Syllabus for NEH Institute

David Hume in the 21st Century: Perpetuating the Enlightenment

Portland State University
July 11 – August 5, 2022

Principles of Civility for NEH Professional Development Programs:

NEH Seminars, Institutes, and Landmarks programs are intended to extend and deepen knowledge and understanding of the humanities by focusing on significant topics, texts, and issues; contribute to the intellectual vitality and professional development of participants; and foster a community of inquiry that provides models of excellence in scholarship and teaching.

NEH expects that project directors will take responsibility for encouraging an ethos of openness and respect, upholding the basic norms of civil discourse. Seminar, Institute, and Landmarks presentations and discussions should be:

1. firmly grounded in rigorous scholarship, and thoughtful analysis;
2. conducted without partisan advocacy;
3. respectful of divergent views;
4. free of ad hominem commentary; and
5. devoid of ethnic, religious, gender, disability, or racial bias.

NEH welcomes comments, concerns, or suggestions on these principles at questions@neh.gov.
Schedule of Topics, Speakers, and Readings
(subject to change)

Abbreviated references to Hume’s writings:

*Treatise* = *A Treatise of Human Nature* (followed by Book, Part, section #)
*EPM* = *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (followed by Part, section #)
*EHU* = *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (followed by Part, section #)
*Essays* = *Essays: Moral, Political, Literary*
*History* = *History of England*
*DCNR* = *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Access to most readings will be provided electronically. Editions of Hume’s works are readily available, including online. For instance, the website davidhume.org has acceptable editions of all of Hume’s works. (The Oxford Critical Editions of the *Treatise*, *EPM*, *EHU*, and *DCNR* are now generally considered the standard editions.)

Formal sessions each day will begin at 9 am and end at noon, with a brief break. We will have opportunities for small group meetings in the afternoons to discuss pedagogy or to meet with guest faculty on topics of special interest. Afternoon participation is optional.

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**Sat-Sun**

**July 9-10** Check in on campus – Information to come

**July 10** Welcoming social – Information to come

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**Week 1**  
**Hume’s Naturalism and Skepticism / Hume on the Mind**

**Mon-Tues**

**July 11-12** Introduction and welcome (Co-directors Angela Coventry and Elizabeth Radcliffe)

**Naturalism and Skepticism (Don Garrett, NYU)**

Evidence and the Correction of Skeptical Doubts: Hume writes in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* that the “undistinguished doubts” of “excessive skepticism ... are, in some measure, corrected by common sense and reflection.” How, within Hume’s epistemology of evidence, does this correction occur? How does it allow Hume to combine mitigated skepticism with naturalism?
Readings:
1. Hume, EHU: Sections 4-6, and 12
2. Hume, Treatise: 1.1.3.1-2, 1.3.7.3, 1.3.8.11-12, 1.3.10.11-12, 1.3.13.1-3, 1.3.13.9, 1.4.2.41, 1.4.5.30, 1.4.7.7, 3.3.1.14-18

Supplemental Readings:
1. Hume, EHU: Section 10
2. Hume, DCNR: Part 1

Weds-Thurs  
July 13-14  
**Naturalism and Skepticism (Paul Russell, UBC and Lund)**
Hume’s irreligious views in the context of his naturalism and his skepticism

Readings:
1. Hume’s Treatise / Hobbes’s Leviathan

Fri  
July 15  
**Hume on Space, Time and Passions (Angela Coventry, Portland State)**
Hume’s treatment of space and time is examined, particularly in relation to the passions.

Readings:
Hume, Treatise 1.1-2, 1.3.13, and 2.3.7-8

Supplemental Readings:
4. Don Garrett, Hume, Routledge, 2015, chapter 2

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**Week 2  Moral Psychology / Morality and Society / Economics**

**Mon**

**July 18**

**Hume’s Moral Psychology (Elizabeth Radcliffe, William & Mary)**

Hume’s theory of the passions and reason as background to his moral theory:
How does Hume’s theory differ from other early modern theories of the passions? What are the respective roles of passion and reason in producing action? Does Hume think there is any way of moderating the passions, given that he argues that reason cannot do it? Finally, what is the role of passion in moral judgment and in moral agency?

