

PHI 402 (84201)

Empiricism

Room: CDN (College of Design North) 62

MWF 10:45-11:35 a.m.

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Fall semester, 2009

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Office Hours (Tentative): T 3:00-5:00 (LSC 248), W 1:45-2:45 (Armstrong 211), Th 2:00-3:00 (Armstrong 211) ; And By Appointment.

This is a course in the philosophical tradition of ‘classical’ (late-17th and 18th century) British empiricism. One prerequisite for the course that is rather important is PHI 302, or some other survey course in the history of modern philosophy. The focus of the course this semester will be intensive rather than extensive. That is, we shall be concentrating on two principal figures in the tradition of classical empiricism: John Locke and David Hume. The former is a key seminal figure in the tradition, while the latter transforms the tradition in such a way that some of its most important original assumptions are called into question. The course will be centered on careful and close reading and analysis of large chunks of text of these two authors.

Class format will include a large amount of lecture material. The enrollment for this class is larger than is optimal for a 400-level course. However, I still hope for a considerably high level of class discussion and involvement by students in the analysis of the texts we shall be reading. ***Therefore, it is extremely important for all students to attend class regularly and to keep up with the reading assignments.*** 25% of course grade will depend upon class attendance and participation. 25% of course grade will depend on occasional short written assignments, 25% on a midterm examination, and 25% on a final examination. The format of the midterm and final are, to some extent open to negotiation. Although class-size is a factor, I hope that at least one of the exams will be a take-home essay examination, with considerable choice with respect to which questions are answered.

There is a website for this course, which is ***not*** a ‘Blackboard’ site. Its URL is as follows: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~mjwhite/phi402.html>

Required texts for the course are the following:

Locke, John. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (Great Books in Philosophy [Prometheus Books], 1995). Paperback.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge; 2nd edition, text revised and notes, P. H. Nidditch (Clarendon Press [Oxford University], 1978). Paperback.

Hume, David. *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge; 3rd edition, text revised and notes, P. H. Nidditch (Clarendon Press [Oxford University], 1975). Paperback.

The following is a tentative and somewhat schematic but ambitious syllabus; *it is subject to change as the semester progresses.*

I. 24 August - 3 September. Introductory material and Locke's *Essay*, Book I (1-59)—An anti-innatism polemic.

II. 9 Sept. - 30 Sept. Locke's *Essay*, Book II, chs. i-xii (59-110), chs. xviii-xxvi (156-241), xxviii-xxxiii (277-320)—On Ideas: The Objects of Our Epistemic States.

III. 2 October - 16 Oct. Locke's *Essay*, Book IV, chs. i-vi (424-505), chs. ix-xix (526-597)—On Knowledge and Other Epistemic States.

IV. 19 Oct. - 28 Oct. Hume's *Treatise*, 'Introduction' (xiii-xix) and *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sec. I (5-16)—Introduction to Hume.

V. 30 Oct. - 13 November. Hume's *Treatise*, Book I, Part I (1-25) & *Enquiry*, secs. II-III (17-24)—On Ideas: The Objects of Our Epistemic States.

VI. 16 Nov. - 25 Nov. Hume's *Treatise*, Book I, Part II, sec. vi, Part III (66-179) & *Enquiry*, secs. IV-VII (25-79)—On Knowledge, Probability, and Belief.

VII. 30 Nov. - 7 December. Hume's *Treatise*, Book I, Part IV, secs. i-iv (180-231) & *Enquiry* sec. X (109-131) and sec. XII (149-165)—On Philosophy: Skeptical and Dogmatic.