

*British Empiricism*, 70.268 – Jan. term 2010  
Brandon University  
*Lectures:* T/Th, 10:10-11:30, in Clark Hall 317  
*Instructor:* Dr. Derek H. Brown  
*Contact information:* brownd@brandonu.ca, 727-9765  
*Office hours:* Tues 11:30-12:30 or by appointment, Clark Hall 331

This course is an introduction to British Empiricist thought (a period roughly extending from 1650-1775), which sought to give *observation* and experiment more central roles in our account of human knowledge than it had previously been given. Their approach marks a pivotal move toward the ‘scientific’ ways of conceiving of knowledge that currently dominate North American thought. John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume are typically taken to be the central figures of this movement, and so, after a brief introduction to the period, we will begin by studying selections from their works. Highlights include Locke’s distinction between *primary* and *secondary qualities*, Berkeley’s arguments for *Idealism*, and Hume’s famous argument against *induction*. Following this we will consider some critics of these thinkers, including Leibniz (the co-founder of calculus), Reid, and Kant. By far the most influential empiricist critic is Immanuel Kant, who laid out his orientation to questions in the theory of knowledge most directly in his *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*. We will carefully study this important work. After this focus on the theory of knowledge, we will turn our attention toward some of the great political and moral works of the period, including Locke’s arguments for Liberalism and Bentham’s arguments for Utilitarianism.

*Required Texts:* Radcliffe, E., et. al (2006). *Late Modern Philosophy: Essential readings with Commentary*. Blackwell Press.  
Supplementary material to be made available in class.

*Grade:*

Periodic reading assignments	worth 5% of final grade
Class participation	worth 10% of final grade
Test 1: Tuesday, February 9	worth 15% of final grade
Paper 1: Tuesday, March 2	worth 15% of final grade
Group presentations: March 23-30	worth 15% of final grade
Test 2: Thursday, April 8	worth 20% of final grade
Paper 2: Thursday, April 15	worth 20% of final grade

Much of the course content and exams are inherently cumulative. As a result each exam typically requires mastery of the material presented up to that point in the course. Instructions for essays and sample test questions will be provided in class. Group presentations can be argumentative, of a debating style, narrative, et cetera. Creativity most welcome. Students will have plenty of opportunity to contribute to class discussion. Please make sure that you do so (to earn participation points) and be sure you allow others to also (they need participation points too!). *Students are asked to turn off all cell phones during lectures.*

In the event that you miss a test/assignment/essay deadline you *must* present documentation establishing your whereabouts during the relevant class, and the reason for your absence must be deemed acceptable by the instructor. Conflicts with scheduled university events (e.g. athletic) in which you will participate must be brought to the instructor’s attention during the first week of the term. *If a student misses a test/assignment/essay deadline and does not provide adequate documentation in a timely manner s/he will receive a grade of 0 on that exam.*

Individuals who have any disability, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this Class, are encouraged to inform the instructor at the start of the semester. Adaptations may be made as required to provide for equitable participation.

Grade assignments will be *roughly* in accordance with the following:

95-100	A+	67-71	C+
89-95	A	63-67	C
84-89	A-	59-63	C-
79-84	B+	50-59	D
75-79	B	0-50	F
71-75	B-		

*NOTE:* Decimal grades from 0.0-0.49 will be rounded down, and from 0.5-0.99 will be rounded up.

Scheduled topics, subject to minor revisions:

Weeks 1-4: General introduction & Part 1 [of text]

Weeks 5-6: Test 1 and Part 2

Week 7: Essay 1 and Part 3

Week 8: Part 5

Weeks 9-10: Part 6

Weeks 11-12: Presentations (no class Thursday April 1)

Week 13: Review and Test 2

April 15: Essay 2 deadline

*Students are specifically referred to the policy on academic dishonesty and misconduct Section 4.2.2 of the General Calendar (pp. 22-3). Violations of this policy, including all forms of plagiarism, will not be tolerated.*