

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THOMAS REID

PHIL 427 (A01) ADVANCED STUDIES IN EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY [12496]/

PHIL 500 (A01) TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY: THOMAS REID [12499]

Classes

Monday & Thursday: 10:00-11:20pm, Clearihue B315

Professor

Patrick Rysiew

Office Hours: Thursday 11:30-12:20, Friday 1:00-2:20, or by appointment; Clearihue B321

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Provisional Draft: This early syllabus is intended to give a sense of what the course is like. It is not the final, official outline: readings or dates may change.

Course Description

This course is about the philosophical theories of Thomas Reid (1710-96). Reid was a contemporary of both Hume and Kant. Like Kant, Reid said that Hume's writings were the main spur to his own philosophical work. In Reid's case, this took the form of challenging 'the theory of ideas', among other things, which he saw as the cornerstone of Hume's (and many other philosophers') writings. Until recently, Reid's work has been largely neglected, and often misunderstood. Too often, his commitment to 'common sense' was seen as amounting to not much more than a refusal to do philosophy, or an inability to feel the grip of philosophical problems. More recently there has been a resurgence of interest in Reid's work and a recognition of its philosophical sophistication and richness. Numerous articles, books, and collections on Reid have appeared over the past two decades; he has been cited by such key contemporary figures as Chisholm, Lehrer, Alston, Plantinga, Putnam and Sosa. Philosophers have grown increasingly interested, especially, in Reid's views on perception, knowledge (and scepticism), and action. These views will be the focus of the course; readings will be drawn from Reid, and from contemporary discussions of Reid and the issues he tackled.

Texts

Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense: a Critical Edition*; Derek Brookes, ed. Penn. State University Press 1997/2000; ISBN 0-271-02071-7.

Excerpts from Reid's *Works*, and a number of additional readings, will be made available via the course's CourseSpaces page.

Resources

- Several books by/about Reid are available at the Library. Please be considerate of other students in the course as concerns such texts – try not to recall a book out from under one of your fellow Reid students; make it known to others if you have a copy of some text, and so on.
- Many digitized manuscripts of Reid's are available here: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/Thomas_Reid/.
- I have copies of many articles on Reid; if you are looking for something and having trouble finding it, feel free to ask.

Evaluation

Students' grades will be based on:

- (a) five short (2pp. max.) "quote and comment" assignments (4% each; 20% total);
- (b) a term paper, approx. 15-20 pp. in length OR two shorter (8-10 pp.) papers, on a topic (/topics) of your choosing, in consultation with the instructor (60%);
- (c) a paper proposal (or proposals), outlining the topic, central theses, and structure/plan for the intended paper(s), approx. 2-3 pp., plus projected bibliography (15%);
- (d) informed participation in the course (5%).

(a) Short "Quote and Comment" Assignments: At least five times during the course, at the start of the Monday session, a student will hand in a brief critical discussion of some part or aspect of the readings for that week. (You may submit up to seven of these, with the top five being counted towards your final grade.) These comments *must* be typed and *may not* exceed two double-spaced pages; else, they will be returned ungraded. Your name and the course title should be clearly indicated at the top of the page. You should identify the reading to which you are responding and a brief passage in the reading that raises an issue or point you wish to discuss. (It often makes sense for you to include a brief quotation from the text as a preface to your remarks.) Offer a brief explanation of what issue or point you find interesting or contentious or confusing, etc., and then provide a brief reasoned response – e.g., a criticism or comment or constructive question, along with reasons for thinking it is important or reasonable, etc. – about the issue being addressed.

(b) Research Paper: Students will write a research paper (or two shorter such papers) on a topic (/topics) of their choosing, subject to the instructor's approval. Students will provide a preliminary plan for their papers in the form of a research proposal (next item). Final papers – either the single, longer paper, or the second of two shorter papers -- are due **Monday December 9th, by 1pm** (my mailbox, Phil. Dept. office). For those writing two shorter papers, the first of these will be due **Monday October 21st at the start of class**.

(c) Paper Proposal: The paper proposal has four elements. First, you should provide a brief but suitably descriptive title for your project. Second, you must provide a brief description of the general philosophical terrain you wish to explore in your research. Here you should identify and briefly characterize any key background theories or assumptions that shape your project. You should also briefly motivate philosophical interest or importance of the general project. Third, you must provide a description of the particular dimensions of the philosophical issue or problem you plan to address in your essay. This should include a provisional characterization of the argument you anticipate developing in your essay. Fourth, you must provide a preliminary bibliography of material you will draw upon in writing your essay. The bibliography must include at least 5 philosophy articles or books. The completed proposal should be approximately 2-3 double-spaced pages long PLUS the bibliography. The **final** deadline for submission of paper proposals is **Monday November 4th at the start of class**. Students who turn their proposals in by a reasonably earlier time will get written feedback, and may revise and resubmit it. (Students who choose the two-paper option under (b) will submit a proposal for each of the two papers; the first of these will be due **Thursday October 10th at the start of class**.)

