Description:

A study of Hume’s ethical and political philosophy, with attention to its basis in Hume’s theory of the mind and of the passions; its background in 17th- and 18th-century British moral philosophy; and its relation to Hume’s philosophy of religion.

Required Books:


Recommended Book Ordered:


Assignments and Grading Policies:

In order to pass the course you must attend the discussion sections and complete all of the written work. There will be three 6-8 page papers, due on Thursday, March 6, Thursday, April 10, and Friday, May 9 (in Reading Period). Topics will be assigned. There will be a final examination, consisting of essay questions selected from a set of questions handed out in advance, which is scheduled for Tuesday, May 20.

Extensions on the midterm papers must be requested before the date on which the paper is due. Work that is late without an extension or beyond an extension will be discounted at the rate of one-third of a grade per day (A to A-, A- to B+, and so forth). No extensions will be granted on the final paper. Papers that receive a grade of B- or below for reasons other than lateness may be rewritten for a higher grade under the guidance of your section leader. The three papers and the final exam will each count for approximately a quarter of your grade, but active participation in section discussions and marked improvement in your written work will weigh in your favor.

Schedule of Readings, Recommended Readings, and Assignments

T = *Treatise of Human Nature*

1E = *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

2E = *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*
R = Dialogues and Natural History of Religion
Essays = Essays Moral, Political, and Literary

1/30: Introduction

2/4: Hume’s Philosophical Project
R: “My Own Life” pp. 3-10
1E: “Of the different Species of Philosophy” pp. 5-16
T: “Introduction”; pp. xiii-xix

The Theory of Ideas and the Problem of Causality
T: Book I, Part III; “Of knowledge and probability” §§ I-VIII, pp. 69-106,
Recommended Reading:
1E: §§ II-V, pp. 17-55

2/11: General Rules and the Idea of Power
T: Book I, Part III; “Of knowledge and probability” §§ XIII-XIV, pp. 143-172
Recommended Reading:
1E: § VII “Of the Idea of necessary Connection” pp. 60-79

Personal Identity
T: Book I, Part IV; “Of personal identity” § VI, pp. 251-262
T: Appendix, pp. 633-636

2/18: Hume’s Theory of the Passions: Pride and Humility

2/25: Hume’s Theory of the Passions: Love and Hate

3/4: Freedom and Motivation
T: Book II, Part III, “Of the will and direct passions”
§§ I-III, pp. 399-418
§ IX, pp.438-448
T: Book I, Part III, “Of the influence of belief” § X, pp. 118-123
Recommended Reading:
1E: “Of Liberty and Necessity” pp. 80-103

First Paper Due Thursday March 6

3/11: Reason versus the Moral Sense
2E: “Of the general Principles of Morals” pp. 169-175

3/18: The Natural Virtues
T: Book III, Part III “Of the other virtues and vices” pp. 574-617
Recommended Reading:
2E: “Of Benevolence” pp. 176-182
2E: Chapters VI-VII (“Of Qualities....”) pp. 233-267
2E: Appendix IV: “Of Some Verbal Disputes” pp. 312-323

Spring Recess

4/1: The Artificial Virtues
T: Book III, Part II, “Of justice and injustice”
§§ I-II, pp. 477-501,
§§ V-VI, pp. 516-534
Recommended Reading:
2E: Appendix III: “Some farther Considerations with regard to Justice” pp. 303-311

4/8: Normative Foundations
1E: “Of the different Species of Philosophy” pp. 5-16
T: Book I, Part IV, “Of the sceptical and other systems of philosophy”
§ I “Of scepticism with regard to reason” pp. 180-187
§ VII “Conclusion of this book” pp. 263-274
T: Book III, Part III, § VI “Conclusion of this book” pp. 618-621
2E: “Conclusion”, pp. 268-284
2E: Appendix II: “Of Self-love”, pp. 295-302

Second Paper Due Thursday April 10

4/15: The Argument from Design
R: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Parts I-VIII, pp. 29-89

4/22: Religion and Morality
R: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Parts IX-XII, pp. 90-130

4/29: Hume’s View of Religion
R: The Natural History of Religion, pp. 134-185

Final Paper Due Friday, May 9
Final Examination: Tuesday, May 20