, Metaphysics IX.1, IX.6 (in Aristotle, Metaphysics Theta, trans. Makin); Marmodoro
Sept. 9	Readings: Aristotle, Metaphysics IX.2 (in Makin, trans.); commentaries by Makin and/or Beere
Sept. 16	Readings: Aristotle, Metaphysics IX.5 (in Makin, trans.); commentaries by Makin and/or Beere
Sept. 23	Readings: Avicenna's Flying Man; Benevich and Adamson on the Flying Man Descartes, The World, ch.1-2
Sept. 30	Descartes, Meditations I, II and V (AT 63 only)
Oct. 7	Descartes, Meditation VI (AT 72-78); Bennett sec. 29 only
Oct. 21	Malebranche, The Search After Truth 6.2.2-3; McDonough 6.1-2
Oct. 28	Leibniz, Monadology 1-18; A New System of Nature; McDonough 6.3-4
Nov. 4	Hume, Enquiry sec. VII; Lolordo
Nov. 11	McKittrick on powers in contemporary philosophy
Nov. 18	Aristotle, Metaphysics IX.3; Witt; Cartwright and Pemberton

Students with disabilities/special needs

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit [Center for Disability Resources](#). Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

Academic integrity

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr.edu, selecting, "Academic Integrity," and "Expectations and Policy." Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

All generative-AI tools are prohibited in this course because their use inhibits achievement of the course learning objectives. This policy applies to all stages of project and writing processes including researching, brainstorming, outlining, organizing, and polishing. Do not use Generative-AI tools to create any content (i.e., images and video, audio, text, code, etc.). If you have any questions about a feature and whether it is considered Generative-AI, ask your instructor.