PHILOSOPHY 682: Philosophical Figures: Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature
Prof. Ted Kinnaman
Fall 2012

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course we will study David Hume’s masterwork A Treatise of Human Nature. Here Hume attempts to construct a “system” of philosophical thought, meaning a coherent and unified account of the major issues in philosophy. Examination of the Treatise, then, lets us look at a wide variety of philosophical topics from a single standpoint, and in connection to one another. In reading Book I of the Treatise, we will consider the Hume’s views about causation, knowledge, and the existence of the external world, as well as his overall conception of philosophy. In reading Book II, we will discuss his moral psychology and its connections to the philosophy of emotions; his compatibilism and the debate about free will; and the account of moral responsibility. Finally, Book III will bring us to his account of moral judgment.

GRADES: Written work for the course will consist of a large research paper, on a topic of the student’s own choosing, which will count for 50% of the grade for the semester, and eight much shorter writings to be prepared for most of our class meetings. Taken together these will account for the other 50% of your grade.


READING SCHEDULE:

Aug. 29: Introduction to course; Hume’s system. Reading: Introduction (pp. xiii - xix); Book I, Part 1 (pp. 1 - 25).


Sept. 12: Empiricism. Reading: Sellars, Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind; Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, On the Principles of a Transcendental Deduction in General.”

Sept. 19: Knowledge and causation (I). Reading: I.III (pp. 69 - 179).

Sept. 26: Knowledge and causation (II). Reading: Strawson (pp. 7 - 31 and 145 - 73).


Oct. 17: The mind. I.IV.VI (pp. 235 - 63) and Appendix (pp. 633 - 6).

Oct. 24: Passions. Reading: II.I.I-VI (pp. 275 - 94); II.II.I-III (pp. 329 - 51); Davidson, A Hume’s Theory of Pride.@

Nov. 1: Character and moral assessment. Reading: II.III.I-II (pp. 399 - 418); Baier, A The Direction of our Conduct.@ [By this point you ought to have met with me regarding your research paper.]

Nov. 8: The naturalistic fallacy. Reading: [tbd]

Nov. 15: Reason as “slave of the passions.” Reading: II.III.III (pp. 413 - 8); III.I.I (pp. 455 - 70). [Draft of research paper due]

Nov. 29: Moral objectivity. Reading: III.III (pp. 574 - 622); Korsgaard, A The General Point of View@; Bricke, A Moral Sentiments.@

Dec. 6: Moral motivation. Reading: Darwall, Korsgaard.

The final version of your RESEARCH PAPER is due in my mailbox in the Department of Philosophy, Robinson B465, on Wednesday, Dec. 13, at 4:00 p.m.

LATE SUBMISSIONS: I am usually generous about accepting assignments a bit after the due date if the student has cleared this with me before hand. If however you hand in an assignment late without talking to me first, you should count on being penalized in some way. If the paper is only slightly late, I may mark it down a grade; if it is very late, I will not accept it at all.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The lack of academic integrity is what is commonly referred to as ‘cheating’. I take cheating to consist in presenting work as your own which was actually written by someone else whether another student or a professional philosopher. A general rule of thumb is, if you say something in a paper that you would not have said if you had not read Smith, even if you do not quote Smith word for word, then you need to footnote Smith. Anyone who cites or otherwise refers to the work of someone else without acknowledging this fact in a footnote will be referred to the Honor Committee.