Philosophy 122 – British Empiricism  
Spring 2012  
Syllabus 

Important Information: 

Lecture:  MWF 10-11 (including section)  
Location: First day - Emerson Hall 101, then hopefully moving to Emerson 310  
Professor: Jeffrey McDonough  
Office Hours: 314 Emerson Hall, Friday, 2-4 p.m. and by appointment  
E-mail: jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu  
Course Web Page: Through my.harvard, Course iSite 

Recommended Texts (available at the Coop): 


Course Description: 

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were among the most exciting and revolutionary periods in the history of philosophy. Among the most prominent philosophers working in that period, Locke, Berkeley and Hume have traditionally been grouped together under the label “British Empiricists” in virtue of their rejection of innate ideas and emphasis on experience as a source of knowledge. This course aims to provide an overview of the development of early modern empiricism while exploring in some detail a number of central issues, arguments and controversies. Topics will include, among others, the theory of ideas, the nature of body, personal identity, human agency, skepticism, and naturalism.
Requirements and Grading:

1. **Reading**

The ability to read texts carefully and thoughtfully is one of the most important skills the study of philosophy can help to foster. In order to better understand what is being taught, and to promote informed classroom discussions, required readings should be completed before lecture. Those readings are typically very short, but also very difficult, and students who wish to do well in the course should expect to read assigned texts more than once.

2. **Papers**

In order to give students a chance to explore topics in greater depth, and to improve their writing skills, each student will be required to write two short papers and one longer paper over the course of the semester. Each short paper should be 3-5 pages double-spaced. Undergraduate longer papers should be 12-15 pages. Graduate longer papers should be 15-20 pages. Students should write one paper centered on each of the philosophers we will be studying, but they are free to write their longer papers on any of the three philosophers we are studying. (So, for example, one student may wish to write her longer paper on Locke, and then short papers on Berkeley and Hume, while another student might wish to write short papers on Locke and Berkeley, and then a longer paper on Hume.) **Please submit papers to jkmcdon@fas.harvard.edu as a Word documents.**

3. **Grading**

Grades will be determined by: classroom participation and papers according to the following percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>First short essay</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second short essay</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longer paper</td>
<td>40 %</td>
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4. **Special Needs and Emergencies**

Students requiring special assistance are encouraged to inform the professor at the beginning of the term. I will be happy to accommodate those with special needs as far as possible. Absences from class or exam periods and late papers will be dealt with in accordance with the policies described in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences handbooks. Students should expect that late papers will be marked down a third of a letter grade for each day that they are late. Requests made to the professor prior to an absence or due date may result in special accommodation.

5. **Academic Integrity**

Collaboration is permitted in written work: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the
result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you should acknowledge this assistance by adding a footnote at the end of your paper that says something like "I would like to thank so-and-so for her helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper."
Tentative Schedule

Monday, January 28: Introduction to Early Modern Empiricism

• Required: Please read the syllabus carefully
• Recommended: “The Epistle to the Reader” in Locke’s Essay (pages 6-14 in Nidditch)
• Supplement: Early Modern England: Politics, Religion and Society under the Tudors and Stuarts, Lectures by Keith E. Wrightson, available through Yale Open Courses at: http://oyc.yale.edu/history/hist-251 (also available through itunes);

--LOCKE--

Note: Unless otherwise indicated the following readings are from Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding; reference will be to book (capital Roman numeral), chapter (lower case Roman numeral), and section (Arabic numeral). So, for example, I.i.1 would denote the first book, the first chapter, the first section of the Essay.

Wednesday, January 30: Locke’s Attack on Innate Knowledge

• Required reading: I.ii; I.iii.3-4; I.iv.1-6, 20-22, 25
• Optional reading: I.i-iv; From Leibniz’s New Essay concerning Human Understanding I.i and I.iii. (A copy of the Leibniz reading will be posted on the course web site.)

Friday, February 1: Discussion section

Monday, February 4: Locke’s Theory of Ideas I (what ideas are)

• Required: II.i.1-5, 25; II.ii-iii; II.vi-vii; II.xii.1-7
• Optional: II.i.6-24

Wednesday, February 6: Locke’s Theory of Ideas II (what ideas do)

• Required: II.ix., II.xi
• Optional: II.x; II.xxiii

Friday, February 8: Discussion section

Monday, February 11: Locke’s Philosophy of Body

• Required: II.viii, II.xxiii.9-12, II.xxxi.1-2, IV.ii.11
• Optional: II.iv; II.xiii

Wednesday, February 13: Language and Classification

• Required: III.iii
• Optional: II.xxx-xxxii; III.i-vi; III.ix-x; IV.iv.11-14, IV.vi.4-6

Friday, February 15: Discussion section
Monday, February 18: No class – Presidents’ Day

Wednesday, February 20: Knowledge and Its Limitations
• Required: IV.iii, II.xxiii.15-19, 22-32; IV.x
• Optional: Correspondence with Stillingfleet, Note I, reference at IV.iii.6 (pages 696-726 in Woolhouse edition – a copy will be posted in the course web site under “Stillingfleet correspondence”).

