

Locke and his Interlocutors (PHILG4900)

When: Thursdays, 10:10am-12pm

Where: Philosophy Hall 716

Professor: Kathryn Tabb (Philosophy)

Office: 717 Philosophy Hall

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Office Hours: Monday 2pm-3pm, Tuesday 3pm-4pm, or by appointment

Course description:

John Locke has been described as “the least consistent of all the great philosophers.” Since his own day scholars have worked to understand the relation between Locke’s contributions to a diversity of fields, including natural, political, and moral philosophy. Premised on the notion that philosophical inconsistency can often be resolved by a careful appraisal of motives, this seminar examines several major themes in Locke’s work by reading him alongside his influences, his interlocutors and his later critics. Focusing on his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), we will consider the contemporaneous debates that motivated Locke and assess how attention to his milieu can resolve current debates over his intentions and the merit of his contributions to philosophy. A central theme that will emerge is Locke’s focus on the proper conduct of the understanding, which, we shall see, often motivates his work on more traditional philosophical questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and political theory.

Readings:

All primary readings are required; **all secondary readings are optional**, except for the week you give a presentation, in which I ask you to read one of the secondary readings for that week and summarize it in your presentation.

The following books are available at **Book Culture**:

- John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, Clarendon Edition)
- John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (Hackett)
- John Locke, *Political Writings* (Hackett)
- Gottfried Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Cambridge)
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)
- Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett)

I urge you to buy the editions listed above — the *Essay* edition especially. The Hackett volumes are quite cheap and readily available used. All other texts on the syllabus will be available on our CourseWorks website.

Requirements:

Participation (25%): Because this class will run on a seminar format, participation is crucial. Along with class participation, I will count discussions we have in office hours towards this component of your grade.

Presentations (20%): You will give at least two presentations over the semester. Presentations will be done in teams of two or three. The team will come meet with me the Monday or Tuesday before class so that we can structure the discussion together. Presentations will be graded not on the quantity of material prepared but rather on the quality of the discussion that results.

Paper (50%): One term paper of about 4,000-5,000 words (15-20 pages) will be due via email by **Monday, May 2nd**. An abstract for your paper, including a (tentative) bibliography with at least 3 secondary sources, is due by class on **Thursday April 21st** via email. Papers can be on any topic that interests you in Locke — they need not address a topic we have covered in class. Papers should be double-spaced, not in a silly font, and formatted to follow one of the major citation styles (Chicago, MLA etc).

Locke Workshop (5%): The Columbia-CUNY-Western Locke Workshop (April 7-8) will complement this course, allowing students to engage with leading Locke scholars and learn more about Locke's exchanges with contemporaries, including numerous early-modern women philosophers. You are required to attend at least one session and write a brief (~500 word) report.

Schedule:

- ◆ **January 21: Introduction**

- ◆ **January 28: Locke's Project**
 - Primary sources:
 - John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Epistle and Book I.i-iii
 - René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1, 2, 4
 - Secondary sources:
 - Margaret Atherton, "Locke and the Issue Over Innatism"
 - Samuel Rickless, "Locke's Polemic Against Nativism"

- ◆ **February 4: Ideas**
 - Primary sources:
 - *Essay* II.i-vii, ix-xii
 - Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, §1-7
 - Secondary sources:

- Martha Brandt Bolton, "The Taxonomy of Ideas in Locke's Essay"
- Keith Allen, "Locke and the Nature of Ideas"
- Philip Pettit, *Made With Words* (selection)

◆ **February 11: Qualities, Modes and Substances**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay* II.viii, xiii, xix-xx, xxii-xiv
 - Robert Boyle, "Of the Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular or Mechanical Philosophy"
- Secondary sources:
 - Margaret Osler, "John Locke and the Changing Ideal of Scientific Knowledge"
 - Edwin Curley, "Locke, Boyle, and the Distinction between Primary and Secondary Qualities"
 - J. L. Mackie, *Problems from Locke* (selection)

◆ **February 18: Power**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay* II.xix
 - Gottfried Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, II.xxi, §1-50
- Secondary sources:
 - Vere Chappell, "Power in Locke's *Essay*"
 - Ruth Mattern, "Locke on Active Power and the Obscure Idea of Active Power in Bodies"
 - Samuel Rickless, "Locke on the Freedom to Will"

◆ **February 25: Personal Identity**

- Primary sources
 - *Essay*, II.xxvi-xxvii
 - Catharine Trotter Cockburn: *A Defense of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding* (selection)
- Secondary sources:
 - Kenneth Winkler, "Locke on Personal Identity"
 - Udo Thiel, "Seventeenth-Century Theories of Consciousness"
 - Jessica Gordon-Roth, "Catharine Trotter Cockburn's *Defence* of Locke"

◆ **March 3: Bad Ideas, Mad Ideas**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay*, II.xxviii-xxxiii

- Locke/Sydenham dubia: “Ars Medica” and “Anatomia”
- Thomas Willis, *On the Souls of Brutes* (selection)
- Secondary sources:
 - John Wright, “Association, Madness and the Measures of Probability in Locke and Hume”
 - Akihito Suzuki, “An Anti-Lockean Enlightenment? Mind and Body in Early Eighteenth-Century English Medicine”
 - Peter Anstey and John Burrows, “John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, and the Authorship of Two Medical Essays”

◆ **March 10: Education**

- Primary sources:
 - Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, §31-82
 - Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (selections)
- Secondary sources:
 - Richard Kroll, “The Muse of Terpsichore, or ‘The Physiognomy of Mind’ In Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*”
 - Jonathan Marks, “Rousseau’s Critique of Locke’s Education for Liberty”
 - Alex Neill, “Locke on Habituation, Autonomy, and Education”

◆ **March 17: NO CLASS (Spring break)**

◆ **March 24: Names and Universals**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay*, III.i-vi
 - Leibniz, *New Essays*, III.vi
- Secondary sources:
 - Hans Aarsleff, “Leibniz and Locke on Language”
 - Nicholas Jolley, “Leibniz and Locke on Essences”
 - Jan-Erik Jones, “Locke on Real Essences, Intelligibility, and Natural Kinds”

◆ **March 31: Knowledge and Judgment**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay* IV.i-v
 - Descartes, *Meditations* 5 and 6
- Secondary sources:
 - David Owen, “Locke on Judgment”
 - Lex Newman, “Locke on Knowledge”

- Ruth Mattern, "Locke: "Our Knowledge, Which All Consists in Propositions""

◆ **April 7: LOCKE WORKSHOP**

◆ **April 14: Governing Assent**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay* III.xi, IV.xii-xvii
 - Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, §1-6
- Secondary sources
 - Douglas Casson, *Liberating Judgment* (selection)
 - James Tully, "Governing Conduct"
 - Sorana Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind* (selection)

◆ **April 21: Property and the State of Nature**

*Paper abstracts and bibliographies due

- Primary sources:
 - John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 1-5
 - Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, xiii-xiv, xvi-xvii
- Secondary sources:
 - Karl Olivecrona, "Appropriation in the State of Nature: Locke on the Origin of Property"
 - Patrick Coby, "The Law of Nature in Locke's *Second Treatise*: Is Locke a Hobbesian?"
 - James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: Locke and his Adversaries* (selection)

◆ **April 28: Reason, Faith and Enthusiasm**

- Primary sources:
 - *Essay*, IV.ix-xi, xviii-xxi
 - Shaftesbury, "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm to my Lord"
- Secondary sources:
 - Nicholas Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (selection)
 - John Passmore, "Locke and the Ethics of Belief"
 - F. H. Heinemann, "The Philosopher of Enthusiasm with Material Hitherto Unpublished"