

**Political Theory of Scottish Enlightenment**  
**POL V53.0195**

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The focus of this course is on a series of ideas, developed in the mid-18th century in Scotland, that have had a monumental impact on subsequent moral, political, and economic theory in the Western world and beyond. These ideas are some of the central elements of our conceptual vocabulary: moral norms as conventions, moral skepticism, the invisible hand and unintended consequences, division of labor and economic growth, the science of politics as a causal inquiry, etc. Thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment saw the politics-centered understanding of moral life, which is the core of the Ancient Greeks' vision of politics and morality, as inadequate for dealing with the consequences of the industrial revolution, the rise of commercial society, and the free-market economy, and saw their own work as developing an alternative and a more appropriate view of the relationship between the economy, morality, and politics. Our key aims in this seminar will be to understand (1) what they considered that relationship to be; and (2) whether and why the conceptual change they urged was necessary.

**Course Requirements**

The course requirements consist of one paper, approximately 10-15 pages long, on a specified topic, three to four oral group presentations (details discussed in class), two exams, and active participation in class discussions. The papers are due on the first day of the week of finals. Papers submitted late without the prior consent of the instructor will be penalized by a grade-point for each week or part of a week after the due date. The distribution of weights of course requirements in your final grade is as follows:

Paper: 20%  
Class presentations: 25% total  
Exams: 20% each  
Discussion participation: 15%

**Required texts:**

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. D. F. Norton, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*. Eugene F. Miller, ed. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987.

Isaac Kramnick, ed., *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. D. Cress, trans. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992.

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Vols. 1 and 2. R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner, eds. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982.

Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, eds. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984.

Reading packet (RP), available in *New University Copies* on Waverley Place.

### **Schedule of Readings:**

*September 15: The Enlightenment Tradition*

Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (Kramnick)

Marquise de Condorcet, "The Future Progress of the Human Mind" (Kramnick)  
"The Perfectability of Man" (Kramnick)

Voltaire, "Reflections on Religion" (Kramnick)

*September 22: Vices and Virtues I*

Bernard Mandeville, "Fable of the Bees" (Kramnick)

Andrew Fletcher, "Second Discourse on the Affairs of Scotland" (RP)

John Brown, "An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times," Part III (RP)

*September 29: Vices and Virtues II*

J.-J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*

*October 6: Vices and Virtues III*

Bernard Mandeville, "An Inquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue" (RP)

"A Letter to Dion, Occasion'd by His Book Call'd Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher" (RP)

Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* Part VII, Sec. II, Ch. 4.6-14

"Letters to the Editor of the Edinburgh Review" (RP)

*Theory of Moral Sentiments* Part IV, Chapter 1.6-10

*October 13: Economy*

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Introduction; Book I, Chs. I-IV, VIII, X (part 1), XI (conclusion); Book IV, Chs. I, II.

*October 20: Economy and Society I*

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book III, Chs. II-IV.

John Millar, "On the Origin of the Distinction of Ranks," Ch. 1, Sec. 6 and Ch. 2, Sec. 2 (RP)

David Hume, "On the Populousness of Ancient Nations" (skim, this essay is much shorter than the page numbers may suggest)

"Of Commerce"

"Of Refinement in the Arts"

*October 27: Economy and Society II*

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. 5 (RP)

Adam Smith, "The Four-Stage Theory of Development" (Kramnick)

*Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. IX

*November 3: MIDTERM EXAM*

*November 10: Moral Theory I*

Francis Hutcheson, "Concerning the Moral Sense" (Kramnick)

"Ideas of Beauty and Virtue" (Kramnick)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (selections in RP)

*A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part I, and Part II, Sections I-III.

*November 17: Moral Theory II*

Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Part I; Part II, Sec. I, Chs. II, IV-V; Sec. II;

Part III, Chs. I, II, VI; Part IV.

*November 24: RE-SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 6*

*December 1: The State I*

Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Part V, Sections III-V (RP)

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Ch. V; Book V, Ch. I.

*December 6: The State II (make-up for the Thanksgiving cancellation)*

John Millar, "Political Consequences of the Revolution" (RP)

David Hume, "Of the First Principles of Government"

"Of the Original Contract"

"Of the Origin of Government"

*December 8: Liberty and the State*

"The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" (Kramnick)

Thomas Paine, "The Rights of Man" (Kramnick)

Benjamin Constant, "Liberties of the Ancients and of the Moderns" (RP)

James Madison, "Federalist No. 10" (Kramnick)

FINAL EXAM