





Teacher(s)	Maeschalck Marc ;Schmutz Jacob ;
Language :	French
Place of the course	Louvain-la-Neuve
Prerequisites	The course assumes a basic background in the history of philosophy, especially ancient and medieval. Ability to read texts in French and English.
Main themes	<p>The History of Modern Philosophy course will seek to deepen the knowledge of one or more authors or currents of the period concerned, starting from a given theme or corpus.</p> <p>The course will pay particular attention to understanding the reasons why European philosophers have called themselves "modern" since the 16th century, and will question this claim to novelty both in relation to past European philosophical systems and to non-European cultures in this period of "great discoveries" and nascent globalisation. The course will pay particular attention to the genesis of the chosen topic and, based on an updated state of research, will attempt to shed light on this topic and to advance the questions related to it.</p> <p>The historical scope of the course is from the 16th to the early 19th century and may include both canonical authors and representatives of an alternative canon, focusing on traditions neglected by mainstream historiography: scholastic traditions, regional traditions, the contribution of women to modern philosophy, or problems specific to interculturality (e.g., the dialogue initiated with non-European traditions in modernity, Chinese philosophy in particular).</p> <p>The systematic field will not be restrictive, since the course may focus simultaneously or alternatively on problems of theoretical philosophy or practical philosophy. Particular attention will be paid to research tools and translation issues.</p>
Learning outcomes	<p><b>At the end of this learning unit, the student is able to :</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 read, understand, and comment on texts from the period in question;</li> <li>2 identify the historical textual sources of a specific philosophical problem and understand the intellectual relationships between authors;</li> <li>3 evaluate the relevance of a historical argument for our thinking today;d'évaluer la pertinence d'un argument historique pour notre réflexion aujourd'hui ;</li> <li>4 critically and reflectively question the constitution of major historical canons such as "rationalism," "empiricism," "Enlightenment philosophy," "German idealism," etc.;</li> <li>5 use specific research tools for modern philosophy (dictionaries, directories, major journals);</li> <li>6 be attentive to the problems posed by the translation of philosophical texts;</li> <li>7 write well-structured papers with clearly defined themes, with a view to writing a master's thesis.</li> </ol>
Content	<p>The 2025–2026 course will be taught by Prof. Jacob Schmutz</p> <p><b>The Debate about Determinism in the Seventeenth Century</b></p> <p>Spinoza offered a famous metaphor for human belief in freedom: we are like a stone thrown into the air, which 'while it continues to move, knows and thinks that it is making every effort to continue moving' (<i>Letter to Schuller</i>, 1667). However, the modern age has often been presented as the age of the victory of self-determination and free will, of which nascent liberalism would be the accomplished political form (for instance J.B. Schneewind, <i>The Invention of Autonomy</i>, Cambridge University Press 1998). In this seminar, we would like to propose the opposite hypothesis</p>

	<p>and take a serious look at all the modern enemies of free will and the belief in human autonomy. These can be found among religious authors – anti-humanist Lutherans and Calvinists, anti-Jesuit Dominicans and Jansenists – as well as among proponents of the new philosophy, such as Hobbes and Spinoza, as opposed to Descartes. We will examine the relevance of their position in relation to contemporary debates in the philosophy of action, particularly in the wake of Harry Frankfurt's famous studies ('Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', 1971) and other reflections on social and psychological determinism.</p> <p>An anthology of texts in English translation will be provided to students. Knowledge of English and/or Latin is an advantage.</p>
Faculty or entity in charge	EFIL

<b>Programmes containing this learning unit (UE)</b>				
Program title	Acronym	Credits	Prerequisite	Learning outcomes
Master [120] in Ancient and Modern Languages and Literatures	<a href="#">LAFR2M</a>	5		
Master [60] in Philosophy	<a href="#">FILO2M1</a>	5		
Master [120] in Philosophy	<a href="#">FILO2M</a>	5		
Certificat universitaire en philosophie (approfondissement)	<a href="#">FILA9CE</a>	5		
Master [120] of Education, Section 4 : Philosophy and Citizenship	<a href="#">FILO2M4</a>	5		