

PHIL 720.001 - Advanced Studies in Modern Philosophy: The Principle of Sufficient Reason

UNC Chapel Hill, Fall 2022

Professor: Rosalind Chaplin

Email: rchaplin@unc.edu

Class Meetings: Wednesdays 4:00-6:30pm, Caldwell Hall 213

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm & Thursdays 10-11am in 207E Caldwell Hall, or by appointment.

Course Website: <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/phil720f22>

Credit Hours: 3

Grading Status: letter grade

Course Description. Roughly speaking, the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) says that every thing, fact, or state of affairs has an explanation that accounts for why it is the way it is. Traditionally understood, this principle demands thoroughgoing intelligibility for everything: if the PSR is true, then there are no brute facts, and everything can be explained. In the European philosophical tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries, many of the most important metaphysical and epistemological debates centered on questions about the status of the PSR and the upshots of a commitment to it. In this seminar, we will examine these debates and the place of the PSR in broadly rationalist metaphysical systems. We will focus on the following questions:

1. How exactly should we understand the demand for intelligibility made in the PSR?
2. Can the PSR be proved?
3. If the PSR is true, what follows from it? Necessitarianism? Idealism? Monism?
4. Does the PSR lead to paradoxes without a restriction of its scope? How might one argue for principled restrictions of its scope?

The majority of the course will focus on historical figures, but we will also examine the recent revival of interest in the PSR in contemporary metaphysics. Our historical star players will be Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant, but we will also read selections from lesser known figures whose influence on debates about the PSR was significant: Christian Wolff, Émilie du Châtelet, Alexander Baumgarten, and Christian August Crusius.

Texts. All required readings will be available on our course page or as e-book via the library, but it may be helpful for you to own hardcopies of the following (abbreviations noted in parentheses will be used in the reading schedule below):

- Spinoza - *The Ethics and Other Works*. Ed. and Trans. Edwin Curley (**EOW**)
- Leibniz - *Philosophical Essays*, Eds. Ariew and Garber (**AG**)
- Watkins, Eric (ed.) (2009). *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Background Source Materials*. Cambridge University Press (**BSM**)
- Du Châtelet - *Emilie Du Châtelet: Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings* (**SPSW**)
- Baumgarten - *Metaphysics*, 1739 - first latin edition. Not much substantive change after 1750. First German translation in 1766 (**M**)

- Kant - *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*. Trans. Walford and Merebote (TP)
- Kant - *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Guyer and Wood (CPR)

REQUIREMENTS

Participation (5%). Attendance and active participation in every class is required. If you need to miss class for any reason, please be in touch with me. Your participation will determine 5% of your final mark.

Weekly(ish) Reading Responses (25%). These are public reading responses to be shared with the entire class on Sakai. They must be posted no later than 4pm on Tuesdays so that we all have time to read them before our Wednesday afternoon meetings. There are many ways to approach these posts, but the main idea is to focus on something that you think warrants further discussion in class. You might articulate a question about the week's readings (either the primary or the secondary readings), you might raise an objection to a point made in the readings, you might defend a point made in the readings against a possible objection, etc. If you are interested in an issue on which someone else has already posted, feel free to submit your response as a reply to theirs. You must complete 10 of these reading responses throughout the semester, and you may submit only one reading response per week (so you'll have a few weeks off). Please do not submit a response in week 1. Your reading responses will be worth 25% of your final mark and will be graded as a whole at the end of the semester.

[Note: A longer document explaining how you should approach reading responses and the role they will play in discussion is posted to Sakai.]

Term Paper (with draft encouraged) (70%). At the end of the term, you will submit a longer paper (of roughly 15-20 pages) treating a topic of interest to you. You must approve your topic with me, and I'm happy to work together with you to determine a good topic if you are the kind of person who likes to figure these things out in conversation with someone else. In addition, you are encouraged (but not required) to turn in a draft for feedback. If you decide you would like feedback on a draft, please send me your draft no later than Monday, Nov 21st (but the earlier the better!). Please also consult with me on recommended readings, given your particular topic choice. The final draft is due on Monday, December 5th by 5:00pm. Your term paper will be worth 70% of your final mark.

Late policies. Reading responses cannot be turned in late. If you miss the Tuesday 4pm deadline, just take that as one of your weeks off (making sure you do the required 10 weeks over the course of the semester). Late term papers will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day (including weekend days), except if you have an emergency and we agree on another arrangement.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

(Note: I may need to make changes to the syllabus, including assignment due dates.
These changes will be announced as early as possible.)

