

PHIL 238: Hume (v. 3.1)

Fall 2022 / TuTh 11:30–1:00 (Union 114)

Instructor: Chuck Goldhaber

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00–4:00

Office: Gest 204

Course Description

David Hume was one of the modern world's most influential thinkers, radically shaping theoretical and practical philosophy, the natural sciences, history, politics, aesthetics, and economics. His treatment of human beings as subjects of an empirical science paved the way to the creation of the social sciences, and to a distinctively modern conception of ourselves. This course surveys his major doctrines, methods, and development in *A Treatise of Human Nature*; *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*; *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*; and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*.

Course Goals

By the end of the term, you will be able. . .

- to read early modern English prose with an eye to its historical context.
- succinctly reconstruct and critically evaluate abstract philosophical argument.
- thoughtfully engage with differing perspectives verbally and in writing.
- understand and articulate Hume's relevance to the historical development of philosophy and the social sciences, and to our contemporary context.

Course Requirements

- Up to 60 pages per week of dense philosophical reading
- Regular participation in class discussion
- Five journal entries of 300–500 words 25%
- Three 3–4 page (900–1200 word) papers 25% each

Required Texts

- *A Treatise of Human Nature* [=T]. 1740. Selby-Bigge Nidditch edition (OUP, ISBN: 9780198245889).
- *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* [=Essays]. 1741–77. Miller edition (Liberty Fund, ISBN: 0865970556).
- *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* [=EHU] and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* [=EPM]. 1748 and 1751. Selby-Bigge Nidditch edition (OUP, ISBN: 019824536X).

Recommended Further Readings

- Barry Stroud. *Hume*. 1977. Routledge. (ISBN: 0415203635).
- Don Garrett. *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*. 1997. Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 9780195097214).
- James Harris. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*. 2015. Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 1108733689).
- Margaret Watkins, *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*. 2019. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 9781108700085).

Readings

In the schedule below, readings are listed underneath the dates by which they must be read. All readings are dense and tough. Though Hume's prose is relatively accessible, and often stylish and entertaining, it is in early modern English. So make sure you budget enough time to read the reading carefully, and several times.

Always bring the week's required reading to class. Please acquire the exact editions of the books listed above. (Try searching by ISBN, if buying online.) I will make several copies of each book available at the library.

Participation

Regular verbal participation in group discussions is crucial for developing philosophical reasoning skills, which are very closely related to conversational and debate skills. If you are feeling shy in class, come to Office Hours, and let's start talking there. Consistent and thoughtful class participation will boost borderline final grades!

Journal Entries

Journal entries (300–500 words) should be thoughtful reflections on the reading. A good strategy is to start out by summarizing some aspect of/argument from the reading, using one or more brief quotations. You should then think about what you find puzzling, or interesting, or outrageous about the reading, and write about that. This is an open-ended exercise, so feel free to get creative. But it should be taken seriously. Take your time writing each reflection; make sure you are thoughtfully engaging with Hume's ideas.

You must submit *five* (5) journal reflections during the course. You can submit them whenever you'd like, so long you follow these guidelines: (a) You submit at least two in the first half of the course, at least two in second half, and always at least a week apart from each other. (b) Each journal reflection must discuss a reading we have not yet discussed in class, and must be submitted via email at least *three* (3) hours before the beginning of the relevant class; absolutely NO reflections will accepted after that! It's your responsibility to know/follow these guidelines; I won't chase after anyone!

Each journal reflection is worth 5% of your final grade and will be graded out of 5: 5 for a thoughtful, clear, well-written, and creative reflections; 3 for entries that show some understanding of the reading, but are shallow, hard to follow, or treat the subject unfairly; 1 for entries that show little understanding of the reading or veer off-topic.

I encourage you to post entries on the Moodle message board, but this is not required.

Papers

You must write three papers (3–4 pages, 900–1200 words). The first two papers are due 10/6 and 11/22 *by 10am* in my mailbox on the second floor of Gest. The final paper is due 12/16 *by noon* via email. Each paper must address one of several provided topics concerning the course texts, unless you get my approval for your own topic at least a week before the deadline. Provided topics will be distributed 9/22, 11/3, and 12/6.

All papers must be clear, concise, rigorous, and well argued. They must use quotes and citations when presenting Hume's views or arguments. Each paper must evaluate these views and arguments through use of objections and replies. You can't just explain what Hume thinks. Your job is to use course readings as a springboard for articulating your own views, and to argue for them convincingly.

Writing Resources

I am happy to discuss paper ideas and drafts in Office Hours. I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center. Info: <https://www.haverford.edu/writing-center>. You can easily make an appointment with a writing consultant online.

Late Policy

Late work will drop 1/3 of a letter grade per each 24 hours late (e.g., A– to B). Due to university policies, I cannot accept late final papers. Plan ahead and start early!

Academic Stressors, Resources on Campus, and Learning Differences

I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey. I also recognize that your ability to thrive academically can be impacted by your personal well-being and that stressors may impact you over the course of the semester. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other potential stressors, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources available on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), the Office of Academic Resources, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the Office of Multicultural

Affairs, the GRASE Center, and the Dean's Office. Additional information can be found at <https://www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources>.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have (or think you have) a learning difference or disability—including mental health, medical, or physical impairment—please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. The Director will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. It is never too late to request accommodations—our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course or if there are ways in which the overall structure of the course and general classroom interactions could be adapted to facilitate full participation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this accommodation from the Director of Access and Disability Services and then must speak to me. Other class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

Prohibitions

Cell phones must be silenced and put away during class. I prefer that no laptops be used in the classroom, but understand that there may be good reasons for making exceptions. Please reach out, if you would like to use a laptop.

