

## P710: Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*

Instructor: Bridger Ehli (behli@iu.edu)

Time: Tu 4:45 PM - 7:15 PM

Location: SY 022

Office Hours: TBD, Sycamore Hall 115

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**Course Description:** In 1739, Scottish philosopher David Hume, then twenty-nine years old, published his first book: *A Treatise of Human Nature*. While Hume was disappointed with the the *Treatise's* reception and eventually disavowed the work, it is one of the most important philosophical works written in the English language, continuing to have an extraordinary influence on contemporary analytic philosophy. Modern-day scholars have, however, found it extremely difficult to ascertain the *Treatise's* ultimate conclusions. Hume's stated aim in the *Treatise* is to provide a complete "science" of human nature. Across its three books, the *Treatise* argues for bold, original positions on a range of philosophical issues: the metaphysics of space and time, the nature of causation and causal inference, the principle of sufficient reason, belief in the external world, personal identity, motivation and action, free will, justice, and the foundations of morality. But Hume's positive contributions to philosophy are threatened by his apparent endorsement of an extreme form of skepticism. James Beattie, a contemporary and virulent critic of Hume, understood this skepticism to imply a "total subversion of human sentiment." This course is an intensive investigation into Hume's early masterpiece. We will interpret and critically engage with Hume's philosophy, aiming to achieve a holistic understanding of the *Treatise*. Moreover, we will pay special attention to the relationship between Hume's philosophical ambitions and his seemingly catastrophic skepticism.

**Intended Audience:** This course is intended for graduate students in philosophy. No knowledge of early modern philosophy is presupposed.

**Assessments:** Students will each give one or more presentations to the seminar. The aim of these presentations is to outline the relevant week's reading and to raise questions for discussion. Students will write a final paper, 20-25 pages long. The final paper need not be interpretive in focus, but it should evince engagement with Hume scholarship. All students should plan to meet with me at least a month before the due date, so that we can discuss what you would like to write about. Grades will be calculated as follows:

15%	Classroom participation
25%	Presentations
60%	Final paper

**Texts:** Students will need either of two editions of the *Treatise*. The first option is the Oxford Philosophical Texts edition (ISBN: 0198751729) edited by Norton and Norton. The second

option is the Clarendon edition (ISBN: 0199596336) also edited by Norton and Norton. The editions give the same text and have the same page numbering. You should purchase whichever you can find for a better price. Please do *not* purchase the Selby-Bigge-Nidditch edition; this is a critical edition that has been superseded by the Norton and Norton editions. You should also purchase the Oxford World Classics edition of Hume's *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (ISBN: 9780199549900) edited by Millican. All other readings will be made available on Canvas.

### Course Schedule:

#### *Week 1*     **Introduction and the History of Philosophy**

Advertisement of the *Treatise*

Introduction to the *Treatise*

Calvin Normore. 2016. "The Methodology of the History of Philosophy." *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology*.

Edwin Curley. 1986. "Dialogues with the Dead." *Synthese*.

*Recommended:* Daniel Garber. 2005. "What's Philosophical about the History of Philosophy?" *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*.

*Recommended:* John P. Wright. 2006. "The *Treatise*: Composition, Reception, and Response." *Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise*.

#### *Week 2*     **Hume's Elements**

T 1.1.1-7, T 1.3.7.5n

Janet Broughton. 2006. "Impressions and Ideas." *Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise*.

Don Garrett. 1997. "The Copy Principle." *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*.

*Recommended:* Stephen Everson. 1988. "The Difference between Feeling and Thinking." *Mind*.

*Recommended:* Paul Hoffman. 2011. "Hume on the Distinction of Reason." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*.

**Week 3      Space and Time**

T 1.2.1-1.2.6

Donald Baxter. 2009. "Hume's Theory of Space and Time in Its Skeptical Context." *Cambridge Companion to Hume*.

Donald Ainslie. 2010. "Adequate Ideas and Modest Scepticism in Hume's Metaphysics of Space." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*.

*Recommended:* Lorne Falkenstein. 1997. "Hume on Manners of Disposition and the Ideas of Space and Time." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*.

*Recommended:* Miren Boehm. 2012. "Filling the Gaps in Hume's Vacuums." *Hume Studies*.

**Week 4      Hume's Fork and Rationalism**

T 1.3.1-5

EHU 4 (selection), EHU 12 (selection)

Michael Della Rocca. 2017. "Playing with Fire: Hume, Rationalism, and a Little Bit of Spinoza." *Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*.

Todd Ryan. 2003. "Hume's Argument for the Temporal Priority of Cause over Effect." *Hume Studies*.

*Recommended:* Peter Millican. 2017. "Hume's Fork, and his Theory of Relations." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

*Recommended:* Don Garrett. 1997. "The Separability Principle." *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy*.

*Recommended:* Michael Della Rocca. 2010. "PSR." *Philosophers' Imprint*.

**Week 5      Judgement and Inductive Skepticism**

T 1.3.6-1.3.8, T 1.3.15-16

Abstract of the *Treatise* (selection)

EHU 4-5

Louis Loeb. 2006. "Psychology, Epistemology, and Skepticism in Hume's Argument about Induction." *Synthese*.

Kenneth Winkler. 1999. "Hume's Inductive Skepticism."

*Recommended:* Graciela De Pierris. "Causation as a Philosophical Relation in Hume." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

*Recommended:* David Owen. "Probable Reasoning: The Negative Argument." *Hume's Reason*.

