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## EMPIRICISM, SKEPTICISM & MATERIALISM in Fall 2018 (PL2037)

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|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Course Code</b>    | PL2037                  | <b>Professor(s)</b>     | Oliver Feltham                       |
| <b>Prerequisites</b>  | None                    | <b>Office Number</b>    | LG-19                                |
| <b>Class Schedule</b> | MR: 10:35-11:55 in SD-2 | <b>Office Hours</b>     | Mondays and Thursdays<br>12h30-13h30 |
| <b>Credits</b>        | 4                       | <b>Email</b>            | ofeltham@aup.edu                     |
| <b>Semester</b>       | Fall 2018               | <b>Office Tel. Ext.</b> | 613                                  |

## Course Description

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## Course Learning Outcomes

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Through completing the readings and carrying out the assessments in a rigorous manner by the end of this course students should be able to:

Identify and define key concepts and principles in empiricist philosopher.

Reconstruct key theses and arguments in empiricist philosophy.

Reconstruct a context for a particular argument or question within empiricist philosophy.

Display interdisciplinary imagination by building a bridge between empiricist philosophy and other disciplines or practices.

Express philosophical arguments in oral and written form with a higher degree of clarity than when entering the course.

## General Education

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[PLEASE EDIT OR REMOVE THE FOLLOWING TEXT AS APPLICABLE]

The general education program at AUP consists of four requirements: Speaking the World, Modeling the World, Mapping the World, and Comparing Worlds Past and Present.

This course can be used to fulfill the [INDICATE THE REQUIREMENT(S) FULFILLED BY THE COURSE] requirement and as such has the following learning outcomes:

[INDICATE THE GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES]

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# Course Outline

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## CLASS SCHEDULE

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**N.B** This is a first draft of the schedule, it is flexible and liable to change as a function of our progress through the texts

### **PART ONE: Grounding a science of human nature: What is a mind?**

#### ***SEPTEMBER***

##### **Week 1 – 10th -14th**

##### **Monday 10th - Session 1**

**Lecture:** Hume's project of constructing a science of human nature using the 'experimental method'

**Readings:** Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Introduction, Bk I, Part 1.

**Corpus:** Locke, *Essay concerning human nature*.

**Concepts:** Ideas, impressions, association, relations, mind, human nature, experimental method

##### **Thursday 13th – Session 2**

**Seminar:** Our ideas of space and time

**Readings:** Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk I, Part 1 & Part 2

**Exercises:** Reconstruct Hume's argument against the infinite divisibility of space

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**Concepts:** Indivisible parts

**September 16th – last day to drop/add courses online**

**Week II - 17th - 21th**

**Monday 17th - Session 3**

**Lecture:** Kinds of knowledge and Hume's critique of our knowledge of causality

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 3, Sections 1-8

**Corpus:** Hume, *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 4

**Concepts:** Induction, deduction, demonstrative reasoning, relations of ideas, inference, constant conjunction, contiguity, reason, imagination, necessary connection

**Thursday 20th - Session 4**

**Seminar:** On belief, probability and knowledge

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 3, Sections 9-12

**Corpus:** Hume, *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Chapters 4 & 5

**Concepts:** Induction, deduction, demonstrative reasoning, relations of ideas, inference, constant conjunction, contiguity, reason, imagination, necessary connection

**Week III - 24th – 28nd**

**Monday 24th - Session 5**

**Lecture:** On free will versus necessity

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**Readings:** Hume, *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 8

**Corpus:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 3, Sections 1-2; Bk I, Part 3, Sections 13-16

**Concepts:** Determinism, free will, compatibilism, problem of evil

### **Thursday 27th - Session 6**

**Seminar:** What is Hume's form of scepticism?

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 4, Sections 1-2

**Corpus:** Hume, *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Chapter 12

**Concepts:** skepticism

## **OCTOBER**

### **Week IV – 1st - 5th**

#### **Monday 1st - Session 7**

**Lecture:** Argument against the immaterial soul

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 4, Sections 3-5

**Corpus:** Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapt. 21

**Concepts:** Substance as substrate.

#### **Thursday 4th - Session 8**

**Seminar:** What is personal identity? Hume's struggle with skepticism as nihilism

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk I, Part 4, Sections 6-7

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**Corpus:** Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapt. 21. Descartes, *Meditations*

## **PART TWO: Hume's theory of society as a fabric woven from the passions**

### **Week V – 8nd - 12th**

#### **Monday 8th - Session 9**

**Lecture:** Descartes, Spinoza and Mandeville's theories of the passions: Hume's definition and basic mechanism of the passions

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 1, Sections 1-7

**Corpus:** Spinoza, Book III of the *Ethics*; Descartes, *Treatise on the Passions*; Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*; Albert Hirschmann, *The Passions and the Interests*.

