

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

NYU PARIS

History of French philosophy

PHIL-UA 9026 C01

Hybrid

CET (GMT+1) / CEST (GMT+2) after March 28

SPRING 2021

We know that you may be taking courses at multiple locations this semester. If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for this course site, please make sure that you've completed the online academic orientation via NYU Classes so you are aware of site specific support structure, policies and procedures. **Please contact the site academic staff (include the email address/es)** if you have trouble accessing the NYU Classes site.

If you are attending in person, you will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol.

Instructor Information

- TBA

Course Information

- PHIL-UA 9026 C01
- History of French philosophy
- An overview of important developments in French philosophy from the 16th century to the 1960s. We pay close attention this semester to the passions and the emotions and their role in the mind, in ethics and in artistic, social and political life.
- No prerequisites
- Mondays and Wednesdays 2-3:30pm, NYU Paris, room 401 and Zoom
- NYU Paris academic calendar: <https://www.nyu.edu/paris/calendar.html>

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Course Overview and Goals

We pay close attention this semester to the passions and the emotions and their role in the mind, in ethics and in artistic, social and political life. We will approach Descartes' philosophical project to understand the underappreciated role of ethics within it. His correspondence with Elizabeth of Bohemia will deepen our understanding of Descartes' philosophy of mind and introduce us to Elizabeth and Descartes' dialogue on happiness and virtue. We will finally read Descartes' last treatise, *The Passions of the Soul*, written under the influence of this dialogue. Rousseau will introduce us to the social turn in 18th-century philosophy. We will trace the evolution of his thoughts about the social passions from the first two discourses to his attempted political solution to the social ills of mankind in *The Social Contract* and the discourse on political economy. A few excerpts from autobiographical writings will also help us understand the role of the passions in his social and political philosophy. We will analyze more in depth the role of sympathy in social and ethical life with the letters of Sophie de Grouchy. We will return to the role of the passions in the arts with a short excerpt from Bergson. Alexandre Kojève will introduce us to the French reception of the philosophy of Hegel and to some of the language that became common currency in European philosophy in the 19th and 20th century. Finally, we will read from Sartre's thoughts about the role of the passions in our life from the beginning of his career and from his major philosophical treatise, *Being and Nothingness*.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- get a sense of the historical evolution of philosophy since the 16th-century,
- see how French philosophers developed some of the key ideas and movements in that history
- identify and debate important issues philosophers still discuss today
- learn how to assess the strength and weaknesses of arguments,
- engage in constructive philosophical discussion, give reasons, and raise objections,
- perfect their skills in argumentative writing.

Course Requirements

Class Participation

You are expected to attend class in person or remote synchronously. Your active participation in class and attendance will be reflected in this part of the course requirements.

Point-group class presentations

Two group presentations to introduce the material for a session and launch the class discussion. At least one within the half of the class (on or before March 17). The presentation should articulate the main question(s) the author grapples with, the position the author stakes and the principal arguments. It should also help the class identify questions to discuss and understand the relevance of the debate to our own times.

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Short papers

Two 1500-word papers following your participation in a point group. The paper should engage with one of the questions asked in the readings for the relevant session. It should explain the position of the author and develop at least one of their reasons to support this position, as well as critically engage with either the position or the reason. The balance between exposition and critical discussion in the paper is flexible and up to you. The question you engage with may or may not be the main question in the readings — you are free to engage with the author on a matter of detail that you find interesting to pursue further.

Final paper

A 3000-word research paper on a topic of your choice, either engaging in further discussion of a philosophical view or argument, initiating a dialogue between multiple views or arguments, or applying philosophical concepts and arguments to tackle a question of interest to you.

After meeting in the second half of the semester to delineate your topic, you'll write a draft of your final paper, on which you'll receive comments from an anonymous peer in the class and from me — and you'll give comments on someone's else anonymous draft. The final paper will then be due at the end of the semester. See schedule below.

Final exam

Paragraph-length answers to questions about the material covered throughout the semester.