(d) Participation: By its nature, this is not a matter that is easily quantified; nor are clear and

useful criteria for optimal performance on this component easily articulated. Students are expected to be regular, active, and thoughtful participants in the life of the course. Bear in mind that this is an advanced course, that a good portion of class time will be devoted to discussion, and that much of what you learn in the course will be from other students. For this reason alone, and quite apart from issues about grades, it is in your own interest to read the material ahead of time, to be prepared and willing to talk about it in class, to actively participate in the course, to intend your in-class comments and questions to be ultimately constructive and helpful, and so on.

In general, evaluation of students' written work will be based on: evidence of comprehension of the materials and issues addressed; evidence of original and critical thought with regard to that material; the extent to which the student stakes out a position and provides good reasons and arguments for it; the extent to which the student communicates his/her ideas clearly (using complete and grammatical sentences, correct terms, a clear essay structure, and so on). All materials used on any of the assignments must be properly cited in the standard way.

Without exception, late papers unaccompanied by a legitimate documented excuse will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day or portion thereof, starting as soon as the due date and time have passed. Should an emergency arise, let the instructor know – ahead of time, if possible.

The standard University grading scheme will be used. Here is an excerpt from it (the full version is here: <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html>):

Passing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+ A A-	9 8 7	90 – 100 85 – 89 80 – 84	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
B+ B B-	6 5 4	77 – 79 73 – 76 70 – 72	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
C+ C	3 2	65 – 69 60 – 64	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
D	1	50 – 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. It is each student's responsibility to know the University's regulations in this regard. The Policy on Academic Integrity is published

in the University Calendar.¹ Other resources concerning cheating and plagiarism include the Libraries' plagiarism guide,² and the Learning and Teaching Centre's information for students.³

A word about Reid's works

Our readings from Reid will be drawn from his three main works:

- *An Inquiry Into the Human Mind, On the Principles of Common Sense*, 1764 (abbreviated below as IHM; '1.1' = Chapter 1, Section 1)
- *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 1785 (EIP; '1.1' = Essay 1, Chapter 1)
- *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind*, 1788. (EAP; '1.1' = Essay 1, Chapter 1)

IHM and EIP are concerned primarily with philosophy of mind/perception and epistemology; EAP is concerned with ethics and agency. Until recently, the standard edition of Reid was William Hamilton, ed., *Philosophical Works*, which contains all three of these plus some other materials. The cost of that volume is prohibitive. New editions of Reid's work are now becoming available, but so far the only one available in an affordable paperback version is the *Inquiry*; so only that has been ordered as a text. The rest of our readings from Reid, along with any additional readings, will be made available via CourseSpaces. (The readings from EIP and EAP will be from the Hamilton edition mentioned above.) Because we will be referring often in class to the readings, and because some other editions of Reid are heavily edited, it is *very strongly* recommended that you stick to the editions being used here.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

We will begin by looking at Reid's method of investigation, the primacy of common sense, and his critique of 'the way of ideas' (for which he is perhaps best known). After that, we will take up topics more or less in the chronological order in which Reid addressed them. In weeks 3-10 we will be concerned with Reid's views on perception, the mind, common sense and knowledge – here, we will look at portions of IHM and EIP, for the most part reading them in parallel. In the latter third of the course, we'll look at Reid's writings on agency and moral judgment; here, EAP will be the primary text from Reid.

Note: What follows is *provisional* and *subject to revision* at the instructor's discretion. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class. As a default, you should do the readings for a given session in the order in which they are listed.

Week 1 (Sept. 5): Introduction and overview; the Humean background: There are several articles provide a fair overview of some of the main issues and views we'll be looking at in the course. Students are encouraged to have a look at one or more of these to get a general sense of Reid's views.

- The entry on Reid by Gideon Yaffe and Ryan Nichols in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reid/>
- D. D. Todd's "Reid Redivivus?"

¹ <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>.

² <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php>.

³ <https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/students/resources/expectations/index.php>.