No eating is allowed in the classroom. Drinks are OK, when allowed by the College's current COVID-19 policies.

Academic Integrity

Any form of cheating, including plagiarism, will be reported to the Honor Council. You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism or cheating. Please consult the Honor Code's webpage: <https://honorcouncil.haverford.edu/the-code/>.

To ensure a safe and constructive learning environment for all, please join me in the commitment to respect everyone's identities and rights, regardless of differences.

Schedule

Required reading

Optional further readings/Assignments

Class 1 (8/30) – Introduction to Hume’s life and writings

– Essays, “My Own Life”

— Part I: Theoretical Foundations —

Class 2 (9/1) – Hume’s philosophical methods, styles, and aims

– T Advertisement, Introduction

– Stroud, Ch 1

– EHU Advertisement, 1

Class 3 (9/6) – Impressions and ideas

– T 1.1.1–3

– Stroud, Ch 2

– EHU 2

Class 4 (9/8) – How ideas become general in their representation

– T 1.1.4, 1.1.7

– EHU 3

Class 5 (9/13) – Against the causal principle

– T 1.3.2–3

– T 1.1.5, 1.3.1

Class 6 (9/15) – Causal reasoning is not based in reason

– T 1.3.6

– T 1.3.4–5

– EHU 4

– Stroud, Ch 3

– Garrett, Ch 5

Class 7 (9/20) – Causal reasoning is based in custom

– EHU 5

Class 8 (9/22) – Reasoning like animals!

Paper 1 topics

– T 1.3.7, 1.3.16

– T App (pp. 623–29)

– EHU 9

– Stroud, Ch 4

Class 9 (9/27) – The idea of necessary connection

– T 1.3.14

– EHU 7

— Part II: Skeptical Implications —

Class 10 (9/29) – The extinction of all belief and reasoning

– T 1.4.1

– LoLordo, “Probability and Skepticism. . .”

– T 1.3.11–12

Class 11 (10/4) – The fictional self

– T 1.4.6

– Stroud, Ch 6

– T 1.4.2

Class 12 (10/6) – Skeptical melancholy and the uncouth monster Paper 1 due

– T 1.4.7

– Goldhaber, “The Humors in Hume’s Skepticism”

[*Fall Break*]

Class 13 (10/18) – Mitigated skepticism

– EHU 12

– Garrett, Ch 10

Class 14 (10/20) – Work-in-Progress Presentation

– Goldhaber, “Hume’s Skeptical Philosophy and the Moderation of Pride”

– T 2.1.2, 2.1.6, 3.3.2

— Part III: Moral Philosophy —

Class 15 (10/25) – Free will and responsibility

– T 2.3.1–2

– Garrett, Ch 6

– EHU 8

Class 16 (10/27) – Reason is a slave of the passions

– T 2.3.3–4

– Stroud, Ch 7

Class 17 (11/1) – Moral judgment

– T 3.1.1–2

– Stroud, Ch 8

– EPM App 1

Class 18 (11/3) – Sympathy, benevolence, generality

Paper 2 topics

– T 3.3.1, 3.3.3

– T 3.3.6

Class 19 (11/8) – Beauty

– Essays, “Of the Standard of Taste”

Class 20 (11/10) – Justice as an artificial virtue

– T 3.2.1

– T 3.2.2–4

– EPM 3

— Part IV: Mary Shepherd —

Class 21 (11/15) – Mary Shepherd’s critique of Hume I

– Mary Shepherd, *An Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect*, Ch. 2, §§1–2

– LoLordo, *Mary Shepherd* (Element), §§1–2

– Bolton, “Causality and Causal Induction...”

Class 22 (11/17) – Mary Shepherd’s critique of Hume II (Guest: Antonia LoLordo)

– Mary Shepherd, *An Essay Upon the Relation of Cause and Effect*, Ch. 2, §§3–4

– LoLordo, “Mary Shepherd on Causation, Induction, and Natural Kinds”

Distinguished Visitor Lecture (11/18), 1:30–3:00 in Gest 101

– Antonia LoLordo, “Mary Shepherd’s Solution to the Mind-Body Problem”

— Part V: Social Philosophy —

Class 23 (11/22) – The value of a liberal education

Paper 2 due

– Essays, “Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion,” “Of the Study of History,” “Of Essay Writing”

– Watkins, Ch 4

[*Thanksgiving Break*]

Class 24 (11/29) – Chastity and marriage

– T 3.2.12

– Watkins, Ch 6

– Essays, “Of Polygamy and Divorce”

– EPM 4

Class 25 (12/1) – Racial and cultural difference

– Essays, “Of National Character”

– Watkins, Ch 2

– Essays, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations” (just pp. 377–93)

– James Beattie, excerpt from *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*

Class 26 (12/6) – Perspectives on the good life

Final paper topics

– Essays, “The Epicurean,” “The Stoic,” “The Platonist,” “The Sceptic”

– Watkins, Ch 3

Class 27 (12/8) – Can philosophy make us happy?

– Reread the four essays from last time

– Essays, “Of Commerce”

– Essays, “My Own Life”

– Goldhaber, “Hume’s Real Riches”

*** Final papers due December 16, by noon via email ***