Assigned Readings

- Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* I-III [DM]
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* [M], I-II and from IV
- Descartes, preface to the French translation of *The Principles of Philosophy* [PPP]
- Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul* [PS]
- From the correspondence between Elizabeth of Bohemia and Descartes (1643-1646)
- Rousseau, "Discourse on the Arts and Sciences" and controversy [D1]
- Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men" [D2]
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract* [SC], from books I-IV
- Rousseau, "Political Economy" [PE]
- Rousseau, *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre* [LA]
- Rousseau, *Confessions*, from book VIII [C]
- Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, VI [R]
- Grouchy (Condorcet), Sophie de, *Letters on Sympathy*
- Bergson, Henri, from *Laughter*
- Kojève, Alexandre, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, introduction
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Sketch for a theory of the emotions* [STE]
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism is a Humanism* [EH]
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness* [BN], I, 2, II and IV, 1, I to IV, 2, II

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Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Short papers	2 x 20% = 40%
Research paper	25%
Presentations	2 x 5% = 10%
Final exam	20%
Class participation	5%

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Description
A	16-20	Outstanding
A-	15	Excellent
B+	14	Very Good
B	13	Good
B-	12	Satisfactory
C+	11	Above Average
C	10	Average
C-	9	Below Average
D+	8	Unsatisfactory
D	7	Low Pass
D-	6	Low Pass
F	5	Fail

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Course Schedule

Zoom links on the syllabus webpage at <https://philonos.net/students/class.php?id=5> (the login is “descartes” and the password is “calvinball”).

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 1 01-Feb-21	Introduction		
Session 2 03-Feb-21	Descartes' project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, DM, 1-3• Descartes, M, 1• Descartes, PPP	
Session 3 08-Feb-21	Descartes on the mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, M, 2• Descartes, M, from 4	
Session 4 10-Feb-21	Descartes and Elizabeth on the mind and on ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes and Elizabeth, letters from 1643 to 21.vii.2645 (w/o the letters on quicksilver)	
Session 5 17-Feb-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes and Elizabeth, letters from 4.viii.1645 to i.1646	
Session 6 18-Feb-21 (make-up day)	Descartes on the passions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, PS, part I	
Session 7 22-Feb-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, PS, part II	
Session 8 24-Feb-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, PS, part III• Descartes and Elizabeth, letters from 25.iv.1646 to v.1646	
Session 9 01-Mar-21	Rousseau on the arts and sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rousseau, D1 w/ “To the King of Poland” and “Last Reply”	
Session 10 03-Mar-21	Rousseau and the problem of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rousseau, D2, part I	
Session 11 08-Mar-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rousseau, D2, part II	

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Session 12 10-Mar-21	The social contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rousseau, SC, I, 1-7 • Rousseau, SC, II, 1-4 • Rousseau, SC, IV, 1-3 	
Session 13 15-Mar-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rousseau, SC, II, 11 • Rousseau, SC, III, 10-14 • Rousseau, PE 	
Session 14 17-Mar-21	On spectacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rousseau, LA • Rousseau, C, from book VIII (reception of his opera at Fontainebleau) 	
Session 15 22-Mar-21	Rousseau revisits the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rousseau, R, 6 	
Session 16 24-Mar-21	On sympathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de Grouchy, letters 1-4 	
Session 17 29-Mar-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de Grouchy, letters 5-8 	
Session 18 31-Mar-21	Bergson on the arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bergson, pp. 46-50 	
Session 19 08-Apr-21	Kojève on Hegel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kojève, introduction 	
Session 20 12-Apr-21	(continued)		
Session 21 14-Apr-21	The early Sartre on emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, STE, pp. 1-33 	
Session 22 19-Apr-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, STE, pp. 34-64 	
Session 23 21-Apr-21	French existentialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, EIH • (optional) Sartre, BN, I, 2, II 	
Session 24 26-Apr-21	Existential freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, BN, IV, 1, I 	
Session 25 28-Apr-21	The situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, BN, IV, 1, II (pp. 629-663) 	Final project
Session 26 03-May-21	(continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, BN, IV, 1, II (pp. 663-722) 	
Session 27 05-May-21	Existential psychoanalysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre, BN, IV, 2, I 	

