

First Paper Topic
Philosophy 22
Winter, 2020

You are to give a textual analysis on the topic described below. Length should be around five pages. Use annotated quotations from the texts to back up your assertions about their contents. Please confine your research to the course reading assignments and materials from the lectures and discussion sections (including notes written for this class on the Web). Please double-space and leave adequate margins for comments by the grader.

As this is a General Education “Writing Experience” course, papers will be graded in part on the basis of organization, style, use of language, and logical coherence. It is expected that you will use the comments you receive on your writing in this paper to improve the quality of your writing on the second paper.

Due: **February 19, 2020**, in class.

All of the rationalist philosophers we have discussed – Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz – attempted to provide solutions to the problems concerning the tension between certain imperfections (or contingencies) in the world and the existence of God. Examples are: Descartes’s solution to the problem concerning his false judgments and God as his creator (Meditation 4), Spinoza’s solution to the problem of evil (Appendix to Part I of *Ethics*), and Leibniz’s solution to the necessity of events and God’s free will (*Discourse on Metaphysics* 13, Letter to Arnauld). Choose one problem, and compare and contrast the attempted solutions offered by two different rationalist philosophers.

Here are three possible topics:

- Compare and contrast Spinoza and Leibniz’s answers to the question “Is it possible for God to create a different world?” (Spinoza, Appendix to Part I of *Ethics*, Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (especially 13), Letters to Arnauld)
- Compare and contrast Descartes’s and Leibniz’s answers to the question “Could God create us differently?” (Descartes Meditation 4, Leibniz, Letters to Arnauld)
- Compare and contrast Descartes’s and Spinoza’s answers to the question, “Why do imperfections exist in a world created by a perfect God?” (Descartes, Meditation 4, Spinoza, Appendix to Part I of *Ethics*)