*denotes optional reading

Reminder: Reading Responses are due on Tuesdays by 4pm (but not in week 1, and you only need to do 10 in total)

WEEK 1 (8/17) - Introduction to the PSR

- Rocca, Michael Della (2010). "PSR," *Philosophers' Imprint* 10 (7): 1-13.
- *Melamed, Yitzhak Y. and Martin Lin, "Principle of Sufficient Reason", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sufficient-reason/>

WEEK 2 (8/24) - Spinoza's PSR and Monism

- Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 1, through proposition 15, **EOW** pp 85-97.
- Garrett, Don (2018, 1979). "Spinoza's 'Ontological' Argument," with postscript. In *Nature and Necessity in Spinoza's Philosophy*. OUP: 31-61.
 - Note: first read "Spinoza's 'Ontological' Argument," then read the Della Rocca piece, then read Garrett's postscript.
- Della Rocca, Michael (2002). "Spinoza's Substance Monism," in *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes*, edited by Olli Koistinen and John Biro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 11-37.

WEEK 3 (8/31) - Spinoza's Necessitarianism

- Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 1, proposition 16-36 and Appendix, **EOW** pp 97-115.
- Koistinen, Olli (2003). "Spinoza's Proof of Necessitarianism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67.2: 283-310.
- Primus, Kristin (2019). "Spinoza's Infinite Modes Reconsidered," *Journal of Modern Philosophy* 1.1: 1-29
- *Huenemann, Charlie (2018). "But Why Was Spinoza a Necessitarian?," in *Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, Michael Della Rocca (ed), Chapter 6: 114-132.

WEEK 4 (9/7) - Leibniz: Truth, Contingency, and Freedom

- Leibniz, *On Freedom and Possibility* (1680-82?), **AG** pp 19-23.
- Leibniz, *On Contingency* (1686?), **AG** pp 28-30.
- Leibniz, *Primary Truths* (1686?), **AG** pp 30-34.
- Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), §§1-14, 35-36, **AG** pp 35-48 and 66-68.
- Leibniz, *From the Letters to Arnauld* (1686-87), **AG** 69-77.
- Leibniz, *On Freedom* (1689?), **AG** 94-98.

- Pikkert, Owen - "The Modal Status of Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* (2021): 40-58.
- *Rutherford, Don (1992). "Leibniz's Principle of Intelligibility," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 9 (1): 35-49.

WEEK 5 (9/14) - Leibniz: God and Monads

- Leibniz, *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* (1697), **AG** pp 149-155.
- Leibniz, *The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology* (1714), **AG** pp 213-225.
- Pickup, Martin (2014). "Leibniz and the Necessity of the Best Possible World," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 92:3: 507-523

WEEK 6 (9/21) - Leibniz: Clarke Correspondence

- Leibniz, *From the Letters to Clarke* (1715-16), **AG** pp 320-346.
- Lodge, Paul (2018). "Leibniz's Justification of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (Mainly) in the Correspondence with Clarke," *History of Philosophy & Logical Analysis* 21 (1): 69-91.

WEEK 7 (9/28) - Stepping back: assessing Spinoza and Leibniz

- Lin, Martin (2011). "Rationalism and Necessitarianism", *Noûs*, 46: 418–448.
- Schaffer, Jonathan (2010). "Monism: The Priority of the Whole", ...
- *Della Rocca, Michael (2012). "Violations of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (in Leibniz and Spinoza)," In Fabrice Correia & Benjamin Schnieder (eds.), *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 139-164.

WEEK 8 (10/5) - Du Châtelet: Anthropocentrizing the PSR and the PSR in Scientific Practice

- Du Châtelet, *Institutions of Physics (aka 'Foundations' of Physics)* (1740), **SPSW** pp 115-200.
 - But just quickly skim the chapter 11 and chapter 21 selections (pp 174-200), unless you are particularly interested in how Du Châtelet treats motion, rest, the laws of motion, and the *vis viva* dispute.
- Amijee, Fatema (2022). "Inquiry and Metaphysical Rationalism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*: 1-15.
- *Wells, Aaron (2021). "Du Châtelet on Sufficient Reason and Empirical Explanation," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 59 (4): 629-655.

