

## Berkeley Topics and Readings

As I said in class, the readings in our packet on Berkeley are the longest in numbers of pages. The readings come from two separate works (*The Principles of Human Knowledge*, and *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*) and there is a lot of repetition. So this email is meant to explain what issues we will be covering and what portions of the text you should read most carefully. What follows is my plan for what topics we will discuss, and what parts of the readings we will focus upon.

Our primary text will be the *Principles*. It consists of an “Introduction,” followed by the “Main Text.” You should read the first 13 paragraphs of the Introduction (pp. 72—77), and all of the Main Text (pp. 82—97). We will supplement this with readings of certain sections of the *Dialogues*, as described below.

### Topics

- 1) We will begin with a discussion of Berkeley’s rejection of abstract ideas. This occurs in the Introduction to the *Principles*, pp. 72—77.
- 2) Then we will look at how Berkeley sets out his position in the first 7 or 8 paragraphs in the *Principles*.
- 3) We will look at the general criticisms Berkeley makes that Locke's commitment to material substance leads to all sorts of strange sounding claims, and tends

towards skepticism. These passages can be found all throughout both readings, and make up most of the first 10 or 20 pages of the *Dialogues*.

4) We will talk about Berkeley's discussion of primary and secondary qualities. In the *Principles*, Berkeley starts discussing secondary qualities at about paragraph 9. By paragraph 14 he begins to argue that the same sorts of arguments Locke makes against secondary qualities also apply to primary qualities. By p. 114 in the *Dialogues*, Berkeley moves from a discussion of secondary qualities to the argument that the same kinds of considerations apply to primary qualities. You should read everything up through p. 114, and then pay close attention to the arguments starting there that arguments made about secondary qualities (that they exist only in the mind) apply equally to primary qualities.

5) We will look at Berkeley's rejection of substratum. This can be found in *Principles* 16 and 17, and in pp. 126-127 in the *Dialogues*.

6) We will look at the argument that material substance doesn't explain anything. This can be found in *Principles* 18-19.

7) We will then look at Berkeley's "Master Argument." This can be found in *Principles* 22-24 and on pp. 126-127 of the *Dialogues*.

8) We will look at the distinction Berkeley makes between real things and "chimeras." This can be found most clearly in the *Dialogues*, pp. 139-140, but also in the *Principles* 29-33.

Finally 9), we will look at Berkeley's discussion of our ideas of mental substance. This can be found in pp. 137-139 of the *Dialogues*.

I can't predict exactly which of these topics we will get to on which of the three class periods tentatively scheduled on Berkeley, whether we'll need a fourth class period, or whether we might skip some of these topics in class. But the above gives you a sense of the topics I think are important and should help you make your way through the repetitive (and sometimes frustrating) text.

Happy reading!