

David Hume



Philosophy 330i

Connecticut College, Fall 2015

TuTh 11:50-1:05 p.m., New London Hall, Room 400

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Office: 302 Blaustein
Office Hours: TuTh 2-3 p.m.,
or by appointment.

I. Course Description

A seminar examining the major works of David Hume (1711–1776), widely considered to be one of the most important (and most subversive!) philosophers of the modern era. We will closely read Hume's major works, including his *Treatise of Human Nature*, his *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, and his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The course is divided into three major units: the first is on Hume's work in (anti-?)metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and epistemology in the *Treatise* and the first *Enquiry*; the second, on Hume's moral and political philosophy in the *Treatise* and the second *Enquiry*; and the third, on Hume's views on religion.

Some of the questions we will consider include: What does reasoning (and, more broadly, thought) consist in? Why do we take things to be related causally (as when we take a moving billiard ball to *cause* another ball to move)? Why do we believe that things continue to exist when we are not perceiving them? What do our judgments about whether something is morally right or wrong consist in? What are the origins of justice, and of political society? Is the existence of God something we can prove?

II. Required Texts

1. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edition, eds. Selby-Bigge & Niddich (Oxford University Press, 1978). ISBN: [978-0-19-824588-9](https://www.isbn-international.org/product/9780198245889)
2. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd edition, eds. Selby-Bigge & Niddich (Oxford University Press, 1975). ISBN: [978-0-19-824536-0](https://www.isbn-international.org/product/9780198245360)
3. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and A Natural History of Religion*. ed. J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). ISBN: [978-0199538324](https://www.isbn-international.org/product/9780199538324)

*** The texts listed here correspond to the page numbers that appear in the schedule of readings.

These should be available in the bookstore. If you would like to buy the books online, make sure to note the ISBN numbers to ensure you're getting the right copies; the ISBN numbers are hyperlinked to Amazon on the electronic version of this syllabus. (Easy rule of thumb: the correct edition of the *Treatise* is brown, and the correct edition of the *Enquiries* is green.)

III. Course Requirements

Breakdown of final grade (see below for details on each)

1. Attendance and participation, 10%.
2. 1 guided seminar session, 10%.
3. 3 short papers, 45% total.
4. Proposal and outline of term paper, 5%.
5. 1 term paper, 30%.

1. Attendance and participation, 10%. This portion of your grade is divided into three components:

- *Attendance*

I won't regularly be taking attendance, but I will take note of patterns of absences. If you miss more than four class sessions (which is equivalent to 2 weeks of class) without giving me any prior notification, you may fail the course even if you complete all the assignments.

- *Discussion Participation*

Since this is a seminar, you will be expected to regularly participate in discussion. This means coming to each meeting having done the reading and having thought about what you might want to talk about with the group. This also means regularly making thoughtful contributions to discussion and responding constructively to others' thoughts and questions.

- *Pre-Discussion Participation*

You should submit at least one question to me (via email) every Monday night by 11:59 p.m. (You can skip this on the week that you are leading discussion.) Your question(s) should concern some aspect of the material assigned for Tuesday. I will collect your questions and may use them to structure our Tuesday discussions.

These questions may take a number of forms: they may be questions about things you were confused by while you were trying to understand some part of an argument, or questions that you think would spur interesting discussion.

I don't plan to grade the quality of the question. However, I will notice, and make suggestions, if your questions are regularly not very amenable to discussion (e.g., "Hume raises a counterexample to one of his own principles which involves a

‘missing shade of *blue*.’ Would the counterexample still apply if he had used the color *green*, rather than blue?’)

2. One guided seminar session, 10%. You will guide discussion for one of our seminar meetings. You will be expected to “set up” the day’s reading (by going through the major points of the reading, and explaining whatever major arguments are presented in that reading) and come with questions to spur discussion. You may choose the session you will lead. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the second week of class.

Please note that you must meet with me beforehand to go over what you plan to present and which questions you plan to use to set up discussion. I am happy to answer any questions you have about the material, and/or help you brainstorm about what to cover and what questions to ask, but do come to our meeting prepared with concrete ideas about how you plan to structure the discussion.