**Concepts:** The selfish system, prevailing passion, interest, sin, conatus

#### **Thursday 11th - Session 10**

**Seminar:** The basic mechanism of pride and humility

**Reading:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 1, Sections 8-12

**Concepts:** Parallel impressions and ideas, intensity, social hierarchy, sympathy

### **Week VI - 15th - 19th**

#### **Monday 15th - Session 11**

**Lecture:** Hume's account of love and hatred

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 2, Sections 1-3

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**Concepts:** envelope (being sunk in a relation), social hierarchy, patriarchy

**Thursday 18th - Session 12**

**Lecture:** Hume's account of socialization via the passions: group formation

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 2, Sections 1-5

**Concepts:** envelope (being sunk in a relation), social hierarchy, patriarchy

**Week VII – 22nd – 26th**

**Monday 22nd - Session 13**

**Lecture:** Hume's explanation of benevolence and anger, pity and malice

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 2, Sections 6-10

**Concepts:** Extended sympathy and the mechanism of parallel directions

**Thursday 25th - Session 14**

**Lecture:** Hume's theory of motivation: passion and custom versus reason

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 3, Sections 3-9

**Corpus:** Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*. Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*.

**Concepts:** predominant passion

**October 26th, Mid-semester grades due**

**Week VIII – 29th – Nov.2nd**

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**Monday 29th - Session 15**

**Lecture:** Hume's theory of motivation applied to manipulating human beings

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk II, Part 3, Sections 3-9

**Corpus:** Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*. Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*.

**Concepts:** predominant passion

**October 31ST - November 2nd, (included) fall break, No classes**

**PART THREE: Hume on morals, justice and government**

**NOVEMBER**

**Week IX – 5th – 9th**

**Monday 5th - Session 16**

**Lecture:** What is the foundation of moral distinctions?

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk III, Part 1, Sections 1-2.

**Concepts:** Moral sense, virtue, vice, judgement

**Thursday 8th - Session 17**

**Seminar:** Locke's theory of action and its judgement, comparison with Hume

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**Readings:** Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Bk II, Ch.22 & Bk III, Ch.9;  
Feltham, "The State as a Kind of Action" in *Badiou and the State* pdf on Blackboard

**Concepts:** Mixed modes, archetypes, Attribution of value, actions as 'perishing'

**November 9th – last day to withdraw from a course/no credit option**

**Week X - 12th -16th**

**Monday 12th - Session 18**

**Seminar:** Hume's theory of justice and critique of social contract theories

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk III, Part 2, Sections 1-2.

**Concepts:** Natural vs artificial virtue, social contract, natural law

**Thursday 15th - Session 19**

**Lecture:** Hume's theory of property as the basis of society

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk III, Part 2, Sections 3-5

**Corpus:** Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, Ch.2 "A Modern Theory of Natural Law",

**Concepts:** Occupation, prescription, accession, succession

**Week XI -19th – 23rd**

**Monday 19th - Session 20**

**Lecture:** Hume's theory of the origin of government

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**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk III, Part 2, Sections 5-8

**Concepts:** Obligation of promises

**Thursday 22nd - Session 21**

**Lecture:** Hume's theory of government

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk III, Part 2, Sections 9-12

**Concepts:** Allegiance or political obligation

**Week XII -26th - 30th**

**Monday 26th - Session 22**

**Lecture:** Hume's own assessment of the *Treatise*

**Readings:** *Treatise*, Bk III, Part 3, Section 6; Appendix; An Abstract of a book lately published...

**Corpus:** Hume, "My Own Life"

**Thursday 29th - Session 23**

**Seminar:** Legacy of Empiricism I: Logical empiricism in the Vienna Circle

**Readings:** Carnap, "The Logical Syntax of Language" (1934/7)

**Corpus:** A.J.Ayer, *Logic, Truth and Language*;

**Concepts:** Verificationism, observation sentences, analyticity, toleration

**DECEMBER**

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**Week XIII – 3rd – 7th**

**Monday 3rd - Session 24**

**Lecture:** Legacy of empiricism II: Quine

**Readings:** Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”

**Corpus:** Analytic vs synthetic propositions, a priori, a posteriori

**Thursday 6th - Session 25**

**Seminar:** Contemporary uses of Hume: Stanley Cavell

**Readings:** *TBD*

**Week XIV - 10th - 14th**

**Monday 10th - Session 26**

**Lecture:** Revision for final exam

**Readings:** Your notes on the *Treatise*; the *Treatise* itself studied by topic; study guide handed out by professor

**December 12th, Last day of classes, December 13th -16th, Reading days**

**December 17th – 21st Final exams**

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## Textbooks

| Title                    | Author     | Publisher               | ISBN          | Required |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Treatise of Human Nature | David Hume | Oxford University Press | 9780198751724 | Yes      |

## Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

## Grading Policy

## Other

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