

PHIL 335. Topics in Modern European Philosophy:

Kant

Fall 2023 / TuTh 2:30–4:00 (Union 111) / Syllabus v. 2.4

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Office Hours: Thursday 4:00–6:00

Office: Gest 204

Course Description

Kant is plausibly the most influential philosopher of the Western philosophical canon. His philosophy is viewed as a synthesis of the rationalist and empiricist traditions which came before him, and as containing seeds for the analytic and continental traditions which would follow. This course gives an overview of his core texts, the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and explores central topics, such as his Copernican turn, transcendental idealism, self-consciousness, the discipline of reason, the categorical imperative, and autonomy.

Course Goals

By the end of the term, you will be able to...

- read complex early modern prose with attention to its systematic character.
- succinctly reconstruct and critically evaluate abstract philosophical argument.
- thoughtfully engage with differing perspectives verbally and in writing.
- understand and articulate Kant's key theses and their relevance to the historical development of philosophy and to our contemporary context.

Course Requirements

- Up to 40 pages per week of *very* dense philosophical reading
- Regular participation in class discussion
- Five journal entries of 300–500 words 25%
- Three 3–4 page (900–1200 word) papers 25% each

Required Texts

- Kant Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Eds. Paul Guyer & Allen Wood. 1781–7/1999. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 978-0521657297).
- Kant Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Eds. Mary Gregor & Jens Timmerman. 1785/2012. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 978-1107401068).

Recommended Further Readings

- Sebastian Gardner, *Routledge Guidebook to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. 1999. London: Routledge. (ISBN: 041511909X).
 - = accessible commentary on the *CPR* presented in the same order as the text.
- Henry Allison. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* 2004. New Haven: Yale University Press. Revised ed. (ISBN: 978-0300102666).
 - = arguably the most important interpretation of the *CPR*; scholarly in tone.
- Christine Korsgaard. *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. 1996. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 0521499623).
 - = truly excellent essays on Kant's moral philosophy.

Readings

In the schedule below, readings are listed underneath the dates by which they must be read. All readings are extremely dense! Kant typically writes in very long sentences, with a specialized vocabulary, and in a systematic, interconnected way. So make sure you budget enough time to read the reading carefully, and several times.

Always bring the week's required reading to class. Please acquire the exact editions of the books listed above. (Try searching by ISBN, if buying online.) Several copies of each book should be available through the library.

Participation

Regular verbal participation in group discussions is crucial for developing philosophical reasoning skills, which are very closely related to conversational and debate skills. If you are feeling shy in class, come to Office Hours, and let's start talking there. Consistent and thoughtful class participation will boost borderline final grades!

Journal Entries

Journal entries (300–500 words) should be thoughtful reflections on the reading. A good strategy is to start out by summarizing some aspect of/argument from the reading, using one or more brief quotations. You should then think about what you find puzzling, or interesting, or outrageous about the reading, and write about that. This is an open-ended exercise, so feel free to get creative. But it should be taken seriously. Take your time writing each reflection; make sure you are thoughtfully engaging with Kant's ideas.

You must submit *five* (5) journal reflections during the course. You can submit them whenever you'd like, so long you follow these guidelines: (a) You submit at least two in the first half of the course (before Fall Break), at least two in the second half, and always at least a week apart from each other. (b) Each journal reflection must discuss a

reading we have not yet discussed in class, and must be submitted via email by 9:30am of the day of the relevant class; absolutely NO reflections will be accepted after that! It's your responsibility to know/follow these guidelines; I won't chase after anyone!

Each journal reflection is worth 5% of your final grade and will be graded out of 5: 5 for thoughtful, clear, well-written, and creative reflections; 3 for entries that show some understanding of the reading, but are shallow, hard to follow, or treat the subject unfairly; 1 for entries that show little understanding of the reading or veer off-topic.

I encourage you to post entries on the Moodle message board, but this is not required.

Papers

You must write three papers (3–4 pages, 900–1200 words). The first two papers are due 10/13 (3pm) and 11/29 (10pm) via email. The final paper is due 12/22 *by noon* via email. Each paper must address one of several provided topics concerning the course texts, unless you get my approval for your own topic at least a week before the deadline. Provided topics will be distributed by 9/26, 11/2, and 12/7.

All papers must be clear, concise, rigorous, and well argued. They must use quotes and citations when presenting Kant's views or arguments. Each paper must evaluate these views and arguments through use of objections and replies. You can't just explain what Kant thinks. Your job is to use course readings as a springboard for articulating your own views, and to argue for them convincingly.

Writing Resources

I am happy to discuss paper ideas and drafts in Office Hours. I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center. Info: <https://www.haverford.edu/writing-center>. You can easily make an appointment with a writing consultant online.

Late Policy

Late work will drop 1/3 of a letter grade per each 24 hours late (e.g., A– to B+). Due to university policies, I cannot accept late final papers. Plan ahead and start early!

Academic Stressors, Resources on Campus, and Learning Differences

I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey and recognize that you bring many strengths, perspectives and strategies as you navigate this journey. I encourage you to think proactively and strategically about leveraging these strengths, in partnership with the many resources on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), Office of Academic Resources, Writing Center, Student Diversity Equity and Access Team, Health Services, Professional Health

Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the GRASE Center, and the Advising Deans. At times you may experience challenges or stressors that impact your ability to fully engage intellectually. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other related topics, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources here on campus. Additional information can be found at <https://www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources>.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and provides equitable access to students with disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability related to mental health, chronic health, neurological state, and/or physical condition—please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. It is never too late to request ADA accommodations—our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. Please know that all inquiries and health-related information is handled in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic ADA accommodations and want to use these in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I want to be sure you are aware of the full range of resources and options available to you.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this ADA accommodation by Access and Disability Services and then must communicate approval to me. I will then make a general announcement to the class that audio recording may occur while respecting students right to privacy by not identifying the individual(s).

