

Faith and reason in the British Enlightenment

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The Enlightenment saw the rise and triumph of reason as the supreme power in many spheres. Focusing on the works of the British empiricists, this course examines the application of reason to matters of faith during this period, and in particular to the question of whether God's existence can be proved. The relationship between faith and reason, Locke's cosmological argument, Berkeley's idealism, and Hume's criticisms of the argument for design will all be considered. While our main interest will be in the primary texts themselves, there will also be the opportunity to look at a selection of contemporary and modern responses.

Additional student learning outcomes

Students who have taken this seminar will:

- have read and considered a selection of key primary and secondary literature relating to Locke's, Berkeley's, and Hume's views of religion
- have acquired a basic knowledge of the historical context in which the primary texts were written
- have critically analysed the main arguments found within the texts

Required reading

G. Berkeley, *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* [any edn acceptable; also available online]

D. Hume, *Dialogues concerning natural religion, parts II, V, and VI* [any edn acceptable; also available online]

J. Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, bk IV, chaps. 9–10, 17–18 (sects. 4–8 of chap. 17 may be skipped) [any edn acceptable; also available online]

J. Bennett, 'Some texts from early modern philosophy', <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com> [offers contemporary English 'translations' of (among others) the above works by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume: not a substitute for the originals, but very helpful for understanding difficult passages]

Recommended reading list

J. Bennett, 'God and matter in Locke', in *Early modern philosophy: mind, matter, and metaphysics*, ed. C. Mercer and E. O'Neill (2005), 161–82 [also available online, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/faqs/bennett/articles>]

—, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: central themes* (1971) [esp. chaps. 6–7]

G. Berkeley, *A treatise concerning the principles of human knowledge* [any edn acceptable; also available online], sects. 27–30 and 145–151

N. Fleming, 'The tree in the quad', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 22 (1985), 25–36

J.C.A. Gaskin, *Hume's philosophy of religion* (1978)

N. Jolley, 'Locke on faith and reason', in *The Cambridge companion to Locke's 'Essay concerning human understanding'*, ed. L. Newman (2007), 436–55

K. Haakonssen, ed., *The Cambridge history of eighteenth-century philosophy* (2006) [esp. sect. III]

J. Hill, *Faith in the age of reason: the Enlightenment from Galileo to Kant* (2004)

J.L. Mackie, *The miracle of theism* (1982) [esp. chaps. 4, 7, 8]

D. O'Connor, *Routledge philosophy guidebook to Hume on religion* (2001)

R. Savage, *Philosophy and religion in Enlightenment Britain: new case studies* (2012) [esp. chap. 3, 'Locke's proof of the divine authority of Scripture']