

University of Warwick

## **PH 201 History of Modern Philosophy (Term 1)**

Kirk Surgener

Autumn 2015

### **Brief Module Description**

The first part of this module, taught in the autumn term, covers the metaphysical and epistemological thought of three of the great Empiricist philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries – John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume. In this part of the module we will look at the views of these philosophers on substance, qualities, ideas, causation, personal identity, and the self.

### **Module Plan**

Week 1: Introduction and Locke on Innate Knowledge

Week 2: Locke on Perception and Qualities

Week 3: Locke on Substance, Personal Identity and Abstract Ideas

Week 4: Berkeley's Idealism

Week 5: Berkeley on God and his Responses to Critics

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: Hume's 'Science of Man' and Meaning Empiricism

Week 8: Hume's Fork and the Problem of Induction

Week 9: Hume on Causation

Week 10: Hume on Religion and Ethics.

**Please note** that depending on how long it takes to get through the material the general schedule may be modified as the course progresses. Your seminars will stick to the schedule below, so that you are able to prepare adequately.

### **How to Do Well in this Module**

The main purpose of this module is to get you to have a deep understanding of the key doctrines of the three pivotal figures we will be studying, and for you to end up with some feeling for their influence on the development of the field of philosophy. The lectures will provide you with an outline of the relevant ideas. Your seminars are designed to consist in detailed discussion of the core texts. Thus it is essential that you read these texts carefully, take notes and write answers to the questions designed to guide your study. These questions are a *compulsory part of seminar participation*.

The secondary literature on these three figures is vast, with hundreds of articles and books on each, and contentious debates on their ideas carry on to this day. For the purposes of this part of the module it would be a good idea to concentrate on carefully reading the primary texts. Certainly, you should engage with the relevant secondary literature when writing your assessed work, but in preparing for seminars and lectures make sure you concentrate on the original texts. Most of your required seminar readings are fairly short but can be quite dense. They will reward re-reading and careful thought.

### **Requirements and Assessment**

Requirements:

Students are required to attend the weekly lectures and seminars and participate actively.

Seminars begin in week 2. Seminars present an opportunity for in-depth discussion of issues raised

in the lecture and for a more precise analysis of core texts. You are required to read the core text, make notes on it and provide short, written answers to the study questions below. Bring the text with you to class. You should also make a note of anything in the lecture or text you'd like to get clearer on: the seminars are one of your opportunities to clarify your understanding.

The three main texts for this course are:

John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge. And Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous.*

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*

These texts are available in a variety of editions. You can also find all three available on-line for free from a number of websites. Particularly recommended are:

Locke's *Essay*: Nidditch's edition for Clarendon Press.

Berkeley: The Oxford World Classics edition edited by Howard Robinson

Hume's *Treatise*: The Norton and Norton edition for Oxford University Press.

However, any unabridged edition is fine, and make sure to bring the text to class.

The **readings and study questions for the seminars** are as follows:

**Week 2 - Locke on Innate Knowledge:** Required Reading *Essay* Book 1 Chapter 2.

1. Why would universal assent not prove that a principle is innate, according to Locke in section 3?
2. Are there any principles universally assented to, according to Locke? Why/why not?
3. Suppose there are a set of principles we all assent to as soon as they are understood. Does this mean they are innate?
4. What is Locke's explanation for a child coming to assent to ' $3 + 4 = 7$ ' in section 16? Is it adequate?
5. What point is Locke making in section 23? Is he right?

**Week 3 - Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities:** Required Reading *Essay* Book 2 Chapter 8.

1. What is the difference between an idea and a quality? Give examples of each.
2. What is a primary quality? Which sorts of qualities are primary?
3. What is a secondary quality? Give some examples.
4. Ideas of primary qualities resemble actual features of bodies, but secondary qualities do not. What does Locke mean by this claim, and why does he make it?
5. What is the water example meant to show?

**Week 4 - Personal Identity:** Required Reading *Essay* Book 2 Chapter 27.

1. What is a person, according to Locke?
2. In what does personal identity consist, for Locke?
3. What if I wholly lose all my memories? What does Locke say about this sort of case? Is his view plausible?

4. Is it just to punish someone for something they cannot remember?
5. Explain how and why Locke distinguishes between the identity of humans ('man' in his terms) and persons.
6. Is it possible for a person to move from one body to another according to Locke? Is this right?

**Week 5 - Berkeley's Idealism:** Required Reading *Principles of Human Knowledge*: Introduction 1-5 and Principles 1-24.

1. What is the argument in principle 10 against Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities? Do you find it convincing?
2. What is the argument in principle 11? Can you think of a response?
3. What does Berkeley try to establish in principle 8? How is this related to the arguments mentioned above?
4. Why can't an idea exist in an unperceiving substance (principle 7)?
5. How does Berkeley use hallucinations ('phrensies') in his argument in principle 18?
6. Overall, how convincing do you find Berkeley's battery of arguments for idealism?

