

Philosophy 224: Topics in British Empiricism

Spring Term 2015

Mondays 2-4, Emerson 310

INSTRUCTORS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course is a graduate research seminar in Classic British Empiricism. As such, it presupposes familiarity with the basic texts and ideas of John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume of the sort students get from taking Phil 122 or its equivalent. *If you want to take this course but have not taken Phil 122 (or its equivalent) we strongly urge you to audit Phil 122 this semester alongside the seminar.* Each week we will read a recent research article. Your job will be to (a) read it carefully; (b) determine its strengths as an interpretation of Locke, Berkeley, or Hume; and (c) determine the main challenges to the interpretation. In order to do that, you will have to work through the relevant primary texts and, often, some of the opposing secondary literature. In class we will discuss the article with the author, who will join us either in person or via Skype.

Although the articles range in topic, we mean to keep our eye on an overarching question throughout the term: *What is the relationship between empiricism and skepticism?* While Locke was no skeptic, and seems to have had little patience for skeptical worries, he *does* emphasize the limit of human understanding, and many have charged that his “way of ideas” invites skepticism. Berkeley is routinely treated as a kind of skeptic, despite his insistence that one of the aims of his philosophical project is precisely to *combat* skepticism. In spite of his idealism, he maintains that he is in fact a defender of commonsense who sides “in all things with the mob.” Hume is regularly portrayed as a skeptic, and he spends much of *Treatise* I.iv apparently developing skeptical arguments. But the take away of Hume’s engagement with skeptical arguments remains hotly contested among early modern scholars and many have seen him as a champion of naturalism rather than skepticism.

The objectives of this course are: (a) to give you familiarity with the current interpretive debates and research in Classic British Empiricism; (b) to give you the opportunity to hone your research skills by engaging in depth with current work in the field, which will require you to engage the primary texts and related secondary literature on your own; (c) to give you the opportunity to become actively involved in conversation with leading scholars on a number of exciting topics in early modern philosophy.

Texts

We will make the **weekly articles** available on the course website:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/k109796>.

If you need the **primary texts**, we recommend the following editions:

- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford University Press, 1975). ISBN-13: 978-0198245957.
- George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, (Oxford Philosophical Texts), edited by J. Dancy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). ISBN-13: 978-0198751618.
- George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, (Oxford Philosophical Texts), edited by J. Dancy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). ISBN-13: 978-0198751496.
- David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature* (Oxford Philosophical Texts), edited by David Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). ISBN-13: 978-0198751724.
- David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford Philosophical Texts), edited by T. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). ISBN-13: 978-0198752486.

If you would like to **review** of British Empiricism through some helpful if opinionated guides to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, we recommend the following:

- Samuel Rickless, *Locke* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014). ISBN-13: 978-1405189361.
- Robert Fogelin. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*. (New York: Routledge, 2001). ISBN-13: 978-0415250115.
- Tom Stoneham. *Berkeley's World: An Examination of the Three Dialogues*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). ISBN-13: 978-0198752370.
- Don Garrett, *Hume (The Routledge Philosophers)* (New York: Routledge, 2014). ISBN-13: 978-0415283342.

Assignments

1. Weekly Preparations. Each week you will prepare a guide to the article under discussion. Precisely how you organize the guide is up to you (an outline, prose, images, diagrams, musical composition), but it should include the following:

- capsule summary of the main thesis of the paper
- clarificatory questions you'd like to ask the author
- capsule summary of one central argument of the paper
- a challenge, worry or objection to something in the article's discussion
- three to five key passages that you think we should look at in discussing the topic (either ones the author quote/cites or ones you think are important to the topic)

2. Seminar Paper. By the end of the semester you will write a (roughly) 25-page seminar paper, due May 16. It's hard to sit down in Week 10 and write a paper from scratch, so start looking for a topic immediately. We will ask you to meet with us to discuss your topic and the structure of your paper during the course of the semester. Details will follow.

Course Schedule

January 26: **Introduction**

February 2: **Locke on Sensitive Knowledge**

Focus paper

Jennifer Marusic, “Locke’s Simple Account of Sensitive Knowledge” manuscript.

Recommended primary literature:

Essay II.xxx-xxxii; IV.i; IV.iv.1-4; IV.ix; IV.xi. The very ambitious might want to look up the bits of the Stillingfleet correspondence that Jen cites in the paper.

Some related literature:

Keith Allen, “Locke and Sensitive Knowledge” *JHP* 51(2) (2013): 249-266.