*Recommended:* Jennifer Marusic. "Does Hume Hold a Dispositional Account of Belief?" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*.

**Week 6      Causal Necessity**

T 1.3.14

EHU 7

Kenneth Winkler. 1991. "The New Hume." *Philosophical Review*.

Galen Strawson. 2000. "David Hume: Objects and Power." *The New Hume Debate*.

*Recommended:* Bridger Ehli. Forthcoming. "Hume on Modal Projection." *Mind*.

*Recommended:* Peter Millican. 2009. "Hume, Causal Realism, and Causal Science." *Mind*.

*Recommended:* John Wright. 2012. "Scepticism, Causal Science and 'The Old Hume.'" *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*.

**Week 7 Skepticism: Reason and the Senses**

T 1.4.1-2

Donald Baxter. 2006. "Identity, Continued Existence, and the External World." *Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise*.

*Recommended:* Bridger Ehli. "Body, Coherence, and Hume's Galley."

*Recommended:* Annemarie Butler. 2010. "Hume on Believing the Vulgar Fiction of Continued Existence." *History of Philosophy Quarterly*.

*Recommended:* Kevin Meeker. 2010. "Hume's Iterative Probability Argument: A Pernicious Reductio." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

**Week 8 The Internal World**

T 1.4.5-6

Appendix to the *Treatise* (selection)

Abstract of the *Treatise* (selection)

Don Garrett. 1981. "Hume's Self-Doubts about Personal Identity." *Philosophical Review*.

Jonathan Cottrell. 2015. "Minds, Composition, and Hume's Skepticism in the Appendix." *Philosophical Review*.

*Recommended:* Bridger Ehli. 2024. "Fiction and Content in Hume's Labyrinth." *Philosophical Quarterly*.

*Recommended:* Tony Pitson. 2012. "Skeptical Realism and Hume on the Self" *Hume Studies*.

**Week 9 Skepticism: Hume's Conclusion of Book 1**

T 1.4.7, 2.3.10

EHU 12

Hsueh Qu. 2020. "The Title Principle and THN 1.4.7." *Hume's Epistemological Evolution*.

Janet Broughton. 2004. "The Inquiry in Hume's *Treatise*." *Philosophical Review*.

*Recommended:* Richard Popkin. 1951. "David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and His Critique of Pyrrhonism." *Philosophical Quarterly*.

*Recommended:* Norman Kemp Smith. 1905. "The Naturalism of Hume (I)." *Mind*.

**Week 10 Indirect Passions**

T 2.1

Charles Goldhaber. Forthcoming. "Hume's Skeptical Philosophy and the Moderation of Pride." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.

Donald Ainslie. 1999. "Scepticism About Persons in Book II of Hume's *Treatise*." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

*Recommended:* Amy Schmitter. 2009. "Making an Object of Yourself: Hume on the Intentionality of the Passions." *Topics in Early Modern Philosophy of Mind*.

*Recommended:* Lorenzo Greco. 2015. "The Self as Narrative in Hume." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

**Week 11 Motivation and Free Will**

T 1.3.10, 2.3.1-3, 2.3.9

EHU 8

*Dissertation on the Passions* (selection)

Paul Russell. 2015. "Hume's Lengthy Digression: Free Will in the *Treatise*." *Cambridge Companion to Hume's Treatise*.

Elizabeth Radcliffe. 1999. "Hume on the Generation of Motives: Why Beliefs Alone Never Motivate." *Hume Studies*.

*Recommended:* Christine Korsgaard. 1986. "Skepticism about Practical Reason." *Journal of Philosophy*.

*Recommended:* Elizabeth Radcliffe. 2008. "The Humean Theory of Motivation and Its Critics." *A Companion to Hume*.

**Week 12**    **Morals and Secondary Qualities**

T 1.4.4, 3.1

EPM Appendix 1

Simon Blackburn. 1993. "Hume on the Mezzanine Level." *Hume Studies*.

P.J.E Kail. 2007. "Gilding: Projection, Value, and Secondary Qualities." *Projection and Realism in Hume's Philosophy*.

*Recommended:* Barry Stroud. 1993. "Gilding and Staining the World with Sentiments." *Hume Studies*.

*Recommended:* Charlotte Brown. 2008. "Hume on Moral Rationalism, Sentimentalism, and Sympathy." *A Companion to Hume*.

**Week 13**    **Artificial Virtue**

T 3.2.1-6, 3.2.12

Geoffrey Sayre-McCord. 2016. "Hume on the Artificial Virtues." *Oxford Handbook of Hume*.

Rachel Cohon. 1997. "Hume's Difficulty with the Virtue of Honesty." *Hume Studies*.

*Recommended:* Annette Baier. 1988. "Hume's Account of Social Artifice - Its Origins and Originality." *Ethics*.

*Recommended:* Annette Baier. 1979. "Good Men's Women: Hume on Chastity and Trust." *Hume Studies*.

*Recommended:* Stephen Darwall. 1993. "Motive and Obligation in Hume's Ethics." *Noûs*.

*Week 14*     **Moral Judgement**

T 2.1.11, 3.3

Christine Korsgaard. 1999. "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume's Ethics." *Hume Studies*.

Kate Abramson. 2008. "Sympathy and Hume's Spectator-Centered Theory of Virtue." *A Companion to Hume*.

*Recommended:* Philippa Foot. 1963. "Hume on Moral Judgement." *David Hume: A Symposium*.

*Week 15*     **Catch up week**