This course will provide a close examination of Hume’s moral philosophy as presented in *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. We will situate these texts in their historical contexts, elucidate their arguments, and consider their long-term philosophical significance.

**Day 1:** Book 3 of the *Treatise* in context: Hume's early intellectual development, and the project of *A Treatise of Human Nature*

**Reading:** 'Letter to a Physician'; extracts from Books 1 and 2; Book 3 Part 1; extracts from Hutcheson’s *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*; correspondence with Hutcheson

Questions for discussion to include: What are the appropriate intellectual contexts for understanding the project of the *Treatise*? How does Book 3 relate to Books 1 and 2? What is the place of Book 3 Part 1 in the overall argument of Book 3? How do Hume’s moral sense theory, his criticisms of moral rationalism and his sentimentalism compare with Hutcheson?

**Day 2:** Artificial virtues

**Reading:** Book 3 Part 2. Extracts from Hobbes and Mandeville. Selected essays from *Essays, Moral and Political*.

Questions for discussion to include: Why are justice and promise-keeping so prominent in Book 3? How exactly does Hume argue for the 'artificiality' of these virtues? How should we understand the relation between Hume's position and the (in some ways similar) positions of Hobbes and Mandeville? What exactly is the distinction Hume draws between a 'natural' obligation and a 'moral' obligation? What is the role of 'allegiance' in the argument of Book 3 Part 2? Why does Hume give special prominence to the virtue of chastity?

**Day 3:** Natural virtues

**Reading:** Book 3 Part 3. Extracts from Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Smith.

Questions for discussion to include: What according to Hume makes a virtue 'natural'? How should we understand Hume's blurring of the usual distinction between virtues and abilities? What exactly is the role of sympathy in Hume's theory of moral judgment? How does his use of sympathy differentiate his theory of moral judgment and natural virtue from Hutcheson's? How does his use of sympathy differentiate his theory of moral judgment and his account of natural virtue from Smith's?

**Day 4:** *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*: a change of context?

**Reading:** All of the *Enquiry*.

Questions for discussion to include: What are the most significant differences between the *Enquiry* and *Treatise* Book 3? How should we account for those differences? What does the *Enquiry* tell us about Hume's conception of the essential features of his moral philosophy? How should we understand Hume's judgment that the *Enquiry* is the best of all his books?
Day 5: Hume's legacy in moral philosophy

Questions for discussion to include: What did Hume's early critics focus on in their discussions of his moral philosophy? Why did Hume have so little influence until c. 1900? Why was he so influential in the twentieth century?