3. Three short papers, 45% total. Due dates for each appear on the course schedule, below. The purpose of these short papers is to sharpen your expository and argumentative skills. You will be given a choice of prompts that call on you to carefully explain some argument that Hume offers and to critically assess that argument.

1. Paper 1 (M&E), 500-900 words (=~1-2 pages, single-spaced.)
2. Paper 2 (Philosophy of action OR Moral/Political), 500-900 words.
3. Paper 3 (Religion), 500-900 words.

4. Proposal and outline of term paper, 5%. Due dates for each appear on the course schedule, below. Your term paper will be on a topic of your design.

- Your proposal for the term paper should be kept relatively short and be structured around a couple of specific questions. (So, a term paper should *not* be structured around a question so broad as, “What is Hume’s political philosophy?”)
- Your outline should show exactly how you plan to address the prompt you’ve constructed, and how the expository and evaluative phases of your paper fit together.

Note: I will give more specific advice about how to construct your proposal, outline, and term paper later in the semester.

5. A term paper, 30%. Due on the last day of finals. You will be expected to draw upon at least one secondary source in your term paper. I will make recommendations about what sources to look into, but you are free to use whatever (relevant!) sources you’d like. The term paper should be 3,000-5,000 words. (This is roughly equivalent to 7-10 pages, single-spaced.)

You may use one of your three short papers as the basis for your term paper. If you decide to go this route, you will still need to come up with your own proposal that significantly expands on the topic, and which indicates how you plan to incorporate secondary material.

IV. Classroom Policies

- **Electronic devices.** Don't bring them. This includes laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Accommodations can be made for those who, for medical reasons, need to use electronic devices. Please get in touch if this applies to you.

- **Feedback on papers before due date.** I am happy to talk with you in office hours (or by appointment) about anything regarding your paper, as well as give you extensive written feedback on outlines of papers. I will not, however, provide feedback on complete first drafts of papers prior to the due date.

- **Late papers.** All papers should be emailed to me by 11:59 p.m. of the due date. Every day that your paper is late, your paper grade will go down a "step." (For example, if your paper is one day late, then if your paper is an A paper, you will get an A-.) I will accept late papers up to 5 days after the due date; after 5 days, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

If you require an extension, please get in touch with me no later than 48 hours in advance of the deadline. I will not assign extensions after that period, except in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

Note: I won't grant extensions for excuses along the lines of "I would write a better paper if I had more time." You are expected to plan your schedule wisely so that you can complete the assignment on time.

- **Paper Grades.** The way I think about grading papers is roughly based on Jim Pryor's grading guidelines. (Jim Pryor is a philosophy professor at NYU. He also offers *excellent* advice for how to write good philosophy papers; I would highly recommend poking around his website for that information if you are interested.) You can find his grading guidelines here: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/grades.html>. What follows is more or less a reprint of most of that material:

A. This is a truly outstanding paper. It is clearly written, well-argued, and original. A paper that just gives a straightforward or "obvious" response to some philosophical or interpretative problem would not merit an A, even if it is clear. An A paper does something extra--but not at the cost of a clear treatment of the problem. If you receive an A on a paper you have reason to feel extremely proud of your work!

A-. This is a really good paper, one that operates at an advanced level. It is clearly written. (If there are any significant problems with the writing or the organization of the paper, then it won't merit an A-. This is because good, clear writing and organization are not separable from good philosophical thinking.) The paper may have a couple of minor mistakes or confusions, or it may fail to unpack some of its arguments sufficiently. It may have an original argument or interpretation, but if so, that will be offset by some other flaw. For example, in a longer paper, perhaps there is too little philosophical back-and-forth (considering objections and challenges, and responding to them). Or perhaps it is not as engaged with the texts as it should be.

B+. This is a good paper with nothing terribly wrong. The writing itself may have some small problems, or it may be flawless. The paper likely makes some mistakes or

has some ambiguities that have to be sorted out, but overall it will be a good paper. It will show more promise or originality than a B paper, but nothing will make it stand out like an A- paper, or it won't be operating at as advanced a level as an A- paper. (Or perhaps the paper would stand out if some of its ideas were properly developed, but as it stands they aren't.)