**Readings:**
1. Hume, T 2.3, 3.1
2. Hume, EPM Part 1, Appendix 1

**Supplemental Readings:**

**Tues**

**July 19**

**Hume on Morality (Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, UNC Chapel Hill)**

Hume and taking up “the general point of view” in moral judgment; how this point of view connects with the natural virtues, such as gratitude and benevolence.

**Readings:**
1. Hume, *Treatise* 3.1.1-2, 3.3.1, 3.3.3-5
**Weds**

**July 20**  
**Hume on Society (Geoffrey Sayre-McCord)**  
The general point of view and artificial virtues such as honesty and justice.

**Readings:**  
1. Hume, *Treatise* 3.2.1-6  

**Thurs-Fri**  

**July 21-22**  
**Hume’s Economics (Margaret Schabas, University of British Columbia)**  
A study of Hume’s key texts on economic theory, including his essays on money, the interest rate, and trade; Hume’s efforts to forge policies on public finance; Hume’s vision for economic prosperity, both national and global.

**Readings:**  

**Supplemental Readings:**  
Week 3  *Hume the Historian / Non-Western Philosophy / Race*

**Mon**  
**July 25**  
**David Hume, the Historian (Mark Spencer, Brock)**  

**Readings:**
   - Vol. VI, Section on “Manners, arts and science,” pp. 530-45.

**Supplemental Reading:**

**Tues**  
**July 26**  
**David Hume, the Historian, cont. (Mark Spencer)**

**Readings:**
Supplemental Reading:

Weds-Thurs
July 27-28 Hume and Non-Western Philosophy (Jay Garfield, Smith and Harvard)
Homologies between Hume’s Indian Mādhyamikas’ treatment of custom, the self, and ethical cultivation.

Readings:
5. Selections from Milindapañha.
7. Selections from Śāntideva, Bodhicāryāvatāra.

Fri
July 29 Hume and Race (Andre Willis, Brown)

Readings:
(Assumes Hume’s Treatise, EHU, NHR, DCNR, Essays, etc. to be foundational)

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**Week 4  **

**Hume and Race, Gender, Animals, and the Environment**

**Mon**

**August 1**  
**Hume and Race (Andre Willis)**

Topic from July 29 continued.

**Readings:**

See above.

**Tues**

**August 2**  
**Hume and Gender (Lisa Shapiro, Simon Fraser)**

Hume’s remarks on women; the use of Humean moral psychology to understand the ways in which gender (and racial) roles and the evaluation of those roles are socially situated, rather than natural; the methodological question of how to understand the power of a philosophical position distinct from the prejudices of the philosopher holding that position.

**Readings:**

1. Hume, *Treatise* 3.2.12,

Supplemental Readings:
1. Hume, the withdrawn Essays: ‘Of Impudence and Modesty’ and ‘Of Love and Marriage’.

Weds

August 3

Hume and Gender (Lisa Shapiro / Deborah Boyle, College of Charleston)
Discussion of evidence of forgotten women philosophers in the period; the challenges of discovering whether and how these women engaged with philosophically with Hume; Catherine Macaulay’s exchange with Hume upon the publication of her History of England, which seems to have been written in part as a response to Hume’s History; Lady Mary Shepherd’s critique of Hume’s account of causation.

Readings on forgotten women philosophers:
2. James Harris, Hume: An Intellectual Biography, pp.413-438. (see esp. 412-415; 421-24; 428-31)

Readings on Catherine Macaulay:
3. TBD

Readings on Lady Mary Shepherd


**Thurs August 4**

**Hume on Animals (Deborah Boyle)**

Did Hume think nonhuman animals can make moral judgments? Are they properly the subjects of *our* moral evaluations? Do they have moral standing?

**Readings:**


**Fri August 5**

**Hume and the Environment (Andrew Valls, Oregon State)**

How does Hume conceive of the relation between humans and the natural environment? Can nature, or features of the natural world, be encompassed by Hume’s moral and political theory? In short, is Hume a proto-environmentalist, or (more modestly) is his philosophy compatible with the concerns of contemporary environmentalism?

**Readings:**

1. Hume, *Treatise* 3.2.1-3

2. Hume, EPM, Section 3 and Appendix 3


Fri Evening  Closing Social