The Descartes Seminar will focus on Descartes’ epistemology and metaphysics, and will examine primary texts and current interpretations about his views on God, nature, knowledge, mind, and freedom. It aims to develop in students the research skills necessary to produce publishable work in early modern philosophy.

Readings from journal articles and essays in collections, especially:

For more of a general background, consult Frederick Copleston’s *History of Philosophy*, vol. 4.

Aug.  27  **Descartes research strategies, seminar presentations** [Dr. Daniel]

Sept.  3  **Meditations understood as a totality** [Dr. Daniel]

10  **Doubt** [Steve Dezort]
- David Owens, “Descartes’s Use of Doubt” [B&C 164-78]

Skepticism [Dr. Daniel]
- Charles Larmore, “Descartes and Skepticism” [Gauk 17-29]

17  (Class cancelled)

24  **Innate ideas** [Matthew Wester]
- Alan Nelson, “Cartesian Inneness” [B&C 319-33]

God [John Forcey]
- John Cottingham, “The Role of God in Descartes’s Philosophy” [B&C 288-301]

Oct.  1  **The Cartesian Circle** [Paul Berghaus]
- Gary Hatfield, “The Cartesian Circle” [Gauk 122-41]
  [Option: Louis Loeb, “The Cartesian Circle” [Cott 200-235]]

Ontology of Ideas, Intentionality [Harris Bechtol]
- Deborah Brown, “Descartes on True and False Ideas” [B&C 196-215]

8  **Eternal Truths** [Matt Wurst]

Perception, Sensation, Representation, Consciousness [John Bibeau]
- Sarah Patterson, “Clear and Distinct Perception” [B&C 216-34]

15  **The Linguistic Character of Rationality** [Dr. Daniel]
- Desmond Clarke, “Human Language,” ch. 6 of his *Descartes’s Theory of Mind*, 158-80.

Animals [Tobias Flattery]
- Gary Hatfield, “Animals” [B&C 404-25]
Oct. 19  First paper due Friday
Substance, Attributes, Modes [Dr. Daniel]
  Vere Chappell, “Descartes on Substance” [B&C 251-70]
  Jorge Secada, “The Doctrine of Substance” [Gauk 67-85]
  Desmond Clarke, “Descartes’s Use of the Concept of Substance,” ch. 8 of his Descartes’s Theory of Mind, 207-34.
22
Real Distinction [Steve Dezort]
Material substance [John Forcely]
  Desmond Clarke, “Descartes’ Proof of the Existence of Matter” [Gauk 160-78]
Nov. 5  Spiritual substance [Matthew Wester]
Dualism: the mind-body relation [John Bibeau]
  Marleen Rozemond, “Descartes’ Dualism” [B&C 372-89]
12  Will [Paul Berghaus]
  Michael Della Rocca, “Judgment and Will” [Gauk 142-59]
  [Option: Desmond Clarke, “The Will as a Power of Self-Determination,” ch. 5 of his Descartes’s Theory of Mind, 135-57]
Freedom [Tobias Flattery]
19  Occasionalism [Matt Wurst]
  Michael Della Rocca, “Causation Without Intelligibility and Causation Without God in Descartes” [B&C 235-50]
Passions [Harris Bechtol]
  Amy Schmitter, “How to Engineer a Human Being: Passions and Functional Explanation in Descartes” [B&C 426-44]
  Desmond Clarke, “The Passions of the Soul,” ch. 4 of his Descartes’s Theory of Mind, 106-34.
26  Descartes’ Legacy [Dr. Daniel]
  Thomas Lennon, “Descartes’s Legacy in the Seventeenth Century” [B&C 467-81]
  Ted Schmaltz, “Seventeenth Century Responses to the Meditations” [Gauk 193-203]
Dec. 3  Hot Topics: 2011-2012 Publications [Dr. Daniel]
13  Second paper due Thursday
Presentations/Papers/Grades: seminar members will prepare a six-page outline of primary texts and secondary sources twice during the semester. They will then lead the seminar in a discussion of their outline. Together, these outline presentations count for 30% of the semester grade. A 10-page paper (30%) and a 20-page paper (40%) are due on the indicated dates.

Think of your presentation as having two aspects: the first is something that you do in our seminar meeting, namely, summarize the basic argument and ideas developed in the readings. Presumably everyone in the seminar will have read that material and might have comments or questions. The second is your written presentation, the outline that is distributed no later than the night before by email. You want your outline to look like an outline of a paper you are writing, the theme of which is Descartes' treatment of the topic that you have selected. The outline is your chance to show how you would write a paper that says "here is Descartes' doctrine of X."

Both the 10-page research paper and the 20-page term paper should have the following structure:

a) after the title (which will be something like "Descartes on X" or "Descartes' Doctrine of X"), one or two paragraphs should indicate the issues that have arisen in the scholarly literature about how to interpret his discussion of X, followed by an indication of the specific problems you plan to address and the order of your main points. Use a note to identify the main advocates of positions you will engage.

b) each section of the paper should have a title and should be at least 3-4 pages long. For the short paper, that means there will be no more than three sections.

c) a final brief (less than a page) section, entitled "Concluding Remarks," indicating how the points you made address the issues you raised.

d) footnote citations should adopt the following format:


You should cite all references to Descartes quotes parenthetically in the text itself at the end of the sentence, not in a footnote. Use internal references when the location is small enough for someone to find the passage easily. For example, PP I.60 tells the reader that the cited passage is from the Principles of Philosophy Part I, article 60; and Med III indicates Meditation III. Always add the CSM or CSMK location when the section is longer than a page. So if you are referring to or quoting a passage about Descartes’ distinction between a real, modal, and conceptual distinction, inserting (PP I.60) is sufficient; but quote from Med III this way: “the distinction between preservation and creation is only a conceptual one” (Med III, CSM 2: 33). (The period goes after the parenthesis.)

Insert the following as a note (with the appropriate additions or deletions) the first time you refer to a quote:

"Abbreviations used: Meditations (Med), Objections (Obj), Replies (Rep), Principles of Philosophy (PP), and Passions of the Soul (PS). CSM refers to The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vols. 1 and 2, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984-85); CSMK refers to The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol. 3, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). AT refers to the Oeuvres de Descartes, rev. ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery (12 vols.; Paris: J. Vrin/CNRS, 1964-76)." A citation of a work referred to in a previous note should list simply the author's last name and an abbreviated title (e.g., Nadler, "Occasional Causation," 38). If you cite a secondary source repeatedly, abbreviate it (e.g., Nadler) and insert it parenthetically in the text. Use only standard sources, never other translations unless you have a reason to do so.