

Western University

Department of Philosophy

Philosophy 4045G (001): Special Topics in 18th Century Philosophy Hume on Conventions, Property and Justice 2023-24

Description

On Hume's account, private property and the principles of justice arise as a matter of convention under circumstances of, and in part to solve problems created by, moderate scarcity. This idea has been enormously influential. Our goal is to understand and evaluate it and the various elements out of which it is assembled. We'll start with an overview of Hume's epistemology and moral theory, and then work through his accounts of conventions, property, and justice. Along the way we will consider some earlier accounts on which Hume drew (for example, Grotius on property) and later accounts which responded to him (for example, Kant on moral motivation). We will also spend some time on recent followers of Hume, including David Lewis on convention, Liam Murphy on private property, and John Rawls on the circumstances of justice. We may also consider the impact of Hume's thinking on economics. Readings will be drawn both from Hume's major philosophical works and his Essays.

Note: This course will be cross-listed with a graduate seminar. Both classes will meet as one group, and do the same readings. The requirements will otherwise be different.

A suggestion: If Hume is new to you—and even if he isn't—you might have a look, before we begin meeting, at the introduction to and Chs 1-3 of Annette Baier's excellent (and short) introduction to Hume's life and work, *The Pursuits of Philosophy*, available electronically through Western libraries. (This is optional!)

Objectives

This course has three main objectives. The first is to introduce students to some of Hume's most influential ideas. The second is to consider, via a close look at the work of Hume and some of his followers, some core issues in political and legal philosophy and the philosophy of social science. The third is to provide students an opportunity to develop their writing and their interpretive and critical skills at an advanced level.

Texts

All readings will be available online.

Requirements and evaluation

- (1) Three short (5pp.) papers, due at roughly equal points throughout term, on assigned topics or, with approval, topics of your devising: 25% x 3 = 75%
- (2) A two hour final exam: 25%

Late papers

Late papers will be subject to a penalty of 2%/day, to a maximum of 10%. I will accept papers after they have accumulated the full penalty, until the last day of the classes, April 8, 2024.

If you need an extension on a paper, you will need to see an academic counsellor in the office of the dean of your faculty. Your counsellor will get in touch with me with any recommendations they have. I am not permitted to accept any documentation, medical or otherwise; please submit those to your counsellor. See below, under “Accommodation” under “Department Policies” for more information.

Auditing

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

Department of Philosophy Policies

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Evaluation of academic performance

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean’s discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

Course assignments: final deadlines

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to

students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

Academic offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.