

**Department of Philosophy**  
**Eighteenth-century Philosophy**  
**PHIL 361; 2012**

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The purpose of this course is to introduce students to important texts and issues of eighteenth-century philosophy. We will take as our theme the influence on philosophy of Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*.

The importance for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy of recent developments in science are reflected in, for example, Locke's Epistle to the Reader in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, where he describes "the incomparable Mr. Newton" as one of the "master builders" of the commonwealth of learning, and satisfies himself with the task of an "underlabourer in clearing ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish, that lies in the way to knowledge". Hume describes his *Treatise of Human Nature* as "an attempt to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects". Locke and Hume here reflect two aspects of the influence on philosophy, one concerning the *role* and *content* of philosophy, the other concerning its *method*. These are just two of the underlying themes of this course.

The course will begin with a brief consideration of Newton, with an emphasis on the *method* of experimental philosophy; we will read selections from his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. We will then consider a number of philosophical issues arising out of the *Principles*—ranging from questions about the nature of space to the issue of free will and God's intervention in the universe—as they are discussed in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence and selections from Berkeley's *De Motu*. We will then consider the philosophical underpinnings of Berkeley's critique as they are put forward in his *Principles of Human Knowledge*. Finally, we will consider Hume's application of the "experimental method of reasoning" to a new "science of human nature" in his *Treatise of Human Nature*.

**Texts:** *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge* and Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* are available at The Word bookstore on Milton Street. The other readings will be made available online.

**Requirements:** The requirements for the course are three short papers (1x1 page, 2 x 3 pages), the first worth 10% of the final mark, and the second and third worth 25% each, and a final exam worth 40% of the final mark. Late papers without a medical note will be penalised half a letter grade per day.

The University Senate has passed a resolution requiring that the following notes be attached to the course syllabus:

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).*

*In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.*