Prohibitions

Cell phones must be silenced and put away during class. I prefer that no laptops be used in the classroom, but understand that there may be good reasons for making exceptions. Please reach out, if you would like to use a laptop.

No eating is allowed in the classroom. Drinks are OK, when allowed by the College's current COVID-19 policies.

Academic Integrity

Any form of cheating, including plagiarism, will be reported to the Honor Council. You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism or cheating. Please consult the Honor Code's webpage: <https://honorcouncil.haverford.edu/the-code/>.

Schedule

Required reading

Optional further readings

Class 1 (9/5) – Introduction to Kant and his context

- No reading

— Part I: *Critique of Pure Reason* —

Class 2 (9/7) – The need for critique

- A Preface (Avii–xxii, pp. 99–105)
- Translators' Introduction (pp. 1–23)

Class 3 (9/12) – The Copernican turn

- B Preface (Bvii–xliv, pp. 106–24)
- Gardner, Chs. 1–2

Class 4 (9/14) – Empirical, a priori

- B Introduction, §§I–III (B1–10, pp. 136–41)

Class 5 (9/19) – The general problem of pure reason

- B Introduction, §§IV–VII (B10–30, pp. 141–52)
- Gardner, Ch. 3

*** No class on 9/21 ***

Class 6 (9/26) – Review of a priori, empirical, synthetic, analytic

- No new reading.

Class 7 (9/28) – The two stems of cognition and their sciences

- B Aesthetic, §1 (B33–36, pp. 172–74)
- Allison, Ch. 4
- The Idea of a Transcendental Logic (A50–64/B74–88, pp. 193–200)

Class 8 (10/3) – Space and time

- B Aesthetic, §§2–5 (B37–49, pp. 174–80)
- Gardner, Ch. 4
- Allison, Ch. 5

Class 9 (10/5) – Transcendental idealism

- B Aesthetic, reread §3 (B40–45, pp. 176–78) – Gardner, Ch. 5
- B Aesthetic §§6–8 (B49–73, pp. 180–92) – Allison, Chs. 1–2

Class 10 (10/10) – The “clue” to the forms of thought

- Transcendental Analytic, Ch. 1, §§9–12 (A66–83/B89–116, pp. 201–18)
- Gardner, pp. 115–35
- Allison, Ch. 6

Class 11 (10/12) – Why the categories need a transcendental deduction

- Transcendental Analytic, Ch. 2, §§13–14 (B116–29, pp. 219–26)
- Goldhaber, “Kant’s Offer to the Skeptical Empiricist”

*** Paper 1 due, Friday 10/13, 3pm ***

*** Fall break ***

Class 12 (10/24) – Self-consciousness

- B Deduction, §§15–16 (B129–36, pp. 245–48) – Gardner, pp. 135–51

Class 13 (10/26) – Objectivity

- B Deduction, §§17–20 (B136–43, pp. 248–52) – Gardner, pp. 151–65

Class 14 (10/31) – The Deduction’s negative verdict

- B Deduction, §§21–24 (B143–56, pp. 252–59)

Class 15 (11/2) – The Deduction’s positive verdict

- B Deduction, §§25–27 (B157–69, pp. 259–66) – Allison, Ch. 7

Class 16 (11/7) – Deduction overflow day

- No new reading, but please review the deduction as a whole!

Class 17 (11/9) – Necessary illusions and conflicts within reason

- Transcendental Illusion (A293–98/B349–55, pp. 384–87) – Gardner, pp. 209–21
- Antithetic of Pure Reason (A420–25/B448–53, pp. 467–53) – Allison, Ch. 11

Class 18 (11/14) – How transcendental idealism eases the conflict

- First Antinomy (A426–33/B454–61, pp. 470–75) – Gardner, pp. 231–37, 245–64
- Third Antinomy (A444–51/B472–79, pp. 484–89) – Allison, Ch. 13
- Critical Decision of the Cosmological... (A497–507/B525–35, pp. 514–519)

Class 19 (11/16) – How skeptics go wrong

- Introduction to the Discipline of Pure Reason (A708–12/B736–40, pp. 628–30)
- On the Impossibility of a Skeptical Satisfaction... (A758–69/B786–97, pp. 652–58)
 - Goldhaber, “The Dissatisfied Skeptic...”

— Part II: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* —

Class 20 (11/21) – The good will

- Preface (4:387–92, pp. 3–8) – Editor’s Introduction (pp. ix–xxxvi)
- §1, on the good will (4:393–96, pp. 9–12)

*** Thanksgiving break ***

Class 21 (11/28) – Acting from duty

- Rest of §1 (4:397–405, pp. 12–20) – Korsgaard, Ch. 2

*** Paper 2 due, Wednesday 11/29, 10pm ***

Class 22 (11/30) – The supreme principle of morality

- §2, through the formula of universal law (4:406–27, pp. 21–39) – Korsgaard, Ch. 3

Class 23 (12/5) – Applying the law

- §2, reread the applications of the formula of universal law (4:420–24, pp. 33–37)
- §2, the formula of humanity and its application (4:427–30, pp. 37–43)
 - Korsgaard, Ch. 4

Class 24 (12/7) – Why there can be no other moral law

- Rest of §2, incl. formulas of the kingdom of ends, autonomy (4:430–45, pp. 43–55)

Class 25 (12/12) – Freedom *is* morality

- §3, through how the categorical imperative is possible (4:446–55, pp. 56–64)
 - Korsgaard, Ch. 6

Class 26 (12/14) – Freedom remains unknowable

- Rest of §3 (4:455–63, pp. 64–72)

*** Final paper due Friday 12/22, by noon via email ***