The British Empiricists, Spring 2011

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Class time: Tuesday & Thursday, 12:30-1:50 pm
Office Hours: Tuesday & Fridays 2-3pm
Office: B5A, Mudd Hall of Philosophy (MHP)

Course Description

This course concerns the views of four of the greatest and most influential English-speaking philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume and Thomas Reid. Although all four wrote about a wide diversity of topics, this course focuses on their interrelated views regarding the nature of thought – both thoughts about particular things, and thoughts about kinds of things – and their views regarding sensory perception, particularly visual perception, and the way it provides knowledge of the external world.

Course Objectives

We will be studying primary texts written by major figures of Western Philosophy, who helped shape not only the development of philosophy, but also of some other academic disciplines, such as psychology and cognitive science. By completing this course, students will have been exposed to some major issues regarding the nature of mind and the relation between our minds and the external world. They will also have gained an appreciation of the importance of experience as a source of knowledge.

By completing the written assignments, students will have enhanced their critical thinking skills, which include the ability to read a difficult text, and to provide in-depth analyses of the arguments advanced in such a text.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Students are expected to attend all lectures and sections. The following constitute the grade components:

- Regular attendance and participation in lectures and discussions. This will represent 10% of your final grade.

- Two papers (5-7 pages), analyzing an argument from one of the reading assignments. Each counts 20% towards the final grade. These essays are due at the beginning of class, on the following dates:
  
  **February 10th** (first essay)
  **April 21th** (second essay)

- One in-class mid-term examination, which will count 20% of the final grade, on **March 3rd**.
• Final in-class examination, which will count 30% of the final grade, on **May 12th**.

**Required Books**

- Thomas Reid. Selections from *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* and from *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (photocopies to be distributed in class).

**Course Topics**

The following schedule of topics may be changed if necessary. You will be notified of any changes, and the new syllabus will be posted online – on Blackboard and on my webpage.

**I. Locke**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>1/11</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 6–14; 43–48 (Epistle to the Reader, I.i)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>1/13</td>
<td><strong>Innate Ideas</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 48–65 (I.ii)</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>1/18</td>
<td><strong>Ideas and the Nature of Thought</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 104–121; 155–166 (II.i-ii, II.xi, II.xii)</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td><strong>Primary and Secondary Qualities</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 132–149 (II.viii, II.ix)</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>1/25</td>
<td><strong>Substance and the Mind-Body Problem</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 295–317 (II.xxxii)</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>1/27</td>
<td><strong>Language and General Terms</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 402–420 (III.i, III.ii, III.iii)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td><strong>Natural Kinds</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 438–471 (III.vi)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td><strong>Knowledge about Kinds</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 525–530; 579–591 (IV.1, IV.vi)</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td><strong>Knowledge of the External World</strong></td>
<td>Locke, pp. 630–639 (IV.xi)</td>
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### II. Berkeley

**Week 5 2/10**  
**FIRST PAPER DUE**  
Seeing distance  
Berkeley, pp. 7–24 (New Theory of Vision §§1–51)

**Week 6 2/15**  
Seeing size  

**Week 6 2/17**  
Seeing shape  

**Week 7 2/22**  
Common sensibles  

**Week 7 2/24**  
Abstract Thought  
Berkeley, pp. 73–88 (Principles of Human Knowledge-Introduction)

**Week 8 3/1**  
Towards Idealism: Primary and Secondary Qualities  
Berkeley, pp. 89–101 (Principles... §§1–33)

**Week 8 3/3**  
MIDTERM EXAMINATION

**Week 9 3/8**  
Objections to Idealism  
Berkeley, pp. 101–122 (Principles... §§34–84)

### III. Hume

**Week 9 3/10**  
Ideas, Impressions and Association  
Hume, pp. 7–14 (I.i.1–4)

**SPRING RECESS: 3/14–3/19**

**Week 10 3/22**  
Abstraction and Ideas of Substances  
Hume, pp. 14–22 (I.i.5–7)

**Week 10 3/24**  
Causation—The Negative Views  
Hume, pp. 50–55; 59–65 (I.iii.1–2, 4–6)

**Week 11 3/29**  
Belief  
Hume, pp. 65–74; 81–85; 396–398 (I.iii.7–8, 10, Appendix)

**Week 11 3/31**  
Causation—The Idea of Necessary Connexion  
Hume, pp. 105–116 (I.iii.14)

**Week 12 4/5**  
Causation—The Idea of Necessary Connexion  
Hume, pp. 105–116 (I.iii.14)

**Week 12 4/7**  
The Limits of Reason  
Hume, pp. 121–125 (I.iv.1)

**Week 13 4/12**  
Knowledge of the External World  
Hume, pp. 125–144 (I.iv.2)

**Week 13 4/14**  
Knowledge of the External World  
Hume, pp. 125–144 (I.iv.2)
IV. Reid

Week 14  4/19  SECOND PAPER DUE
Week 14  4/21  Reid’s Reply to the Skeptic
               Reid, An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, 5.7
               and 6.20 (photocopy to be handed out in class)

Week 15  4/26  Reid on the First Principles of Common Sense
               Reid, Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, 2.20 and 6 (photocopy to be
               handed out in class)

Week 15  4/28  Closing remarks.

FINAL EXAMINATION: THURSDAY, MAY 12, FROM 2:00 p.m. TO 4:00 p.m. Note: the
date and time of the final examination are set by the Registrar’s office according to the days and
times of the class meeting; I have no say in exam scheduling. Please do not ask to take the exam
early; if you know now that you will have commitments that require you to leave campus prior to
the time of the exam, do not enroll in this class.

Other Policies

Plagiarism: Each student is expected to know the University policy on plagiarism as it is stated
in SCampus: http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/universityconductcode/ especially the sections
under “11.00 Behavior Violating University Standards and Appropriate Sanctions”. Students
caught plagiarizing on a paper, exam, or any assignment, will be reported to the Office of
Student Judicial Affairs and will be failed for the course. Proper citations are an easy way of
avoiding this problem. If you are unsure about how to cite in your paper, please see me.

Academic Accommodations: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a
disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DPS) each semester. A
letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DPS. Please be sure
the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DPS is located in STU 301
and is open from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DPS is
(213)-740-0776.