

17th and 18th Century British Philosophy

Class time and room: T 2-4.50 pm, HC 2-19
Instructor: Rob Wilson
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A. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This course will focus on the philosophical views of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. In my view, these are the true giants in 17th- and 18th-century British Philosophy, not only in terms of their influence in their own time, but as philosophers with continuing impact. I hope that the course will provide some sense of why.

Hobbes is best known for his contributions to political philosophy, but his views and arguments here form part of a larger philosophical system of ideas. It is that system to which we will be attending in the first part of the course. Hobbes's most widely-read work, Leviathan (1651) will serve as our principal text, but we will also look at some of his other writings, such as the English translations of his first-published, philosophical work, De Cive (published in Latin in 1642), and De Corpore (published in Latin in 1655, with an English translation in 1656). I expect to spend a little more than half the course on Hobbes.

In looking at Locke, we will focus exclusively on his An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, first published in 1690. We will read most of this, but we will skip Book I (on innateness) altogether, and much of Book IV (on human knowledge). But don't worry, that still leaves us with around 360 pages to read, primarily from Book II (on ideas, qualities, and the mind) and Book III (on language).

Please feel free to come and chat about any aspect of the course, either during my regular office hours or by appointment outside of them. I have voice-mail in my office, and am on e-mail regularly, though typically not over weekends. I am most likely to be in my office on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

B. BACKGROUND FOR THE COURSE

There are no specific course requirements to take the course, apart from those for 400- and 500-level courses in the Department in general. I will presuppose that you have at least heard of both Hobbes and Locke, but will not expect you to have anything but passing familiarity with some of their standard views. If you know that Hobbes said something about life being "nasty, poore, solitary, brutish, and short", and that Locke got himself into all sorts of trouble by drawing the distinction between primary and secondary qualities in the way he did, then that's probably enough by way of background.

For those who only feel truly prepared for a course by being worried that they are not prepared, please come and see me early on in the course. There will be some background information to be read between the first and second class, and a handful of books placed on reserve for the course (including those in G below that the university holds). Some of these may set your mind at ease. But we will chiefly be reading Hobbes and Locke themselves, not secondary literature, and even having not read them previously at all need be no disadvantage to understanding what they have to say.

C. COURSE MATERIALS

Required texts:

- Hobbes, T., Leviathan. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
Revised student edition.
- Hobbes, T., Human Nature and De Corpore Politico. Edited by J.C.A. Gaskin. Oxford
University Press, 1994.
- Locke, J., An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Edited by P.H. Nidditch.
Oxford University Press, 1979.

These books are all available as reasonably-priced paperbacks. If you have to make a choice between them, consider Human Nature as optional. It contains some material from De Corpore that we will use early in the course, but the main text itself is mainly for the sake of comparison with Leviathan.

In addition to these, additional reading material from De Cive will be made available as a course packet. These are the opening chapters of the book, and contain an alternative expression of some of the most critical ideas in Leviathan, concerning the state of nature, the laws of nature, and the constitution of a commonwealth. I would assign more of De Cive if a reliable, affordable edition were readily available, but, alas, it appears not to be. Please consider this course packet required reading.

D. WORKLOAD AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The reading load for this semester is high in quantity and level: it is on average about 75 book pages per week and spread fairly evenly through the semester. You should expect to have to read most of the assigned readings carefully, and in most cases, more than once. If it turns out that this is too ambitious a reading load, we will scale back as necessary. The writing load for the course is moderate.

For **undergraduates** the assessment will be determined as follows:

Short paper due around Weeks 7-8:	20%
Term paper due just after the end of classes:	30%
Final examination	30%
Class preparation and participation:	20%

The last of these will be assigned in equal increments at roughly one-third and two-thirds through the course, and at the end of classes, with the worst of these dropped. Thus, antecedent to the last few weeks of class you will have 30% of your final grade in hand; at the end of classes, this moves to 40%. (The University requires that final examinations have a

minimal weight of 30% in courses in which they are set, which limits my discretion here.) Undergraduates can also expect to be assessed by standards appropriate to their undergraduate standing.

The assessment scheme for **graduate students** will be as follows:

Short paper due around Weeks 7-8:	20%
Draft of term paper, penultimate week:	20%
Term paper due during exam week:	30%
Class preparation and participation:	30%

The last of these will be assigned in equal increments at roughly one-third and two-thirds through the course, and at the end of classes. Thus, prior to the end of classes you will have 60% of your final grade determined, rising to 70% at the end of semester. Graduate students can also expect to be assessed by standards appropriate to their graduate standing.