- P. Rysiew, “Thomas Reid”

Week 2 (Sept. 9, 12): Reid’s method of investigation; the primacy of common sense; his critique of the way of ideas

- Reid: IHM 1; EIP 1, 2.14; “Oration III” (1759)

Week 3 (Sept. 16, 19): Sensation and perception: Reid’s distinction; the role of sensation in perception

- Reid: IHM 2-4; EIP 1.1, 2.5, 2.16
- Todd, “Thomas Reid’s Semiotic”
- Chappell, “The Theory of Sensations”
- Duggan’s Introduction to IHM

Week 4 (Sept. 23, 26): Primary and Secondary Qualities: Locke and Berkeley on the distinction; Reid’s way of drawing it

- Reid: IHM 5, EIP 2.17
- excerpt from Locke (*Essay*)
- excerpt from Berkeley (*Three Dialogues*)

Week 5 (Sept. 30, Oct. 3): Reid’s Nativism: Nativism vs. empiricism; ‘natural signs’; Reid’s arguments for nativism; the role of nativism in combating scepticism; nativism and ‘innate ideas’

- Reid: IHM 6.1-6.7; EIP through 2.22
- the Hume-Reid exchange in the *Inquiry*, Brookes, ed. (pp. 255-65)
- Wright, “Hume vs. Reid on Ideas: The New Hume Letter”
- excerpt from Leibniz

Week 6 (Oct. 7, 10): Direct and indirect realism: Different senses of ‘direct’; strategies for securing direct realism; whether Reid succumbs to ‘the way of ideas’ himself; whether acquired perception is direct; whether ‘acquired perception’ is perception

- Reid: sections on acquired perception – IHM 6.20-23, EIP 2.21-22
- Van Cleve, “Reid’s Theory of Perception”

Week 7 (Oct. 14, 17) [no class Oct. 14 – Thanksgiving]: Vision – Visible Figure, The Geometry of Visibles

- Reid: IHM 6.8-19 (less important: 6.14-16, 6.18-19)
- Daniels, Chapter 1 (*Thomas Reid’s ‘Inquiry’: The Geometry of Visibles and the Case for Realism*)
- optional: Brookes, 272-7, 318-9

Week 8 (Oct. 21, 24): continued; then, moving on [see next week]

Week 9 (Oct. 28, 31): Reid’s Epistemology: what is common sense?; the status of ‘first principles’; Reid’s theory of evidence; locating Reid with respect to foundationalism-vs-coherentism, internalism-vs-externalism, reliabilism, and naturalism; the epistemology of testimony; Reid’s reply to the sceptic

- Reid: IHM 6.24, 7, & pp. 169-170; EIP 2.20, 6.1-6.6, 7
- Lehrer, “Chisholm, Reid, and the Problem of the Epistemic Surd,” and *Thomas Reid*, pp. 162-3, 197-202
- De Bary, “Thomas Reid’s Metaprinciple”
- Greco, “Reid’s Reply to the Sceptic”
- Van Cleve, “Reid’s Response to the Skeptic”
- Rysiew, “Reid and Epistemic Naturalism”

Week 10 (Nov. 4, 7): continued

Week 11 (Nov. 11, 14) [no class Nov. 11 – Reading Break]: Causation, Freedom, Agency: ‘active power’; agent causation vs. event causation; determinism; compatibilism; the role of agent causation in Reid’s account of freedom

- Reid: EAP 1; “Of Power”
- Lehrer, *Thomas Reid*, pp. 203-11, Chapter 14
- Rowe, “Thomas Reid’s Theory of Freedom and Responsibility”
- *optional: Reid: EAP 2, 4*

Week 12 (Nov. 18, 21): continued; then, moving on [see next week]

Week 13 (Nov. 25, 28): Reid’s Moral Philosophy: Reid as critic of Hume; Reid as ‘moral sense’ theorist? as ‘intuitionist’?; the relation of Reid’s moral theory to his epistemology

- Reid: EIP 7.2
- Lehrer, *Thomas Reid*, pp. 212-26, Chapter 13
- Cuneo, “Reid’s Moral Philosophy”
- *optional: Reid: EAP 3, 5*

Week 14 (Dec. 2): Final Meeting

*Final papers are due **Monday December 9th, by 1pm** (my mailbox, Phil. Dept. office). A reminder that late papers unaccompanied by a legitimate documented excuse will be penalized at the rate of 5%/day.

Some important administrative dates:⁴

- Tues., Sept. 17: last day for 100% reduction of fees.
- Fri., Sept. 20: last day to for adding first-term courses.
- Tues., Oct. 8: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- Thurs., Oct. 31: last day for withdrawing from second-term courses without penalty of failure.

⁴ <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-05/general/dates.html>.