The Seminar in the History of Philosophy this semester examines the philosophy of three major figures of modern philosophy, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, George Berkeley, and Jonathan Edwards. Although the seminar addresses many themes developed in their epistemological and metaphysical writings, it focuses especially on the theme of substance.

Texts: Philosophical Texts by G. W. Leibniz (ed. Francks and Woolhouse); reading PT
Philosophical Works by George Berkeley (ed. Ayers); reading PW

For more of a general background in the issues of the period, consult Frederick Copleston’s History of Philosophy, vol. 4 (includes Leibniz) and vol. 5 (includes Berkeley). Recommended overviews of Leibniz include The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz (ed. Jolley); for Berkeley, consult Berkeley: An Interpretation by Ken Winkler.

Assignments/Presentations/Papers/Grades
At each class meeting a member of the seminar will prepare a 4- to 6-page outline of selected passages from the text and other writings by the philosopher under discussion that shed light on the seminar theme. Each student will lead the discussion three times during the semester. Together, these outline presentations count for 30% of the semester grade. By mid-semester you will also be responsible for completing a 10-page paper on Leibniz’s treatment of substance (another 30% of the final grade). The final term paper will be a more in-depth (20-page) paper on that same topic in Berkeley or in Berkeley and Leibniz. The final paper is worth 40% of the final grade.