I will aim to make your progressive grades available to you as quickly as I can. I expect to turn assignments and papers back within a week with written comments. Unless undergraduates individually or collectively express an interest in having written comments on their final papers, these will be omitted; in my experience, they are (sadly) a wasted effort, since many undergraduates do not even bother to pick up their term papers.

You are encouraged to start work (however tentatively) on the **term paper** shortly after paper topics are distributed in Week 7 or 8. I would be happy to discuss a draft of the term paper in advance of its deadline.

In general, **late papers** are not particularly welcome, and you should (i) talk to me in advance about a paper which will not be submitted by the due date, (ii) expect to be penalized for a late paper that does not have a written extension from me. The going rate for deductions for papers that are submitted late but without a written extension from me is one grade per day. Incomplete grades will not be given in this course, except in cases of documented family and medical emergencies. Please keep up with the work for the course as you go, and avoid massive disappointments at its conclusion.

Finally, a reminder: that **plagiarism** is a seriously academic offense that is grounds for strong disciplinary action. The first item under "Inappropriate Academic Behaviour" in the University of Alberta's Code of Student Behaviour reads:

30.3.2(1) Plagiarism

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

This document can be found at:

<http://www.ualberta.ca/%7Eunisecr/policy/sec30.html>

The University also maintains a more general website on plagiarism:

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism/>

I would encourage you to consult both early in the course if you are unfamiliar with their contents and, more generally, **not to risk the consequences of plagiarizing** in this course.

E. CLASSES

Regular attendance of the class is required, for much of the work will be done through class discussion; irregular attendance, in the extreme case, will be grounds for failing the course. If you find the class meetings boring, too easy, too difficult, or a waste of time, please let me know directly and early on in the course rather than by not turning up at all. Remember, if you find the class meetings particularly irksome, it is likely that others do, too, and I hope you find me approachable about changes to the content or style of the course.

I envisage splitting most class periods into two parts, the first shorter than the second. In the first part, I will provide a brief overview of some of the main issues from the week's readings. This will not be a summary of the assigned readings, but will aim to set the broader context for them, and raise some questions for you to think about. After a short break, we will discuss the assigned readings for that week, questions and issues you raise both in and antecedent to the class, and other issues as they arise. At the end of each class I will give you some "**starter questions**" to think about for the following class, as well as assign the specific readings for that week.

For in-class discussion to be most effectively, I would encourage you to e-mail me questions and comments you have **before noon on the Monday of class**. These can range from purely "I don't understand X" questions (for any X ... some subset of which I may be able to answer), through to detailed critiques, concerns about, and problems with the substance of the assigned readings. **This interaction constitutes an important part of your preparation for classes** and participation in the course more generally, and I will weigh it together with your in-class participation in determining the participation component to your grade final grade.

There will be no class presentations from students. Despite being the "method of choice" for upper-level or graduate seminars, in my view these seldom make for effective discussion in the class as a whole, and often do more harm than good for the person presenting. My emphasis will be on encouraging you to keep your participation at a steady level throughout the course, and on including you all in class-based discussion each week.

F. A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

I plan to spend slightly more time on Hobbes than on Locke, generally assigning slightly less reading per week for Hobbes and more for Locke (but with a review week there to help pull it all together). We will begin by trying to understand Hobbes's method and his "philosophy of body" in *De Corpore* (1655 Latin; 1656 English) before moving to his civil and political philosophy in *Leviathan* (1651) and *De Cive* (1642 Latin; 1651 English). For Locke, we will stick to his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).

There is no required reading for the first week, but I will mention some things that you might like to take a look at if you're interested. In addition, if we keep to this schedule we should end up with a spare week, which will give us some flexibility as the course develops.

