

The Philosophy of David Hume

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1 Overview

David Hume (1711-1776) witnessed and participated in the emerging scientific and industrial revolution sweeping his native Scotland, England, and Europe. Hume influenced and was influenced by his best friend Adam Smith and woke Immanuel Kant from his “dogmatic slumbers.” He also influenced Charles Darwin and continues to influence and inspire contemporary social science, psychology, and philosophy. We will read his principal works, with a special emphasis on how his various ideas are related. Hume is one of the towering foundational figures of modern philosophy, and understanding his work is important to a proper education in philosophy.

2 Assessment

Assessment will depend on three things: participation, your final essay, and several short essays submitted over the course of the term. Each component will be weighted as follows.

Final essay: 40%
Participation: 40%
Short essays: 20%

The final essay will be based on the topic of your choosing and of no more than 4,500 words.

3 Readings

All of our readings are available online at David Hume Texts Online (<https://davidhume.org/>). You should bring the texts to class and have easy access to them. If you want a print version, there are a number of excellent editions available.

	Reading
Week 1	1. David Hume (1777) —“My Own Life” 2. Adam Smith (1776)—Letter from Adam Smith, LI.D. To William Strahan, Esq
Week 2	1. David Hume (1739)— <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i> , “Introduction” 2. David Hume (1748)— <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (First Enquiry), §1-3
Week 3	David Hume (1748)— <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (First Enquiry), §4-9
Week 4	David Hume (1748)— <i>First Enquiry</i> , §10-11
Week 5	1. David Hume (1748)— <i>First Enquiry</i> , §12 2. David Hume (1739)— <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i> , Book 1, Part 4, Section 7 “Conclusion of this Book”, “Appendix”
Week 6	1. David Hume (1741)—“That Politics be Reduced to a Science” 2. David Hume (1752)—“Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth”

Week 7	David Hume (1751)— <i>A Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (Second Enquiry), §1, §2
Week 8	Adam Smith (1759)— <i>The Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> (TMS), Part I
Week 9	David Hume- (1751)— <i>Second Enquiry</i> §3
Week 10	David Hume (1739)— <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i> , Book 3, Part 2, “Of Justice and Injustice”
Week 11	Adam Smith (1759)—TMS, Part II
Week 12	David Hume (1751)— <i>Second Enquiry</i> §4 David Hume (1748)—“Of The Original Contract” David Hume (1748)—“Of Passive Obedience”
Week 13	David Hume (1751)— <i>Second Enquiry</i> §5-§6
Week 14	David Hume (1751)— <i>Second Enquiry</i> §7-§9