

LPS 213: Topics in Early Modern Philosophy: Locke and Reid (Fall 2019)

Wednesday 2:00-4:50 PM **SST 777**

Instructor:

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Office: SST 759

Office hours: by appointment

Course Description:

We will examine the writings of two empiricist philosophers of the early modern era: John Locke and Thomas Reid. Why Locke and Reid as a pair? Though both are well-known for their theories of mind and their work in epistemology (broadly construed), each also was an active participant in the burgeoning experimental natural philosophy of their day. A key focus of this seminar will be to examine the ways this engagement with the science of their day both informed and was informed by their more properly philosophical projects. While we will spend most of the seminar studying these thinkers in their own context, we will conclude the seminar by reflecting on the potential lessons and implications of their approaches for scientifically informed philosophy today.

Requirements:

All that is required for an 'S' is regular attendance and occasional participation. For a grade, you must submit two short (5-10 pp) papers, one due Wednesday of week 6, and one due Wednesday of finals week. Ideally, one of these papers would focus on a thesis related to Locke, and one on a thesis related to Reid. Completing this course for a grade could count for either an early modern empiricism or a metaphysics/epistemology credit.

Readings:

In addition to a number of articles and excerpts (which can found on the course website), it is assumed that everyone has access to the following:

An Essay concerning Human Understanding, by John Locke (Oxford, 1975, Nidditch edition)

An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, by Thomas Reid (Penn State UP 2000, Brookes edition)

Note that these are the standard scholarly editions of these works: if you plan to work on early modern empiricism in the future, they might be nice additions to your shelf. For our purposes, however, any *unaltered* version of these texts will do fine.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Boyle's Mechanistic and Experimental Natural Philosophy

- "Excellency and Grounds of the mechanical hypothesis", Robert Boyle
- "The Lack of Excellency of Boyle's Mechanical Philosophy", Alan Chalmers
- "Robert Boyle and the Heuristic Power of Mechanism", Peter R. Anstey
- "Reply to Anstey", Alan Chalmers

Week 2: Locke's Theory of Ideas

- *Essay* Epistle, Bk I Ch I, and Bk II Ch I-IX
- "Boyle and Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities", Peter Alexander

Week 3: Real and Nominal Essences

- *Essay* Bk III Ch VI
- "Locke vs Aristotle on Natural Kinds", Michael Ayers
- "The Status of Mechanism in Locke's Philosophy", Lisa Downing

Week 4: Mechanism in Locke's Philosophy

- *Essay* Bk IV Ch I-III.6, and BK IV Ch IX-XI
- "Superadded Properties: The Limits of Mechanism in Locke", Margaret Wilson
- "Mechanism, Superaddition, and the Proof of God's Existence in Locke's Essay", Michael Ayers
- "Reply to Ayers", Margaret Wilson

Week 5: Locke's Newtonianism

- *Essay* Bk IV Ch III.7-Ch IV
- "Locke's Newtonianism and Lockean Newtonianism", Lisa Downing
- "Locke's Defense of Mathematical Physics", Kenneth Winkler

Week 6: Reid's Philosophy of Common Sense

- *Inquiry*, Ch I-IV and Ch V.3
- "Reid on Common Sense", Nicholas Wolterstorff
- EXTRA: "Thomas Reid and the Common Sense School", Paul Wood

Week 7: Reid on Primary/Secondary Qualities

- *Inquiry*, Ch V-VI.6
- "Reid's Foundation for the Primary/Secondary Quality Distinction", Jennifer McKittrick
- *Problems from Reid*, James van Cleve, Ch. 4

Week 8: Reid's Theory of Perception

- *Inquiry*, Ch VI.7-VI.13 and Ch VI.17
- "A Realism for Reid: Mediated but Direct", Rebecca Copenhaver
- *Problems from Reid*, James van Cleve, Ch. 3

Week 9: Reid's Newtonianism

- *Inquiry*, Ch VI.20-VI.21 and Ch VII.
- "Reid on Hypotheses and the ether: a reassessment", Paul Wood
- "Reid and Priestley on Method and the Mind", Alan Tapper
- "Reid and the Role of Hypotheses in Natural Science", Victor Eremita
- "Newtonian Forces of Attraction", Robert Callergard

Week 10: Lessons from Locke and Reid

- "In Praise of Natural Philosophy", Nicholas Maxwell
- *After Certainty*, Robert Pasnau, Selections TBA
- "A Plea for Natural Philosophy", Penelope Maddy