THOMAS HOBBS (Weeks 1-7)

1. Introduction to Hobbes: Background, Location, Issues

Quentin Skinner, "Introduction: Hobbes's Life in Philosophy" (course packet)
 Noel Malcolm, "A Summary Biography of Hobbes" (course packet)
Leviathan editor's "Introduction", (pp.ix-xlv)

2. Method: Philosophical and Scientific Knowledge

De Corpore Author's Epistle to the Reader (in course packet)
 Book I, chapters i, vi (pp.183-212 of Human Nature ...)
Leviathan Introduction (pp.9-11), and chapter xlvi (pp.459-474)

3. Metaphysics: Matter and Motion

De Corpore Book II, chapter vii-xii (pp.91-144), Book III, chapter xv (pp.203-217)

4. Human Nature: Mind and Natural Persons

Leviathan Book I, chapters i-xii (pp.13-86)

5. Natural Laws and Conditions for a Commonwealth

Leviathan Book I, chapters xiii-xvi (pp.86-115)
 Book II, chapter xvii (pp.117-121)
De Cive Chapters I-III, V (pp.41-76, 85-90 of Warrender edition, in course packet)

6. Sovereignty

Leviathan Book II, chapters xviii-xxv (pp.121-182)

7. Laws and Sovereigns

Leviathan Book II, chapters xxvi – xxxi (pp.182-254)

JOHN LOCKE (Weeks 8-12)

8-9. Ideas, Qualities, and the Mind

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Book II, chapters i-xiii (pp.104-181)

Book II, chapters xvii-xxi.1-24 (pp.209-247); chapters xxii-xxvii (pp.289-348)

10. Language

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Book III (pp.402-524), except chapters vii-viii (pp.471-475), and xi (pp.509-524)

11. Human Knowledge

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Book IV, chapters i– vi (pp.535-591), and viii (pp.609-618)

12. Review of Locke

No new readings.

G. SOME FURTHER READINGS

These are books that I have requested to be put on reserve for the course in the Rutherford Library. (With some, no doubt, this will not be possible.) There are, in addition, plenty of other introductory and biographical works on both Hobbes and Locke available in the library, and please don't be afraid to check them out yourself, but don't think of these as a substitute for reading the main texts themselves (they aren't!).

Ayers, M., 1991, Locke: Epistemology and Ontology. Two big volumes from an eminent Locke scholar. In the "Arguments of the Philosophers" series, something I used last time I taught a graduate seminar on Locke.

Brandt, F., 1928, Thomas Hobbes' Mechanical Conception of Nature. Remains the most comprehensive treatment of Hobbes' De Corpore and related texts.

Chappell, V., 1993, The Cambridge Companion to Locke. A useful collection of original essays on various aspects of Locke's philosophy.

Ewin, R.E., 1991, Virtues and Rights: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. Goes against the grain of Hobbes scholarship of the 1980s (e.g., Hampton, Kavka) in arguing that Hobbes was a sort of virtue theorist.

Harrison, Ross, 2003, Hobbes, Locke, and Masterpiece's Confusion. This will become, I think, one of the more influential works on Hobbes.

Hobbes, T., 1839-45. The English Works of Thomas Hobbes. Edited by Sir William Molesworth. The library has all 11 volumes; I may place just the first volume, De Corpore, on reserve.

Hobbes, T., 1983, De Cive: The English Translation. Part of the Clarendon Press's edition of the works of Thomas Hobbes, which seems to have become stalled following Warrender's death over 20 years ago and perhaps disputes over the authorship of the original English translation.

Garber, D., and M. Ayers (eds.), 1998, The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy. If you're a scholar, this is for you. Long, thematic essays by many leading scholars. Strong on metaphysics and epistemology, weaker on morals and politics.

Malcolm, N., (ed.), 1994, The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes. 2 volumes. Part of the Clarendon works of Hobbes, and for those with a more serious interest in scholarship.

Skinner, Q., 2002, Visions of Politics: Volume III: Hobbes and Civil Society. A collection of this influential intellectual historian's essays on Hobbes, ranging over the last 40 years.

Sorell, T., 1986, Hobbes. Short, punchy, another in the "Arguments of the Philosophers" series.

Sorell, T., 1996, The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes. Like the corresponding Chappell collection on Locke, ranges usefully over much of Hobbes's philosophy.

H. ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Rob Wilson is an Australian in permanent Northern Hemispheric exile. He came to the University of Alberta in July 2000 after gaining early release for good behaviour from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where he was an associate professor and a member of the Cognitive Science Group at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. He took his doctorate in Philosophy at Cornell University from 1987 to 1992 (minoring in Cognitive Studies), and has also previously taught at Queen's University. His chief research interests are in the philosophy of mind, cognitive science, and the philosophy of biology. He is the author or editor of six books, the two most recent of which--*Boundaries of the Mind* and *Genes and the Agents of Life*--will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2004. His "Locke's Primary Qualities" appeared in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40 (2002), 201-228. Most importantly, he is a member of the Luxuriant Flowing Hair Club for Scientists (<http://www.improb.com/projects/hair/hair-club-top.html>).