

PHL 311: The Empiricists

University of Toronto, Winter 2021

Instructor: Dr. Owen Pikkert, owen.pikkert@mail.utoronto.ca

Lecture hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM (online)

Office hours: Thursdays 1:00 to 3:00 PM (online)

Course description

This course examines the philosophies of Locke and Hume. Both of these philosophers are usually classified as empiricists, for they thought that our ideas ultimately derive from sensation. Our aim is to master some of their main ideas and arguments. Topics to be discussed include the origin and nature of ideas, the existence of the external world, causation, personal identity, the existence of God, as well as other topics. We will conclude by examining some twentieth-century applications of empiricism.

Logistics

Joining the lectures: Lectures are livestreamed via BB Collaborate. To join a lecture, log in to Quercus (q.utoronto.ca), click on the course, click on “BB Collaborate” on the left, and then join the appropriate session.

Readings. You will have to purchase the following two books: an abridged version of John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, abridged and edited by Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), as well as David Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, second edition, edited by Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998). These books have not been ordered via the U of T bookstore; instead, you must purchase them yourself, either as hard copies or as ebooks (click [here](#) for a list of relevant ebook vendors, though note that the Google Play version changes the formatting and pagination of the original). The other two books for this course are Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (pages 211-254 of this book) and Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature*. These are both freely available via the U of T library system by clicking on the links above.

Evaluation: A midterm at 25% (on Mar 2), two papers at 25% each (due Mar 5 and Apr 9), and a final assessment at 25% (date determined by the Registrar’s Office for Apr).

Midterm and final assessment. The midterm and final assessment will be based on material discussed in the lectures, and will consist of both multiple choice and short answer questions. They will be conducted online via Quercus at a set time. The instructor will also be available online to answer any questions that students may have while writing these assessments. Note that the final assessment only covers material discussed in lectures after the midterm.

Papers: The first paper will be on Locke, and the second paper will be on Hume. For each paper you will have a choice from three topics. Papers are to be 4 to 8 pages double-spaced. Topics and instructions will be posted to Quercus well before the due dates, and papers must be submitted via Quercus.

Late submissions, extensions, and missed midterms: Late papers will be penalized at 5% for each calendar day, and papers more than one week late will not be accepted. In more normal circumstances, requests for extensions would require submitting a Verification of Student Illness or Injury Form, or another document deemed acceptable by the University. This year, however, the University has decided the following: “Students who are absent from class for any reason (e.g., COVID, other illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work should report their absence through the online absence declaration. The declaration is available on ACORN under the Profile and Settings menu. Students should also advise their instructor of their absence.” It is highly recommended that, as soon as you have filled out this form, you contact the instructor immediately concerning your situation. Late requests will not be viewed favourably. Note also that busyness is not an adequate reason for an extension.

Office hours: If you would like to meet with the instructor for office hours, then please email the instructor with a time that works for you between 1:00 to 3:00 on Thursdays. The instructor will then email you a link with a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Email: Only use email for short logistical questions that are not already answered on the syllabus. Philosophical and textual questions are best saved for office hours.

Turnitin.com: Normally, students will be required to submit their papers to Turnitin.com (now incorporated into Quercus) for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their papers to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Information security: If you are a citizen of another country, and/or accessing your courses at the University of Toronto from a jurisdiction outside of Canada, then please note that you may be subject to the laws of the country in which you are residing, or any country of which you have citizenship. The University of Toronto has a long-established commitment to freedom of expression, with this right enabled by an environment valuing respect, diversity, and inclusion. In your classes, you may be assigned readings or discuss topics that are against the law in other jurisdictions. You are encouraged to become familiar with any local laws that may apply to you and any potential impact on you if course content and information could be

considered illegal, controversial, or politically sensitive. If you have any concerns about these issues, please contact your instructor directly to discuss with them.

Recording and copyright policy

Recording policy: Lectures will be recorded and made available on the course Quercus page. Note that these recordings will include any comments or questions posed during the course of these recordings. If you wish to remain anonymous while the lecture is being recorded, then please contact your instructor.

Copyright: Please note that instructors reserve their copyright on all material that they have created for this course, including lectures. You have the right to access course materials and use them privately as part of your learning experience. However, you do not have the right to share course materials, whether by email, file-sharing software, reposting them on another website, or any other method not mentioned here.

Academic integrity

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to your instructor. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other [institutional resources](#).

Lecture schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pages</i>
Jan 12	Introduction		
Jan 14	Locke's rejection of innate ideas	<i>Essay</i> 1.1-4	1-32
Jan 19	Locke on ideas	<i>Essay</i> 2.1-12	33-68
Jan 21	Locke on space	<i>Essay</i> 2.13-17	69-89
Jan 26	Locke on freedom	<i>Essay</i> 2.21	93-114
Jan 28	Locke on substance	<i>Essay</i> 2.22-23, 3.3,6	114-29,180- 7,192-203
Feb 2	Locke on personal identity	<i>Essay</i> 2.27	133-150
Feb 4	Locke on the extent of knowledge	<i>Essay</i> 4.1-4	224-254
Feb 9	Locke on the existence of God	<i>Essay</i> 4.10	275-284
Feb 11	Locke on the external world	<i>Essay</i> 4.11	284-292
Feb 16	Reading week		
Feb 18	Reading week		

Feb 23	Locke on toleration	<i>Letter</i>	211-254
Feb 25	Leibniz's critique of Locke	Preface to <i>New Essays</i>	48-68
Mar 2	Midterm		
Mar 4	Hume on ideas	<i>Treatise</i> 1.1.1-7	1-25
Mar 5	Paper 1 due		
Mar 9	Hume on causation (1)	<i>Treatise</i> 1.3.1-6	69-94
Mar 11	Hume on causation (2)	<i>Treatise</i> 1.3.14-15	155-176
Mar 16	Hume on the external world	<i>Treatise</i> 1.4.2	187-218
Mar 18	Hume on personal identity	<i>Treatise</i> 1.4.5-6, App	232-63, 633-6
Mar 23	Hume on the teleological argument	<i>Dialogues</i> 1-5	1-38
Mar 25	Hume on the cosmo. arg. and evil	<i>Dialogues</i> 9-11	54-76
Mar 30	Hume on miracles	<i>Dialogues</i> (orig. <i>Enq.</i>)	107-125
Apr 1	Ayer on verificationism	<i>Language, Truth, and Logic</i> (chp. 1)	
Apr 6	Carnap on linguistic frameworks	"Empiricism, Semantics, & Ontology"	
Apr 8	TBD		
Apr 9	Paper 2 due		
Apr TBD	Final assessment		