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Session 28 10-May-21	Possessions	• Sartre, BN, IV, 2, II	
12-May-21	Final exam		Final exam
14-May-21			Research paper

Course Materials

All course readings and information to be posted at <https://philonos.net/students/class.php?id=5>

Required Textbooks & Materials

- No required book

Optional Textbooks & Materials

You could consider purchasing paper copies of the following books:

- Descartes, René, *The Passions of the Soul*
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*
- Grouchy, *Letters on Sympathy*
- Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*
- Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*
- Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Sarah Richmond (Routledge)

If you read French, you are welcome to use French editions. The most accessible of the authors for non-native French readers are Rousseau, Grouchy and Bergson. For the first, you might prefer an edition with modernized spelling (e.g. GF Flammarion).

Resources

- **Access your course materials:** <https://philonos.net/students/class.php?id=5>
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Hygiene/Physical Distancing policies

- Students will be assigned/choose a seat on the first day of class. For NYU COVID-19 Safety protocols, please use the same seat for the duration of the semester.

Attendance and Tardiness

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Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers or online through NYU Classes if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Unexcused absences will affect students' semester participation grade. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to discuss where at the Academic Center the remote course can be taken** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. This means they should initiate email and/or office hour discussions to address any missed lectures and assignments and arrange a timeline for submitting missed work.

Suggested New Section: Classroom Etiquette/Expectations

Things to consider:

- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
- Please do not eat during class and minimize any other distracting noises (e.g. rustling of papers and leaving the classroom before the break, unless absolutely necessary)
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (ie COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class. Consider using the chat function or “raise hand” function in order to add your voice to class discussions especially if leaving the video on presents challenges.

Final Exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between final exams, please bring it to the attention of the site Academic representative as soon as this is known to facilitate alternate arrangements. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

Late Assignment

- 1) Written work is due at the end of day and should be uploaded at <https://philonos.net/students/upload.php?class=5>

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- 2) Late work should be uploaded as soon as it is completed and you should email me in advance to discuss an extension. Any late work without a prior extension loses one letter grade every two days.
- 3) Students who arrive to class late for an exam do not have automatic approval to take extra time to complete the exam.
- 4) Students who miss an exam (including the final) without previously arranged permission will receive a zero on that exam.
- 5) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director.

Incomplete Grade Policy

An “incomplete” is a temporary grade that indicates that the student has, for good reason, not completed all of the course work. This grade is not awarded automatically nor is it guaranteed; rather, the student must ask the instructor for a grade of “incomplete,” present documented evidence of illness, an emergency, or other compelling circumstances, and clarify the remaining course requirements with the instructor.

In order for a grade of “incomplete” to be registered on the transcript, the student must fill out a form, in collaboration with the course instructor and the academic administration at the site; it should then be submitted to the site’s academic office. The submitted form must include a deadline by which the missing work will be completed. This deadline may not be later than the end of the following semester.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

As the University’s policy on "[Academic Integrity for Students at NYU](#)" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." **Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.**

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

NYU X takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the lecturer. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you **MUST** inform your professor.

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For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides](#)

Religious Observances

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.

Students must notify their professor and the local Academics team in writing via email at least 7 days before being absent for this purpose.

Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU PARIS, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center **as early as possible in the semester for assistance**. Accommodations for this course are managed through the site sponsoring the class once you request it.

Instructor Bio/About Your Instructor

Philippe Lusson (PhD, New York University, 2014; Ecole Normale Supérieure de la rue d’Ulm, 2008; agrégé in Philosophy, 2007) works mostly in the philosophy of mind and action, with a particular focus on intentions, willpower, decision-making, omissions and collective coordination, and with a deep belief in the continuity between scientific and philosophical research in these areas. He has presented his work at various international conferences, most recently in Cork and Braga.

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