**Week 6:** Reading Week

**Week 7 - Berkeley on God, and replies to objections:** Required Reading *PHK* Principles 145-146; 34-59.

1. How do I know about the existence of other people, according to Berkeley in principle 145?
2. What is (are) the argument(s) for the existence of God in principle 146?
3. What do you think of this argument?
4. Briefly summarise each of the objections that Berkeley considers in principles 34-59.
5. Which of these objections do you think is most worrying for Berkeley? Does he answer it convincingly?

**Week 8 - Meaning Empiricism:** Required Reading *Treatise* Book 1 part 1, in particular section 1.

1. Hume divides all the "perceptions of the mind" into **impressions** and **ideas**. (a) What are the sources of our impressions? (b) Where do our ideas come from? Give your own examples of an impression and an idea.
2. How can I have an idea of something that I have never had an impression of, such as a winged horse or a vampire?
3. Hume says that *all* our ideas are "copies of our impressions." Is this contradicted by the example Hume gives of the missing shade of blue?
4. What is Hume's solution to the missing shade of blue problem? Are you convinced by it?
5. Is it true that when you are thinking you have a stream of faint copies of impressions in your mind? Does this depend on the subject matter of your thought?

**Week 9 – Causation and Necessary Connection:** Required Reading *Treatise* Book 1 Part 3 Section 14.

1. According to Hume, can we have *a priori* knowledge of cause and effect? Why/why not?
2. Every time I go to work wearing my only pair of red socks, it rains. Do my red socks *cause* the rain?

3. Does Hume believe there is no such thing as necessary connexion? Does he believe that there might be but we can't ever *know* for sure? Does he think the term "necessary connexion" is meaningless?
4. How does Hume use the copy principle in this section?
5. If the universe was devoid of thinking beings would causation exist?

**Week 10 – Ethics:** Require Reading *Treatise* Book 3 Part 1 Section 1; Book 2 part 3 Section 3.

1. What is the role of reason in producing action?
2. What is the role of the passions in producing action?
3. How does Hume characterise the relationship between reason and passion?
4. Hume claims that it is not against reason to prefer the destruction of the world to the scratching of his finger. Is he right?
5. What is the relation between reason, passion and morality for Hume? N.B. this is a tough question, but give it a go.

### **Assessment Methods:**

This module will be assessed in the following way:

- Two 1,500-word essays (one per term, worth 15% of the module in total)
- 3 hour exam (worth 85% of the module)

Essays should be submitted to Tabula in line with the essay deadlines schedule – for this term the deadline is 12 noon Thursday, Week 8.

### **Assessed Essay:**

Write a 1,500 word essay on one of the following questions:

How does Locke distinguish between primary and secondary qualities? Is the distinction tenable?

Explain Locke's best argument against the existence of innate principles. Evaluate that argument.

### **Further Reading List:**

Please note that in addition to the materials I will make available each week, you also have access to previous iterations of the course. These materials differ in approach and the topics focussed on, but you may find it useful to take a look at another approach to the topics.

You may find the following three textbooks useful:

E.J. Lowe (1995): *Locke on Human Understanding* (Routledge)

Robert Fogelin (2001): *Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*.

Harold Noonan (2007): *Hume* (Oneworld)

Further general reading:

Ayers, M. (1991): *Locke* (Routledge)

Bennett, J. (1971): *Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Oxford University Press)

Chappell, V. (1994): *Cambridge Companion to Locke* (CUP)

Dancy, J. (1987): *Berkeley – an Introduction* (Blackwell)

Grayling, A.C. (1986): *Berkeley: Central Arguments* (Open Court)

Jolley, N. (1999): *Locke: His Philosophical Thought* (Oxford University Press)

Lowe, E.J. (2005): *Locke* (Routledge)

Mackie, J. (1976) *Problems from Locke* (Oxford University Press)

Winkler, K.P. (1989): *Berkeley: An Interpretation* (Oxford University Press)

Winkler, K.P. (ed.) (2005): *Cambridge Companion to Berkeley* (CUP)

Mackie, J. (1976) *Problems from Locke* (Oxford University Press)

Stroud, B (1977): *Hume* (Routledge)

Blackburn, S. (2008): *How to Read Hume* (Granta)

Noonan, H. (1999): *Hume on Knowledge* (Routledge)

Kemp Smith, N. (1941): *The Philosophy of David Hume* (Palgrave)

Traiger, S. (ed.) (2006): *Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise* (Blackwell)

Baier, A. (1991): *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (Harvard UP)

Dicker, G. (1998): *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics* (Routledge)

Garrett, D. (1997): *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (OUP)

Pears, D. (1990): *Hume's System* (OUP)