Jennifer Nagel, “Sensitive Knowledge: Locke on Sensation and Skepticism” *Blackwell Companion to Locke*, ed. by Matthew Stuart, forthcoming.

Sam Rickless, “Is Locke’s Theory of Knowledge Inconsistent?” *PPR* 77(1) (2008): 83-104.

Sam Rickless, “Locke’s ‘Sensitive Knowledge’: Knowledge or Assurance?” *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 7, forthcoming.

Shelley Weinberg, “Locke’s Reply to the Skeptic” *PPQ* 94 (2013): 389-420.

Aaron Bruce Wilson, “Locke’s Externalism about ‘Sensitive Knowledge’” *BJHP* 22(3) (2014): 425-445.

February 9: **Locke on Substance and Mode: Where’s the Self?**

NB: MEETS IN BARKER CENTER ROOM #114 (the Kresge Room), 4-6 p.m.

Focus paper

Antonia Lolordo, “Person, Substance, Mode and the “moral man” in Locke’s *Essay*” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40(4) (2010): 643-668. NB: this material reappears as Chapter 2 of Lolordo’s *Locke’s Moral Man* (OUP, 2012).

Recommended primary literature:

TBA

Some related literature:

Emily Carson, “Locke on Simple and Mixed Modes” *Locke Studies* 5 (2005): 19-38.

Jessica Gordon Roth, “Locke on the Ontology of Persons” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 53(1): 2015.

Ruth Mattern, “Moral Science and the Concept of Person in Locke” in *Locke: Oxford Readings in Philosophy* (OUP, 1998): 226-241.

Ken Winkler, “Locke on Personal Identity” in *Locke: Oxford Readings in Philosophy*, edited by Vere Chappell (OUP, 1998): 149-174.

February 16: **NO CLASS President’s Day**

February 23: **Locke’s Nominal and Real Essences: Are there Natural Kinds?**

Focus paper

Matthew Stuart, *Locke’s Metaphysics*, chapter 4 “Essence.”

Some related literature:

Peter Anstey, *John Locke & Natural Philosophy*, chapter 11 “Species.”
 Margaret Atherton, “Locke on Essences and Classification” in *Cambridge Companion to Locke Essay*.
 Paul Guyer, “Locke’s Philosophy of Language” in *Cambridge Companion to Locke*.
 David Owen, “Locke on Real Essences,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 8 (2).
 Pauline Phemister, “Real Essences in Particular” *Locke Newsletter* 21 (1990): 27-55.
 Kyle Stanford, “Reference and Natural Kind Terms: the Real Essence of Locke’s View,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (1) (1998):7 8–97.

March 2: **Locke’s Mechanical Skepticism and the (non)Science of Body**

Focus paper

Walter Ott, *Causation & Laws of Nature in Early Modern Philosophy*, Part III: “Power and Necessity.”

Some related literature:

Peter Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, chapters 7 “Demonstration,” and 8 “Explanation.”
 Lisa Downing, “The Status of Mechanism in Locke’s *Essay*” *Phil Review* 107(3) (1998: 381-414
 Rae Langton, “Locke’s Relations and God’s Good Pleasure” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100(1) (2000):75–91.
 Edwin McCann, “Locke’s Philosophy of Body” in *Cambridge Companion to Locke*.
 Marleen Rozemond and Gideon Yaffe, “Peach Trees, Gravity and God: Mechanism in Locke” *JHP* 12(3) (2004): 387-412.
 Matthew Stuart, “Locke on Superaddition and Mechanism” *BJHP* 6(3) (1998): 351-379
 Margaret Wilson, “Superadded Properties: The Limits of Mechanism in Locke” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16(2) (1979): 143-150.

March 9: **Berkeley’s New Theory of Vision**

Focus paper

Becko Copenhagen, “Berkeley on the Language of Nature and the Objects of Vision,” *Res Philosophica*, Vol. 91, No. 1, January 2014, pp. 29–46. (copy available through course web site)

Recommended primary text: Berkeley’s *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, and *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained* (copies available through the course web site)

Some related literature:

Margaret, Atherton. 1987. *Berekeley’s Revolution in Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
 Margaret, Atherton. 2005. “Berkeley’s Theory of Vision and Its Reception,” in Kenneth Winkler, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 94-124.
 Richard Brook. 2003. “Berkeley’s Theory of Vision: Transparency and Signification,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (11) 691-9
 Rick Grush. 2007. “Berkeley and the Spatiality of Vision,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (45:3) 413-442.
 Margaret Wilson. 1999. “The Issue of “Common Sensibles” in Berkeley’s *New Theory*

of Vision,” in M. Wilson, *Ideas and Mechanism: Essays on Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Gideon Yaffe. 2003. “Berkeley and the ‘Mighty Difficulty’: The Idealist Lesson of the Inverted Retinal Image,” *Philosophical Topics* (31) 485-510.