Friday, February 22: Discussion section

Monday, February 25: Substance
Required: I.iv.18; II.xii; II.xiii 17-20; II.xxiii; III.iii.6
Optional: Correspondence with Stillingfleet, Note E, reference at II.xxiii.2 (pages 654-659 in Woolhouse edition – a copy will be posted on the course web site under “Stillingfleet correspondence”).

Wednesday, February 27: Identity and Diversity
• Required: I.iv.3-5; II.xxvii
• Optional: Correspondence with Stillingfleet, Note F, reference at II.xxvii.29 (pages 659-684 in Woolhouse edition – a copy of will be posted on the course web site under “Stillingfleet correspondence”).

Friday, March 1: Discussion section

--BERKELEY--

--- Locke Short Paper Due by Monday, March 4, 10:00 am ---

Monday, March 4: Berkeley’s Attack on Abstract Ideas
• Required: Introduction to the Principles
• Optional: Principles: 3, 10, 11-13, 97, 98, 100, 116, 125, 143; Locke’s Essay II.xiii.13; III.iii.7

Wednesday, March 6: The New Theory of Vision
• Required: Selections from Berkeley’s An essay towards a new theory of vision (NTV); sections 1-28; 41-52; 127-138 (a copy of the NTV will be posted on the course web site)
• Optional: The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained (a copy will be posted on the course web site under the title)

Friday, March 8: Discussion section
Monday, March 11: Against Materialism:  *Principles*
  • Required: *Principles* 1-24
  • Optional: *Dialogues* I and II

Wednesday, March 13: Against Materialism:  *Dialogues*
  • Required: *Dialogues* I and II
  • Optional: *Principles* 1-24

Friday, March 15: Discussion section

--March 18-22, No Classes, Spring Break--

Monday, March 25: Ordinary Objects
  • Required: *Principles* 3, 45-48;  *Dialogues* III
  • Optional: Berkeley’s Letter to Percival, Trin. Coll. Sept 6th, 1710 (a copy will be posted on the course web site)

Wednesday, March 27: Human Agency, Part I
  • Required: *Principles* 25-28, 137-138;  *Dialogues* 3:236-240;  *Philosophical Commentaries* 107, 461, 499, 548, 699.  (Relevant sections of the *Commentaries* will be posted on the course web site.)
  • Optional: Samuel Johnson Letter 10 September 1729 (The letter to Johnson will be posted on the course web site.)

Friday, March 29: Discussion section

Monday, April 1: Human Agency, Part II
  • Required: *Dialogues* 3:236-240
  • Optional: Berkeley’s Reply to Johnson 25 November 1729 (Berkeley’s reply to Johnson will be posted on the course web site.)

---HUME---

Wednesday, April 3: The Study of Human Nature
*Optional:*  Enquiry, Sections 1-3

Friday, April 5: Section

--- Berkeley Short Paper Due by Monday, April 8, 10:00 am ---
Monday, April 8: Hume’s Critique of Induction
Required: Enquiry, Section 4
Optional: Treatise I.iii.

Wednesday, April 10: Hume’s Skeptical Solution?
Required: Enquiry, Sections 5-6
Optional: Treatise I.iii

Friday, April 12: Section

Monday, April 15: The Idea of Necessity
Required: Enquiry, Section 7
Optional: Treatise I.iii.14

Wednesday April 17: Skepticism with Regard to the Senses, first half
Required: Treatise I.iv.2 – paragraphs 1 -22
Optional: Treatise I.iv.2 – paragraphs 22 – 57

Friday, April 19: Section

Monday, April 22: Skepticism with Regard to the Senses, second half
Required: Treatise I.iv.2 – paragraphs 22 – 57
Optional: Treatise I.iv.3-4

Wednesday, April 24: Personal Identity
Required: Treatise I.iv.5-6; Appendix; “Hume, Belief, and Personal Identity,” Justin Broackes in Peter Millican, ed., Reading Hume on Human Understanding (Oxford 2006) 187-210. Justin’s article will be posted on the course web site.
Optional: Treatise I.ii.1-6; I.i.2, I.iii.5

Friday, April 26: Section

Monday, April 29: Hume’s Naturalism

Required: Treatise Liv
Optional: Enquiry 12
Supplement: Hume’s Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion

Wednesday, May 1: Wrapping up!

--- Hume Short Paper Due by Monday, May 6, 10:00 am ---
-- Undergraduate Long Papers Due by Thursday, May 9, 10:00 am --
-- Graduate Long Papers Due by Friday, May 17, 10:00 am --