WEEK 9 (10/12) - Wolff and Baumgarten: The Justification of the PSR (and Freedom)

- Wolff, *Rational Thoughts* (1720), §§29-38, 422-522, **BSM** pp 11-14 and 33-36.
- Baumgarten, Alexander - *Metaphysics*, Preface of the 3rd Edition (1750) and §§1-33.
- Fugate, Courtney D. (2014). "Alexander Baumgarten on the Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Philosophica — Revista Do Departamento de Filosofia da Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa* 44: 127-147.

WEEK 10 (10/19) - Crusius: Sufficient vs Determining Grounds and Libertarian Freedom

- Crusius, *Sketch* (1745), preface-§84, **BSM** pp 132-161.

- Tester, Steven (2021). "Crusius on Liberty of Indifference and Determinism," in *Christian August Crusius (1715-1775): Philosophy Between Reason and Revelation*, (eds) Grunert, Hahmann, Stiening. De Gruyter: 229-248.
- *Pruss, Alexander (2006). "Free Will," in *The Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Reassessment*. Cambridge University Press: 126-159.

WEEK 11 (10/26) - Early Kant: Grounds of Truth, Grounds of Existence (and more freedom)

- Kant, *New Elucidation* (1755), TP pp 5-45.
- (no secondary readings this week)

WEEK 12 (11/2) - Early Kant: Proof of God's Existence and Grounding Possibles

- Kant, *The Only Possible Argument* (1763), sections 1 and 3, TP pp 116-136 and 195-201.
- Heide, Dai (2021). "Rationalism and Kant's Rejection of the Ontological Argument," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 59 (4): 583-606.

WEEK 13 (11/9) - Critical Kant: Causality and Principles of Reason

- Second Analogy of Experience (A189/B232-A211/B256), CPR pp 304-316.
- Introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic (A293/B349-A309/B366), CPR pp 384-393.
- Introduction to the Antinomy of Pure Reason (A405/B432 -A425/B453), CPR pp 459-469.
- Choose one of:
 - Lu-Adler, Huaping (2021). "Kant and the Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Review of Metaphysics* 74 (3): 301-330.
 - Chaplin, Rosalind (draft in progress). "Is Kant's Supreme Principle of Pure Reason the Principle of Sufficient Reason?"

WEEK 14 (11/16) - Contemporary Issues: Restricting the PSR?

- Dasgupta, Shamik (2016). "Metaphysical Rationalism," *Noûs* 50 (2): 379-418.
- Della Rocca, Michael (2021). "Tamers, Deniers, and Me," *Philosophical Studies* 178 (4): 1101-1119.

Term paper drafts to me by Monday, Nov 21st at the latest, if you would like feedback.

WEEK 15 (11/23) - NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

WEEK 16 (11/30) - Contemporary Issues: Necessitarianism (again)

- Levey, Samuel (2016). "The Paradox of Sufficient Reason," *Philosophical Review Recent Issues* 125 (3): 397-430.
- *Amijee, Fatema (2021). "Explaining Contingent Facts," *Philosophical Studies* 178 (4): 1163-1181.

Term Paper due Monday, Dec 5th by 5:00pm.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

<p><i>Accessibility Resources</i></p>	<p>The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including academic adjustments, resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.</p> <p>Accommodations for students are determined through Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.</p> <p>Please refer to the ARS Website for contact information or email ars@unc.edu.</p>
<p><i>University Attendance Policy</i></p>	<p>Attendance is required, and missed classes will be factored into your participation grade, unless you have a University Approved Absence, involving one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorized University activities 2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC) 3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC). <p>Please communicate with me early about potential absences. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence.</p>
<p><i>Counseling and Psychological Services</i></p>	<p>UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website (https://care.unc.edu) is a place to access the many mental resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more.</p>

<i>Title IX Resources</i>	<p>Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.</p>
<i>Honor Code Statement</i>	<p>Students are bound by the Honor Code in taking exams and in written work. The Honor Code of the University is in effect at all times, and the submission of work signifies understanding and acceptance of those requirements. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please take note of the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reusing a paper that you have written for another class qualifies as academic dishonesty. - Summarizing ideas or arguments that you have found in articles or on the internet, without citing your sources, qualifies as academic dishonesty. It doesn't matter if you put them into your own words. If you have gotten an idea from a source, you must acknowledge the debt by citing the source. <p>You can read more about the honor code at studentconduct.unc.edu.</p>