March 16: **NO CLASS Spring Break**

March 23: **Berkeley on Spirits and Activity**

Focus paper

Sukjae Lee, “Berkeley on the Activity of Spirits” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 (3):539-576

Some related literature:

Margaret, Atherton, “The Coherence of Berkeley’s Theory of Mind,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (43) 1983, pp. 389-99.

Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, Volume 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 165-167.

Nicholas Jolley, “Berkeley and Malebranche on Causality and Volition,” in J.A. Cover and Mark Kulstad, eds., *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy: Essays Presented to Jonathan Bennett* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1990).

Anita Fritz, “Berkeley’s Self—It’s Origin in Malebranche,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* (15:4) 1954, pp. 554-572

Robert McKim, “Berkeley on Human Agency,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (2) 1984, pp. 181-94.

Robert McKim, “Berkeley’s Active Mind,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* (71) 1989, pp. 335-43.

Jeffrey McDonough, ““Berkeley, Human Agency, and Divine Concurrence,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (46:4) 2008, pp. 567-590

March 30: **Idealism in the First Dialogue**

Focus paper

Sam Rickless, *Berkeley’s Idealism*, Introduction (pp. 1-10), and Chapter 4: The Argument for Idealism in the First Dialogue (pp. 138-188).

Recommended primary texts: Berkeley’s *Principles* 1-15 and the *First Dialogue*.

Some related literature:

Margaret Atherton, “How Berkeley Can Maintain Snow is White,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (67) 2003, pp. 101-13.

Melissa Frankel, “Revisiting Berkeley’s Perceptual Relativity Argument,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (30:2) 2013, pp. 161-176.

Robert Muehlmann, *Berkeley’s Ontology* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992).

Daniel Flage, “Berkeley’s Epistemic Ontology: The Principles,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (34) 2004, pp. 25-60.

George Pitcher, *Berkeley* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

Stephen Harris, “Berkeley’s Argument from Perceptual Relativity,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14) 99-120.

April 6: **Hume's Naturalistic Response to Skepticism: Psychology and Normativity of Belief**

Focus paper

Don Garrett, "Hume's Sense of Probability" manuscript.

Some related literature:

Don Garrett, "Reason, Normativity, and Hume's Title Principle" *Oxford Handbook of Hume*, edited by Paul Russell, forthcoming.

Don Garrett, *Hume* (Routledge, 2014), esp. chapters 3, 5 and 7.

Louis Loeb, "Hume on Stability, Justification, and Unphilosophical Probability" *JHP* 33(1) (1995): 101-132.

Antonia LoLordo, "Probability and Skepticism about Reason in Hume's *Treatise*" *BJHP* 8(3) (2000): 419-446.

David Owen, "Hume on Scepticism with Regard to Reason" forthcoming in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume's Treatise*.

April 13: **Hume's Skepticism with Regard to the Senses: Realist, Anti-Realist, or Skeptic?**

Focus paper

Kenneth Winkler, "Hume on Skepticism with Regard to Senses" forthcoming in *The Cambridge Companion to Hume's Treatise*.

Some related literature:

Yumiko Inukai, "Perceptions and Object: Hume's Radical Empiricism" *Hume Studies* 37(2) (2011): 189-210.

Jani Hakkarainen, "Hume's Scepticism and Realism" *BJHP* 20(2) (2012): 283-309.

April 20: **Humean Skepticism in "The Conclusion of this Book"**

Focus paper

Donald Ainslie, "True Skepticism" forthcoming in *Hume's True Skepticism*, forthcoming.

Some related literature:

Annette Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments*, (you can read selectively).

Janet Broughton, "The Inquiry in Hume's *Treatise*" *Phil Review* 113(4) (2004): 537-556.

Don Garrett, "Hume's Conclusions in 'Conclusion of this book'" in *Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise*, edited by S. Traiger (ed) (Malden, MA: 2005): 151-175.

April 27: **TBA**