415-01: Ethical Theory: Hume
Fall 2015, August 24th-December 11th
Tuesday 5-7:50
Gannett 2050
Mr. Robison, Hale Chair in Applied Ethics

IMPORTANT: Electronic devices: All cellphones are to be off in class: no answering, no calling, no texting. You may use computers to take notes, but for nothing else. But see why writing notes by hand is better because it involves a different part of the brain.

No incompletes: no early exams and no make-ups.

415-01 Ethical Theory: Hume. This course critically examines Hume's ethical theory and some of the secondary literature.

(1) Office and hours: 1116, College of Liberal Arts; Tuesday 3:15-5, by appointment and by e-mail.

(2) Required Texts: We will primarily be reading the Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, but also looking, from time to time, at Book III of the Treatise of Human Nature. Both are downloadable, listed on the course syllabus, but I have also listed the standard texts if you wish to purchase a hard copy. In addition to Hume's works, we will be reading Michael Gill, Humean Moral Pluralism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) as well as a number of essays that are to appear in an anthology devoted to the Hume's theory in the Enquiry. These are in addition to David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. Norton & Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and David Hume, An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). The two Hume volumes can be picked up used on Amazon.com. Gill has sent me the proof copy of his book, and though it shows some corrections -- and some things that need correction -- we shall use that: it's free. The essays are also in draft form, but are also free.

(3) Aims of the course: We will learn the details of Hume's theory along with its difficulties and how they might be met.

(4) Requirements:

(a) Attendance and participation are presumed. I will assume that you have read and studied the reading assignments. We will be discussing those in class as well as issues that arise in those discussions that you will not be able to read about. The fruit of these discussions will make their way into future discussions and presentations. So a crucial element is to attend classes and participate in discussion: if you do not understand something, you should ask about it. All this requires paying attention, of course, and that is one reason for not using a cellphone or playing on a computer in class. The other reason, obviously, is that it disturbs others and impedes discussion.

One prerequisite of doing philosophy is the realization that we do not know a great deal and a great deal of what we think we know is likely false or misconceived. In any event, the aim is to understand, and you not likely to understand these issues well without a thorough discussion of them. 10 points of your grade will depend upon class participation.
(b) **Presentation** -- You will all be giving a presentation in class, a micro-essay, on what we are reading. This is to be a one-page summary of the points being made, the arguments for them, and conclusions drawn. If you wish to add your own comments, you may do so, but in any event you should make clear the thesis or theses in what you are reading as well as the argument and/or arguments for that thesis or theses. You are to bring to class enough hard copies so that everyone in class can have one. The presentation is worth 30 points. If you miss giving your scheduled presentation or critical comments for any reason, you lose the chance to give one and, obviously, lose the points as well.

(c) **Critical summaries** -- You are each to send me via email a summary, no more than one page in length (a micro-essay), of the week's reading by 5 p.m. Friday of that week. It is to state the most important points made and sketch, at least, the argument(s) for them. Worth 20 points total.

(d) **Major paper** -- You are to pick out an issue that strikes you as particularly interesting and explain what the problem is, what the potential solutions may be, and what the best solution may be. A hard-copy draft of this paper is due in class 12th week with the final version due the last day of class, in hard-copy. We will discuss this in more detail in class. This is to be a major paper, properly researched, with proper notes. I do not require any specific style, but leave that to you. I do not require any specific length, but suggest that you determine the length by what needs to be said so that someone unfamiliar with the problem you are discussing can understand it, the potential solutions, and what you think the best solution may be. The draft will not be graded, but no final paper will get any points unless I have a draft in hand in class 12th week. Worth 40 points.

(e) **Grades** -- 93 to 100 equals an A, 90-92.99 = A-, 87-89.99 = B+, 83-86.99 = B, 80-82.99 = B-, 77-79.99 = C+, 73-76.99 = C, 70-72.99 = C-, 60-69.99 = D, F < 60, with 100% of your grade determined by your summaries, your paper, and your class participation. The likelihood of my making such subtle grading judgments as that between, say, 81.63 and 82.10, is nil, and, for some reason, the grading system does not permit anyone to earn an A+. So...lower your expectations.

(5) **Electronic devices: attention with attendance** -- As a courtesy to us all, cellphones are to be off: no answering, no calling, no texting. Computers may be used for taking notes or for accessing the web for information relevant to the discussion. If you wish to use your computer to play games, or for any other purpose, I would suggest you simply not come to class: you get no credit merely for attending, and your playing games or doing something other than taking notes for the class is a distraction to those around you.

(6) **Honor policy** -- I presume honesty, am embarrassed to bring up the issue, and find it hard to believe that someone could contemplate dishonesty in a course in ethics. But, just so you will know, I will flunk for the course anyone found cheating.

(7) **I do not give incompletes.** Plan your life -- and your time -- accordingly.