

HUMANITIES 11700
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE HUMANITIES III

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TEXTS

David Hume, *Ethical Writings* (U of Notre Dame Press)
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge)
Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (Penguin)
Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew* (Penguin)

All texts are available at the Seminary Co-op bookstore.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Three 5-page papers, one on Hume, one on Kant, and one on either of the literary works. A total of four paper topics will be handed out, and you can choose to write either on the second or the fourth, but you must write on both the first (on Hume) and the third one (on Kant). Please hand in **two copies** of each paper, as each paper will be given two grades: one by Land, which evaluates the content of your paper, and one by Coyne, which evaluates your writing. Each of the grades by Land will count for 20%. Coyne's cumulative grade will count for another 20%. Class participation accounts for the final 20% of your overall grade.

SCHEDULE

- Mar 29 Introduction
- Mar 31 Why morality rests on feeling, not on reason: the argument from motivation.
Hume, *Treatise*, II.iii.3 Of the Influencing Motives of the Will, and III.i.1, Moral Distinctions not Deriv'd from Reason
- Apr 5 More on why morality rests on feeling: the idea of a moral sense.
Hume, *Enquiry*, §I and Appendix I; *Treatise*, III.i.2, Moral Distinctions Deriv'd from a Moral Sense
- Apr 7 Two kinds of virtues, natural and artificial: how are they different?
Enquiry, §§II, III and Appendix III
- Apr 12 Why is usefulness ("utility") a characteristic of virtue?
Enquiry, §§IV, V and Appendix II
- Apr 14 What are the properties that make an action virtuous (in addition to utility, which we already know about)? Hume names four and uses them to give a classification of the virtues.
Enquiry, §§VI-VIII

- Apr 19 Two topics: (a) Why should we be virtuous? The problem of the so-called “sensible knave”; (b) Moral relativism: what if different cultures find different things useful or agreeable? Would this be a problem for Hume’s theory?
Enquiry, §IX and “A Dialogue”
- Apr 21 We shift gears from theory to a concrete moral problem: the story of Billy Budd.
Melville, *Billy Budd*
- Apr 26 *Billy Budd* continued
Hume paper due
- Apr 28 Introduction to Kant: the idea of a metaphysics of morals; and why morality rests on reason, not on feeling.
Kant, *Groundwork*, Preface
- May 3 Why moral action has a special motive: the motive of duty and its connection with the idea of the good will
Groundwork, Section I
- May 5 Kant claims that the will is identical with practical reason: what does that mean? And what does morality have to do with imperatives?
Groundwork, pp. 406-420₁₇
- May 10 The Categorical Imperative
Groundwork, pp. 420-427₁₈
Melville paper due
- May 12 Kant introduces two additional versions of the categorical imperative: are they equivalent to the first? What is the connection between universal law and humanity?
Groundwork, pp. 427-437₅
- May 17 Kant’s master thought: morality as autonomy
Groundwork, pp. 437-445
- May 19 Concluding discussion on Kant; Kant and Hume on the motive of duty
Hume, *Treatise*, III.ii.1, Justice, Whether a Natural or Artificial Virtue?, pp. 203-205, and III.ii.5, Of the Obligation of Promises, pp. 226-228.
- May 24 Morality and happiness
Diderot, *Rameau’s Nephew*
Kant paper due
- May 26 *Rameau’s Nephew* continued
- May 31 Concluding discussion
- Jun 2 no class (reading period)
- Jun 7 **Diderot paper due**