Descartes’ *Meditations* concerned “First Philosophy”, a subject-matter traditionally co-extensive with Metaphysics or Theology. Virtually all of Descartes’ other works, however, concerned “Second” or “Natural Philosophy”, a subject-matter that encompassed any and all investigations into the structure and nature of the changing, material world. The aim of this seminar is two-fold. First, it is to understand the *Meditations* as an isolated, free-standing text. Second, it is to understand the connection between the *Meditations* and the remainder of Descartes’ mature philosophical output. In other words, it is to understand the meaning and relations of “First Philosophy” and “Second Philosophy” in the Cartesian context.

**Texts:**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Grading:**

Grades will be based on participation (15%), two presentations (40%), a proposal for a final paper (5%), a short draft of the final paper (10%) and the final paper itself (30%). One of the presentations must be on the *Meditations*. The proposal for the final paper must be no more than a single paragraph. The short draft of the final paper must be 2 and 5 pages. The final paper must be between 15 and 25 pages. Students are highly encouraged to consult with me before their presentation.

**Website:**

[http://www.wmich.edu/philosophy/courses/descartes.html](http://www.wmich.edu/philosophy/courses/descartes.html)
Schedule:

Week 1 (Jan 8, 10): Background & Historiography.


Week 2 (Jan 15, 17): The Cartesian System.

Garber, Descartes' Metaphysical Physics. Chapter 1: “Descartes’ Vocation”
Chapter 2: “Descartes’ Project.”

Week 3 (Jan 22, 24): Meditation VI.

Week 4 (Jan 29, 31): Meditation V.

Week 5 (Feb 5, 7): Meditation IV.

Week 6 (Feb 12, 14): Meditation III.

Week 7 (Feb 19, 21): Meditation II.

Week 8 (Feb 26, 28): Meditation I.

Paper proposal due on Feb 26th.

Week 9 (Mar 11, 13): Le Monde, Guakroger Translation, p. 3 - 47.

Week 10 (Mar 18, 20): Le Monde, Guakroger Translation, p. 47 - 75.

Paper draft due on March 18th.

Week 11 (Mar 25, 27; Reschedule!): Body

Garber, Descartes' Metaphysical Physics. Chapter 4: “Descartes Against His Teachers: The Refutation of Hylomorphism”

Week 12 (Apr 1, 3; Reschedule?): Body

Garber, Descartes' Metaphysical Physics. Chapter 5: “Descartes Against the Atomists: Indivisibility, Space, and Void”

Week 13 (Apr 8, 10): The Cartesian System


Week 14 (Apr 15, 17): Buffer

Final Paper Due April 22.