B. This is a solid paper, with some notable mistakes or obscurities, but no deep misunderstandings. The writing may not be super clear. To earn a B, the paper needs to make it clear why the problem addressed in the paper is a problem, and offer some response to it. (It may be a straightforward or unoriginal response; it may not be a decisive response; the paper may even end by showing that a certain response doesn't work. But the paper must put forward or examine *some* response to the problem.) A B paper does not seriously misrepresent the views of other philosophers.

B-. There are starting to be some serious problems. Perhaps the writing is really unclear or the paper is poorly organized. Or perhaps there are straightforward mistakes and misunderstandings about what the problem is, or about what other philosophers say. Or perhaps the paper presents the problem correctly, but doesn't really address it. Still, there is an effort. The author has some understanding of the problem and of the relevant texts. He/she does offer some argument. A paper with no argument won't merit a B-.

C+. There are more serious problems. Either the writing is really hard to get through; or the paper has no discernable structure; or the author doesn't understand the text or the positions he/she is discussing; or the paper doesn't attempt to offer any argument.

V. Campus Policies

Statements have been provided by the college.

• The Connecticut College Honor Code

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in maintaining the high standards of scholarship in our community. Academic dishonesty is considered to be a serious offense against the community and represents a significant breach of trust between the professor, the classmates, and the student. There are many forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, submitting the same work in two courses without prior approval, unauthorized discussion or distribution of exams or assignments, and offering or receiving unauthorized aid on exams or graded assignments. Students violating the Honor Code may be referred to the college's Honor Council for resolution.

• Office of Student Accessibility Services

If you have a physical, mental, or learning disability, either hidden or visible, which may require classroom, test-taking, or other reasonable modifications, please see me as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, please be sure to register with the Office of Student Accessibility Services. You can do so by going to the Office of Student Accessibility Services, which is located in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) on the second floor of

Shain Library in Room 236, or by contacting the Office at 860-439-5240 or 860-439-5428, or by email to sas@conncoll.edu.

- **The Academic Resource Center**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support your academic work, such as study skills workshops, time management, coaching, and tutoring. Our offices are located on the second floor of Shain. Please visit us or call 860-439-5294 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

- **The Roth Writing Center**

The Roth Writing Center provides one-to-one peer tutoring (free of charge) to help student writers of all abilities during all stages of the writing process. To make an appointment, call x2173 or stop by the Writing Center at 214 Blaustein. If you're a confident, experienced writer, we can help you to push your ideas and polish your style; if you're a relatively inexperienced and not-so-confident writer, we can also help you, by working on grammar or organization or whatever you need. Writing Center tutors are trained to help you to discover what you think through writing. Working with a tutor gives you the opportunity to share your work-in-progress with an actual reader, so that you can get useful feedback on that work *before* you have to turn it in for a final grade. For further information, visit the Writing Center web page at <http://write.conncoll.edu/>.

- **Title IX Statement**

As a faculty member, I am deeply invested in the wellbeing of each student I teach. I am here to assist you with your work in this course. If you come to me with other non-course-related concerns, I will do my best to help.

It is important for you to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of gender-based discrimination. This means that I cannot keep information confidential about sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, or other forms of gender-based discrimination. Darcie Folsom, the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Advocacy, can advise you confidentially, as can Counselling Services and any of the College chaplains. Darcie can also help you access other resources on campus and in the local community. You can reach Darcie at 860-439-2219 or darcie.folsom@conncoll.edu, and her office is in Cro 222.

Policies on student sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, and non-discrimination policies are in the Student Handbook, which can be found on Camelweb, in the "Documents/Policies" section, under the Student Life section.

