Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment Honours 2017-8

Course organiser: Dr Andrew Mason
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Office Hour: Monday, 2.00-3.30 (6.10, DSB).

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Course description

The course will present the thought of four leading philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid. Subjects covered include their treatment of the role of reason and sentiment in moral judgement, the idea of a moral sense, the standard of taste, virtue, justice, duty, and freedom and necessity. The relevance of these ideas to modern debates will also be discussed.

Teaching will consist of a weekly lecture (11.10-12.00 Wednesday; place TBA), and a tutorial, for which there will be two groups (1.10-2.00 p.m. and 3.10-4.00 p.m. Thursday; places TBA). A list of readings for tutorials will be published at the start of term. The tutorial in week 1 will be introductory; after this tutorials will move a week behind lectures, i.e. the tutorial in week 2 will be based on material from the lecture in week 1, etc.

There will be an additional fortnightly meeting for M.Sc. students (time and place to be arranged).

Assessment

Assessment consists of a midterm essay of 1500 words, due at noon on Thursday 26th October (40%) and an final exam in the December exam period (60%). Midterm essay topics will be posted at the start of week 3. Fourth year honours students who have chosen to submit a coursework dissertation (5000 word essay) in this course should follow the usual procedure for coursework dissertations. They should consult the course organiser about their plans for the dissertation before the decision deadline (Monday 23rd October). M. Sc. students will be assessed by an end-of-term essay of 2500 words, following the usual procedure for the M. Sc., and will have the opportunity to submit a midterm formative essay.

Seminar Content

Topics:

Week 1. Introduction to the Scottish enlightenment, and Hutcheson’s Aesthetics. Hutcheson Inquiry Treatise 1. (Omit section 5.)
Week 2. Hutcheson’s Ethics: the idea of a moral sense.  

Week 3. Hume’s Ethics: reason, passion and morality.  
*Treatise* II.3.3. and III.1.1-2. (See also *Moral Enquiry* appendix 1.)

*Treatise* II.1.11 and III.3.1 and 6. (See also *Moral Enquiry* 2, 5 and appendix 4.)

*Treatise* III..2.1-2, 5-6. (See also *Moral Enquiry* 3 and appendix 3.)

Week 6. Hume’s Aesthetics and its significance for his ethics.  
‘Of the Standard of Taste’: ‘A Dialogue’ (printed with the *Moral Enquiry*).

Week 7. Smith’s moral psychology: sympathy and the impartial spectator.  
Smith *Theory* part I sec. 1., part II sec. 1., part III chapters 1-3.

Week 8. Smith on moral rules and on virtue.  
*Theory* part III chapters 4-6, part II sec. 2 chapters 1-2, part VI (especially sec. 3 paras 1-21), part VII sec. 2 chap.1 (especially the concluding paragraphs).  
(Smith’s thoughts about virtue are hard to isolate, being spread throughout the *Theory*, but these passages are among the most significant.)

Week 9 Reid on Freedom and Necessity.  
Reid *Active Powers* 4, omitting 5, 10 and 11.

Week 10. Reid’s Ethics; the centrality of duty.  
*Active Powers* 5, omitting 3 and 6.

Week 11. Review of some central themes in the Scottish Enlightenment, and comparison with other ethical theories; followed by a question period for revision.

**Readings**

Primary reading is drawn from the following works. (These should be on reserve at the University Library, but online versions are listed when available.)

F. Hutcheson. *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*.  
[http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2462](http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2462)

[http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/885](http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/885)


D. Hume. ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*.  

D. Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*.  

http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/dbanach/hume-enquiry%20concerning%20morals.htm
A. Smith. The Theory of Moral Sentiments.
http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smMS.html
http://books.google.com/books/about/Essays_on_the_active_powers_of_man.html?id=5ksOAAAAQAAJ

Secondary reading:
A. Broadie. The Scottish Enlightenment: the Historical Age of the Historical Nation.
A. Broadie, ed. The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment.
V. Hope. Virtue by Consensus; the Moral Philosophy of Hutcheson, Hume and Adam Smith.
P. Kivy. The Seventh Sense: a study of Francis Hutcheson’s aesthetics and its effect in 18th century Britain.
J. Baillie. Hume on Morality.
B. Stroud. Hume.
A. Baier. A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume’s Treatise.
C. Griswold. Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment.
D. Raphael. The Impartial Spectator.
K. Haakonsen, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith.
K. Lehrer. Thomas Reid.
W. Rowe. Thomas Reid on Freedom and Morality.

Additional reading relevant to particular topics may be recommended during the course.