

PHLC36-Empiricism

Instructor: Dr. Dustin Stokes
Section: PHLC36H3 LEC01; Winter Term
Lectures: Tues 3:00-5:00 HW309
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Course description

This is an advanced course on a philosophical movement known as modern (or British) Empiricism. The central figures will be John Locke, David Hume, and George Berkeley, who wrote in the 17th and 18th centuries. Our interest will be in the general empiricist philosophy and whether it provides a sufficiently explanatory worldview. Once we have a sufficient understanding of this philosophical position we will be asking, simply, how far can it take us? For example, can it provide answers to metaphysical questions about substance, personal identity, or causation? Generally, can empiricism, as these figures saw it, provide answers to all of the questions to which philosophers and scientists would like to ask? And if not, does this threaten empiricism *or* show that some questions are themselves problematic and so should not be asked at all? We will thus explore, by careful analysis of the texts of these philosophers, the scope and success of empiricism.

Text

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ed. R. Woolhouse (Penguin 1998)

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Ed. D. Norton and M. Norton (Oxford University Press 2000)

All remaining readings will be made available in pdf on the course blackboard website (or online elsewhere, as noted below).

Note that all other course materials made available on course blackboard website.

Assignments/Requirements:

10% Attendance/discussion/participation	
25% Short paper 1	DUE 9 FEB (questions distributed 2 Feb)
25% Short paper 2	DUE 9 MAR (questions distributed 2 Mar)
40% Final exam	TBA

The short papers might also be thought of as take-home exams. You will be given a short list of questions, from which you will choose and respond to one. The questions will be distributed in class, and the papers are to be submitted the following week at the start of class. Your responses should be concise and to the point, and should be approximately 750-1250 words (or 3-5 pages).

The final exam will be comprehensive and essay-style, but like the short papers, you will have choices between questions.

The default final assignment is the final exam. However, advanced students with a special interest in one of the topics covered in the course may write a final research paper of 8-10 pages, *instead of* the final exam. This paper will be due on the day of the final exam (TBA). If a student chooses this alternative, s/he must first submit a 1-2 page paper proposal no later than **26 March 2010**. If you do not submit the paper proposal by this date, you **must** write the final exam. No exceptions.

The participation component is mostly composed of attendance, discussion, and general participation and effort in the course.

General:

This is a writing intensive course. All of the work/examinations will be written. Your papers will be graded not only on content, but also on grammar, writing mechanics, style, etc.

All paper/exam dates are listed on this syllabus. Therefore, late work/exams are allowed only if arranged at least one week prior to the scheduled due date/exam date. Unexcused late work will not be accepted.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. You should familiarize yourself with the university guidelines and policies on academic integrity:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>

If you require special test-taking or note-taking accommodations, please see me.

(Tentative) Reading/discussion schedule:

Essay = An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Locke)

Treatise = A Treatise of Human Nature (Hume)

@ = reading available on blackboard course website (unless otherwise noted)

- 5 Jan.** *Introduction and the central foil: Descartes' rationalism*
- 12 Jan.** *Locke against innate ideas*
Locke: *Essay* I.ii; I.iii.1-8; I.iv.1-8, 17-25
- 19 Jan.** *On the origin of ideas*
Locke: *Essay* I.i.8; II.i.1-10, 20-25; II.ii-iv.3; II.v-vii
Hume: *Treatise* I.I.i-v
- 26 Jan.** *On knowledge and skepticism*
Locke: *Essay* IV.i-iii; IV.xi.1-10
- 2 Feb.** *Ideas of primary/secondary qualities*
Locke: *Essay* II.viii
Hume: *Treatise* I.IV.iv
@Berkeley: from *Principles*: Part I, Sections 9-15
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/bp.html>
- 9 Feb.** *On substance and essence*

Locke: *Essay* II.xiii.17-20; II.xxiii; II.xxx.5; II.xxxi.6-11
Hume: *Treatise* I.I.vi
@Leibniz: from *New Essays on Human Understanding* II.23
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/leibne.html>

- 16 Feb.** NO CLASS-READING WEEK
- 23 Feb.** *Sense Perception: Representative realism (Locke/Hume) vs. Berkeley and idealism*
@Berkeley: from *Principles*: Part I, 1-36
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/bp.html>
- 2 Mar.** *Sense Perception: Reid and direct realism*
@Reid: From *Inquiry into the Human Mind*
- 9 Mar.** *Personal identity*
Locke: *Essay* II.xxvii
@Reid: 'Of Identity', 'Of Mr. Locke's account of our personal identity'
- 16 Mar.** *Personal identity*
Hume: *Treatise* I.IV.vi
- 23 Mar.** *Hume on causation and induction*
Hume: *Treatise* I.III.ii-iii; I.III.vi; I.III.xiv
- 30 Mar.** *The legacy of empiricism*
Readings to be announced.

Resources:

All of the readings will be primary sources. Needless to say, much of this material will be challenging. You might find some of the following resources helpful.

There are lots of good (and plenty of bad) secondary sources on the modern empiricists. For a few very good examples, try J. Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford University Press 1971); J.L. Mackie, *Problems from Locke* (Oxford University Press 1976); N. Jolley, *Locke: His Philosophical Thought* (Oxford University Press 1999)

-For general philosophy resources, I suggest both *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (1999) ed. Audi, R. and *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (1994) ed. Blackburn, S. Online, try the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/>