V. Course Schedule

** Schedule is subject to revision **

Date	Topic	Readings
Th 9/3, Week 1	Introduction to the course	
Tu 9/8, Week 2	Operations of the mind: ideas, impressions, and relations of ideas	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part I, Introduction (pp. xi-xix), sections i-v (pp. 1-15) <i>Enquiries</i> , sections I-III (pp. 5-24)
Th 9/10		<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part I, section vii (pp. 17-28)
Tu 9/15, Week 3	Knowledge, the idea of causation, and the nature of causal inference	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part III, sections i-vi (pp. 69-94)
Th 9/17		<i>Enquiries</i> , section IV (pp. 25-39)
Tu 9/22, Week 4	The nature of belief	<i>Enquiries</i> , section V (pp. 40-55). <i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part III, sections vii-viii (pp. 94-106), section x (pp. 118-123).
Th 9/24		First paper topics distributed
Tu 9/29, Week 5	The idea of necessary connection	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part III, section xiv (pp. 155-172), section xvi (pp. 176-179).
Th 10/1	The continued and distinct existence of objects	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part IV, section ii (pp. 187-218)
Tu 10/6, Week 6	Personal identity	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part IV, section vi (pp. 251-263); Appendix (pp. 633-636)
Th 10/8	On skepticism, and the conclusions to <i>Treatise</i> Book I and <i>Enquiry</i> 1	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 1, Part IV, section i (pp. 180-187), section vii (pp. 263-274) <i>Enquiries</i> , section XIII (pp. 149-165) Paper 1 due today <i>Enjoy Fall Weekend!</i>
Tu 10/13, Week 7	Liberty and necessity	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 2, Part III, sections i-ii (pp. 399-412)
Th 10/15		<i>Enquiries</i> , section VIII (pp. 80-103)
Tu 10/20, Week 8	Fall Break!	
Th 10/22	Action and passion	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 2, Part III, sections iii-vii (pp. 413-427)
Tu 10/27, Week 9	The nature of morality	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 3, Part I, sections i-ii (pp. 455-476)
Th 10/29		<i>Enquiries</i> (Enquiry 2), section I (pp. 169-175), Appendix I (pp. 285-294)

Tu 11/3, Week 10	Sympathy and the natural virtues	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 3, Part III, sections i-v (pp. 574-617)
Th 11/5		<i>Enquiries</i> (Enquiry 2), section V (pp. 212-232) Second paper topics distributed
Tu 11/10, Week 11	On justice and injustice, the artificial virtues and vices	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 3, Part II, sections i-ii (pp. 477-501)
Th 11/12		<i>Treatise</i> , Book 3, Part II, sections v-vi (pp. 516-534) <i>Enquiries</i> (Enquiry 2), pp. 282-284.
Tu 11/17, Week 12	Government and political obligation	<i>Treatise</i> , Book 3, Part II, section vii-viii (pp. 534-549)
Th 11/19		(no new reading) Paper 2 due Friday, 11/20
Tu 11/24, Week 13	Hume on religion in <i>Enquiry 1</i>	<i>Enquiries</i> (Enquiry 1), section X (pp. 109-131)
Th 11/26	Thanksgiving!	Third paper topics to be distributed over email by Monday, 11/30
Tu 12/1, Week 14	Continuation of Hume on religion in <i>Enquiry 1</i>	<i>Enquiries</i> (Enquiry 1), section XI (pp. 132-148)
Th 12/3	The “argument <i>a posteriori</i> ” for the existence of God	<i>Dialogues</i> , Parts I through VIII Proposed topic for term-paper due today (You must <u>email me</u> your proposal by this date. When you do, we will schedule a meeting to discuss your proposal.)
Tu 12/8, Week 15	The “argument <i>a priori</i> ” for the existence of God	<i>Dialogues</i> , Parts IX through XII
Th 12/10		This day is currently unscheduled, to allow for some flexibility to devote an extra class period to a particularly interesting or difficult topic. The syllabus will be updated immediately to reflect any changes.
M 12/14	(No class)	Paper 3 due today
Tu 12/15, Week 16	Final Class: Reflections on Hume and Hume’s later reception	

* Your **term paper** is due by 5 p.m. on **December 22** (the last day of finals). You may submit the **outline** of your term paper to me at any point between when you get your term paper proposal approved and the last day of class.