

**Topics in Modern Philosophy:  
Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz**

Philosophy 509  
Prof. Brandon Look  
Fall 2007

**Paper #3**

Write a 5-7 page paper on *one* of the following topics. Papers are due at the beginning of class, Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>.

- (1) Explain Leibniz's account of the relation of mind and body -- both (a) speaking with the vulgar, i.e. in terms of "mind" and "body", and (b) speaking in metaphysical rigor, i.e. in terms of "monads" alone. How does this account compare with the accounts given by Spinoza and Descartes? Is this view correct? If not, why not?
- (2) Leibniz claims that God inclines the soul without necessitating it. What does he mean by this? How does Leibniz establish this view? How satisfying do you find this notion of freedom?
- (3) In *Principles of Nature and Grace* §7, Leibniz says, "Assuming this principle [the Principle of Sufficient Reason], the first question we have the right to ask will be, *why is there something rather than nothing?*" (AG 210) Call this question the Primordial Existential Question (PEQ). How does Leibniz answer PEQ? How satisfactory is this answer? How would *you* answer this question? Does PEQ even have an answer? (Hint at a possible response: is it perhaps a misleadingly (i.e., falsely) formed question?)

All philosophy majors are required to hand in **two (2)** copies of their papers.