

Department of Philosophy
Eighteenth-century Philosophy
PHIL 361; 2013

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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 two short papers (5 pages), the first worth 25% of the final mark, and the second worth 35%, and an in-class 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/integrity 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.