

Philosophy 9045: Hume (and some Humeans) on Scarcity, Conventions, Property and Justice
(This course is cross-listed with Phil 4045G: Special Topics in 18th Century Philosophy)

On Hume's account, private property and the principles of justice arise as a matter of convention under circumstances of, and in part to solve problems created by, moderate scarcity. This idea has been enormously influential. Our goal is to understand and evaluate it and the various elements out of which it is assembled. We'll start with an overview of Hume's epistemology and moral theory, and then work through his accounts of conventions, property, and justice. Along the way we will consider some earlier accounts on which Hume drew (for example, Grotius on property) and later accounts which responded to him (for example, Kant on moral motivation). We will also spend some time on recent followers of Hume, including David Lewis on convention, Liam Murphy on private property, and John Rawls on the circumstances of justice. We may also consider the impact of Hume's thinking on economics. Readings will be drawn both from Hume's major philosophical works and his Essays.

Evaluation: One short (5 pp.) paper, worth 25%, on a question of interpretation in Hume, for which I will suggest some topics; one longer (15 pp.) research paper, on a topic of your choice, developed in consultation with me, worth 75%.

Note: This course will be cross-listed with a fourth year undergraduate seminar. Both classes will meet as one group, and do the same readings. The requirements will otherwise be different.

A suggestion: If Hume is new to you—and even if he isn't—you might have a look, before we begin meeting, at Annette Baier's excellent (and short) introduction to Hume's life and work, *The Pursuits of Philosophy*, available electronically through Western libraries. The introduction and chs 1-3 are especially on point. (This is optional!)