

PHILOSOPHY 308 A01 1.5  
Fall 2025

**Instructor:** Dr. James Young

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**Office Hours:** Mondays and Thursdays 2:30-4:00 and by appointment. Students may make an appointment to attend office hours via Zoom.

**Location:** MacLaurin D 203

**Texts:** John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*  
Catharine Trotter Cockburn, *A Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding*  
George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues*  
David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*

Apart from Cockburn's book, these books are available for purchase in the University bookstore. All the books are available free online as follows:

Locke: <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/locke>

Catharine Trotter Cockburn, *A Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding*,  
[https://www.google.ca/books/edition/The\\_Works\\_of\\_Mrs\\_Catharine\\_Cockburn/1cwJLB9SBq4C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22Catharine+Trotter%22&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.ca/books/edition/The_Works_of_Mrs_Catharine_Cockburn/1cwJLB9SBq4C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22Catharine+Trotter%22&printsec=frontcover)

Hume: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4705>

Berkeley, *Principles*: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4723>

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4724>

**Course format and objectives:**

This course will be offered in person. Meetings will be Mondays and Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. in MacLaurin D203.

The objects of this course are to provide students with a knowledge of the epistemological and metaphysical views of the principal members of the empiricist school; to provide students with an appreciation of the continuing philosophical significance of these views; to cultivate philosophical acuity.

**Grading:**

Students will write two essays: one essay on either Locke or Berkeley and one essay on Hume. Students will be provided with suggested essay topics. Each essay will be worth 40% of the course grade. In addition, students will write eight short quizzes. The five best scores on these quizzes will each be worth 4% of the final grade. These quizzes will be administered without notice and will be designed to ensure that students are attending classes and keeping up with assigned readings. If students miss a quiz for a good reason, they may arrange to write a makeup quiz.

Four criteria will be used in assessing essays: (1) effective and correct use of the English language; (2) accurate presentation of the views of the philosophers discussed; (3) presentation of valid arguments; and (4) evidence of original thought. A first-class essay will be characterised by clear, grammatical prose and careful exegesis. It will display an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions discussed. It will state a thesis and provide valid arguments for it. A first-class essay will also contain your own efforts to grapple with philosophical issues and to arrive at your own solutions. Students are discouraged from making extensive use of secondary sources. Their own reasoned reflections are more important than a survey of the extant literature.

After the deadlines, essays will be accepted without penalty for seven days. If papers are submitted after the deadline, without a good reason, the instructor will not feel under an obligation to provide extensive written comments on them. No papers will be accepted more than seven days after the deadline. Requests for exceptions must be received in writing and ***no more than seven days after the deadline.***

Students will receive a final grade out of 100 points. Numbers will be converted to a letter grade in accordance with the following scale: 90-100=A+; 85-89=A; 80-84=A-; 77-79=B+; 73-76=B; 70-72=B-; 65-69=C+; 60-64=C; 50-59= D; 0-49=F. Final grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

**N grades**

Students who have completed the following elements will be considered to have completed the course and are eligible to receive a passing final grade:

- *Essay 1*
- *Essay 2*
- *Four of the eight surprise quizzes*

Failure to complete one or more of these elements will result in a grade of “N” regardless of the cumulative percentage on other elements of the course. An N is a failing grade, and it factors into a student’s GPA as 0. The maximum percentage that can accompany an N on a student’s transcript is 49

## Academic integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are serious academic offences and will not be tolerated. Please see the University Calendar for the regulations on academic integrity: <https://www.uvic.ca/students/academics/academic-integrity/>. The minimum penalty for violation of the policy is a failing grade on a plagiarised assignment. Serious or repeated plagiarism can result in failure of a course and even suspension from the University. A good way to avoid plagiarism is to take the instructor's advice and avoid secondary sources altogether.

Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Humanities. As part of professionalism, students, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with University policies, including the [Tri-Faculty's Standards for Professional Behaviour](#).

## Generative AI

In this course, you may use generative AI to check the spelling and grammar of your essays. No other use may be made of generative AI. Any use of AI besides that specifically permitted will be considered a violation of the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

## Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself or the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity. Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

## Syllabus

Week One: 4 September

Topic: Introduction to empiricism; critique of innate ideas

Readings: *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Epistle to the Reader

Week Two: 8 and 11 September

Topic: Origin of ideas; moral knowledge

Readings: Cockburn, *A Defence of Mr Locke's Essay*  
*Essay*, Bk. I, Ch. I-IV

Week Three: 15 and 18 September

Topic: Simple and complex ideas; primary and secondary qualities; space and time  
Readings: *Essay*, Bk. II, Ch. I-IV, VIII, XII, XIII and XIV

Week Four: 22 and 25 September

Topic: Power; human freedom; substance  
Readings: *Essay*, Bk. II, Ch. XIII, XIV, Ch. XXI, §§ 1 - 50, XXIII

Week Five: 29 September and 2 October

Topic: Identity; types and extent of knowledge  
Readings: *Essay*, Bk. II, Ch. XXVII; Bk. IV, Ch. I – V, IX-XI

Week Six: 6 and 9 October

Topic: Critique of abstract general ideas; immaterialism  
Readings: Berkeley, *Principles*

Week Seven: 16 October

Topic: Berkeley on God and finite souls  
Readings: *Three Dialogues*

Week Eight: 20 and 23 October

Topic: Introduction to Hume; origins of ideas; space and time  
Readings: *Treatise of Human Nature*, Introduction, Bk. I  
Assignment: First essay due 24 October

Week Nine: 27 and 30 October

Topic: Existence, external existence, causality  
Readings: *Treatise*, Bk. II

Week Ten: 3 and 6 November

Topic: Causality continued; the idea of necessary connection  
Readings: *Treatise*, Bk. III

Week Eleven: 13 November

Topic: Scepticism; the nature of the soul  
Readings: *Treatise*, Bk. III; *Treatise*, Bk. IV, §§ 1-7

Week Twelve: 17 and 20 November

Topic: Liberty and Necessity  
Readings: Bk. II, Pt. III, §§ I-II

Week Thirteen: 24 and 27 November

Topic: Hume's meta-ethics  
Readings: Bk. 3, Pt. 1, §§ I-II

Week Fourteen: 1 December

Topic: The legacy of empiricism  
Readings: none  
Assignment: Second essay due 5 December

N.B.: This syllabus is tentative and intended only to give students a rough guide to readings, dates and topics. Dates may be changed.