

Princeton University
The moral philosophy of Adam Smith
Junior Seminar -- Fall 2018
(last updated: 3rd Sept. 2018)

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Office hours: TBA -- or by appointment (email to set up)

Section meeting times: Wednesdays, exact times TBA

Meeting Place: TBA

Course Description: Adam Smith is renowned as a pre-eminent enlightenment philosopher, author of *The Wealth of Nations* (pub. 1776) and the father of modern capitalism. He is less well known for his distinctive contribution to moral philosophy, principally articulated in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1st edition pub. 1759; 6th edition pub. 1790). This classic text deserves more contemporary attention. In keeping with Hume and Hutcheson, Smith defends a broadly sentimentalist virtue ethics; but his moral philosophy is distinctive so far as it is rooted in a richer and more sophisticated theory of sympathy than other enlightenment figures provide. His moral philosophy is interesting in itself, both substantively and methodologically, providing an important counterpoint to the systematic approaches of later thinkers (Kantian and non-Kantian). But it also provides a critical context for his economic views, without which those views are subject to egregious (though popular) mischaracterization. Finally, Smith's novel theory of sympathy is highly relevant to contemporary work in experimental psychology, philosophy of mind and moral psychology. As there are many seams of thought to explore in Smith's work, students will be encouraged to pursue topics most relevant to their own interests as we work our way through the text.

Course Materials:

- Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Preferred text is edited by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (OUP, 1976 and republished by the Liberty Fund in the USA). It is available for purchase from Labyrinth Books on Nassau Street.
- A selection of papers containing critical commentary/ philosophical discussion of Smith's views (available on Blackboard).

Seminar Schedule: A schedule of readings for each week will be posted on blackboard and is appended to this syllabus.

Course goals: This course has two major goals: to examine a classical philosophical text in depth, considering its relevance to contemporary debates; and to develop your skills at independent work.

Method of Evaluation:

- Philosophical journal, seminar participation & 2 short papers 35%
- Final paper (**due on January 8th at 5 PM – university deadline**) 65%

Philosophical Journal: As you know, the JS is meant to be preparation for doing independent research. To this end, it helps to keep a journal of the key questions that arise for you as we read through the material each week. For instance: What essential point is Smith trying to make? Why is it relevant or important to the topic under discussion? Why does Smith approach the topic in the way that he does -- (i.e. what is distinctive about his mode of philosophical argument?, etc.. Consider, too, your own views on the relevant issues, and how these may, or may not, be changing in light of your reflections on Smith. This will be a great help when it comes to writing your final paper. **NOTE:** At the beginning of each seminar, I will also be asking for this input from you. This is not a lecture class, and the quality of the discussion will largely be driven by you.

Class preparation and participation: Do the reading for each week thoroughly and carefully and maintain your journal! As you well know, philosophical material generally has to be read more than once to gain a full (or even partial) understanding of the points being made. Every student is expected to participate fully in each class discussion; and every student is responsible to try to make this happen. This means that students are responsible to try to speak up if they tend to speak too little and to try to listen more if they tend to speak a lot. Remember that you will learn more through genuine dialogue than you will through tedious monologue. But this requires listening carefully to each person's contribution and responding appropriately – i.e. with intellectual attention to what they have said and a readiness to engage in critical debate. Once again, please keep in mind that this is NOT a lecture course; it is a guided reading course.

Short papers: You will be required to write TWO short argumentative papers during the semester. The first paper will be 1200-1800 words (approx. 4-6 pages) and the second paper will be 1800-2400 words (approx. 6-8 pages). Each paper you write in this course (including the final paper – see below) will be on a topic that you define. The first short paper can be self-standing. The second one should serve as a first draft of your final paper, though substantial revisions will be expected. **The due dates are:**

- **Paper 1 Friday 19th October at 11:59 PM**
- **Paper 2 Friday 7th December at 11:59 PM**

Final paper: The final paper will be 4200-5200 words (approx. 15-20 pages). **NOTE:** 20 pages is an absolute upper limit. This paper is intended as a research paper, and you will be expected to engage with some of the critical discussion on Smith that we will have read. **This paper is due on the second day of reading period – January 8th at 5 PM.** Please note: this is a University deadline (permission of the Dean is required to get a late paper excepted).

Submitting your final paper: Please submit your final paper via blackboard by the stated deadline (instructions for doing this will be available on the blackboard site).

Plagiarism: Plagiarism of any kind is VERY BAD and will be dealt with accordingly. If I suspect plagiarism, I will refer the case to the University Committee on Discipline. If plagiarism is found to occur, this will result in an 'F' on that assignment, and as a result an 'F' in the course. **You must cite any and all resources that you use when writing your papers** (including any URLs that you consult). For a review of what constitutes plagiarism, please read your copy of "Academic Integrity at Princeton," also available at <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/>

Junior Seminar: The moral philosophy of Adam Smith
Fall Semester 2018
Provisional Schedule of Readings
 (last updated: 3rd Sept 2018)

Note: This schedule of readings may be revised as the semester progresses. Any changes will be announced in seminar and posted on blackboard.

Required Text: Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS)*, edited by D.D. Raphael & A.L. Macfie (OUP 1976 republished by the Liberty Fund 1982) – page references are to this edition.

Please note some weeks (marked with an *) require additional reading material posted on blackboard (BB)

***Week 1: Sept 19th**

- *BB reading: Introduction to the TMS *Penguin Edition* by Amartya Sen
- TMS, Part I, Section 1, pp. 9-26

Week 2: Sept. 26th

- TMS, Part I, Sections 2&3, pp. 27-66

Week 3: Oct. 3rd

- TMS, Part II, Sections 1-3, pp. 67-108

Week 4: Oct. 10th

- TMS, Part III, Sections 1-3, pp. 109-156

Week 5: Oct. 17th

- TMS, Part III, Sections 4-6, pp. 156-178

1st short paper due: Friday October 19th at 11:59 PM

***Week 6: Oct. 24th (to be finalized)**

- BB reading: G. Harman, “Moral Agent and the Impartial Spectator”
- BB reading: C. Griswold, TBA
- BB reading: G. Sayre-McCord, “Sentiments and Spectators. Adam Smith’s theory of moral judgement” or “Hume & Smith on sympathy, approbation and moral judgement”

RECESS: Oct 27th-Nov. 4th

Week 7: Nov. 7th

- TMS, Parts IV & V, pp. 179-211

Week 8 : Nov. 14th

- TMS, Part VI, Section 1 and Section 2 (chs. 1-2), pp. 212-237

Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 21-25th

***Week 9: Nov. 28th (to be finalized)**

- TMS, Part VI, Section 2 (ch. 3) ; Part VII, Section 1 pp. 237-266
- BB reading: C. Griswold, TBA
- BB reading: G. Sayre-McCord, “Sentiments and Spectators. Adam Smith’s theory of moral judgement” or “Hume & Smith on sympathy, approbation and moral judgement”

***Week 10: Dec. 5th (to be finalized)**

- BB reading: Critical papers cont’d

2nd short paper (= 1st draft final paper) due on Friday December 7th at 11:59 pm

Week 11: This week will be devoted to individual meetings to discuss your final paper.