

PHL 415: KANT SEMINAR
Spring 2017
Monday and Wednesday 3:00-4:50
150 Natural Sciences Building

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Office Hours: Mon and Wed, noon-1:00

"One can philosophize with or against Kant, but one cannot philosophize without Kant."

Kant was one of the rare philosophers who revolutionized philosophy not only in one area but in nearly all: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, political philosophy, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, and more. His thought has been described as the culmination of the Enlightenment and its rejection. He has been called "the all-destroyer" of philosophical systems and another builder of them. His influence reaches into virtually every Western philosophical tradition of the past two hundred years.

Our focus this semester is on Kant's claims about the use and scope of reason, both theoretical and practical. We'll spend most of our time on his best known and most important work, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with an extension into how the critical system developed there extends to ethics and practical philosophy. In the first *Critique* Kant challenged what he took to be all previous philosophy by taking a path that denied that human beings can attain anything like knowledge of the world as it really is and yet avoided the skeptical conclusion that no objective knowledge is possible. This critical approach focused on the capabilities of the cognizer instead of the nature of the objects cognized. As part of the focus on the subject's point of view, Kant provides an account of the place of reason in providing a systematic picture of the world that extends beyond the limits of cognition. We will explore this role of reason in Kant's practical philosophy in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and a few other writings.

PREREQUISITES

The material in this course is difficult and presupposes philosophical background. The official prerequisite for this course is "PHL 211 or two prior courses in philosophy". If you have fewer than two prior courses in philosophy, please speak to the instructor. Other similar courses such as political theory or history and philosophy of science can count.

REQUIRED WORK

1. Two 6-8 page papers (25% each). You will have to submit the paper and then rewrite it after receiving my feedback. Approximately end of February and end of April.
2. One class presentation (15%). You have the choice of either one of your papers, either in progress or upon completion. In either case you will help to lead a class discussion of your particular claim about Kant. These presentations will take place the final week of the semester.
3. Participation in others' presentations (10%). You are required to read the papers to be presented by others students and prepare some questions or comments.
3. Daily preparation and participation (25%). This course will consist largely of textual analysis and discussion rather than lecture. I expect you to have read the material before coming to class and to come to class prepared to offer an explanation and analysis of the main point(s). **YOU WILL NEED TO BRING A WRITTEN 50-100 WORD COMMENT ON SOMETHING IN THE READINGS EVERY DAY.** You may choose to try to paraphrase a point, try to raise an objection, make a comparison, frame a good question, or similar. It should be something that you think is worthy of class attention. You will be asked to read your comment aloud in class. These comments are one indication of the required preparation and participation.

BOOKS

Required:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Guyer and Wood (Cambridge)

Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Gregor, ed. Wood (Cambridge)

Paul Guyer, *Kant* (Routledge)

You should use these translations; if you have others you will have trouble following references in class. Some secondary source material, or passages from Kant's other works may be made available on D2L.

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

It is extremely important for you to read the Guyer book along with the material from Kant. Kant is nearly impossible to understand without guidance. The Guyer book is the main guidance you will have prior to class discussions.

Please read the material prior to the Monday class meeting of each week. As the semester develops particular pages will be assigned as a focus for each class meeting. You will need to reread the material after class discussions as well.

The schedule may also change as the semester develops and depending on student interests.

CPR = *Critique of Pure Reason*

PP = *Practical Philosophy*

Guyer = Guyer

Week of:

Jan 9	Introduction –Reason in Kant's Critical Project. (PP 17-22, CPR 99-105 and 649-650, Guyer 1-46)
Jan 16	Overview of the Critiques: Second Prefaces and Introductions. (PP 139-149 and 269-271, CPR 106-124 and 136-152, Guyer 51-58)
Jan 23	Transcendental Aesthetic – Space and Time (CPR 172-192, Guyer 58-80)
Jan 30	Transcendental Analytic –Deduction of the Categories (CPR 193-197 and 219 -234, Guyer 80-108)
Feb 6	Transcendental Analytic –Analogies of Experience (substance, causation) (CPR 267-286 and 295-321 and 334-337, Guyer 109-132)
Feb 13	Transcendental Analytic –Refutation of Idealism (CPR 326-329, 425-431, Guyer 132-141)
Feb 20	Transcendental Dialectic – Ideas of Reason, Regulative Use of Reason (CPR 384-410 and 590-623, Guyer 144-153 and 189-198)
Feb 27	Transcendental Dialectic – Paralogisms (soul) (CPR 411-425, 445-458, Guyer 153-158)
Mar 13	Transcendental Dialectic –Antinomies (world and freedom) (CPR 459-475 and 484-489 and 508-546, Guyer 158-166 and 245-252)
Mar 20	Transcendental Dialectic – Ideal (God) (CPR 459-550, Guyer 166-175)
Mar 27	Canon of Pure Reason –Practical Philosophy in the first Critique (CPR 672-690)
Apr 3	Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals – Reason and Morality (PP 43-48 and 61-81, Guyer 203-233)
Apr 10	Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals – Reason and Autonomy (PP 81-101 and 108, Guyer 233-238 and 252-255)
Apr 17	Critique of Practical Reason – Postulates of Practical Reason (PP 226-247 and 255-257 Guyer 265--274)
Apr 24	Presentations

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will have an improved ability to:

1. Discern and critically evaluate philosophical claims in written sources
2. Discuss and assess philosophical claims objectively, cooperatively, and in depth.
3. Understand the major contributions of a significant philosopher to many areas of philosophy
4. Write a philosophical paper
5. Present one's position through public presentation

ATTENDANCE POLICY

If you miss a paper deadline without prior approval you will be penalized one letter grade per day for that assignment unless you have written proof of a legitimate reason for absence, which includes serious illness, family emergency, approved university activities, serious religious observance, and the like. For normal class meetings the same policy holds regarding the daily comments with the exception that unexcused late daily comments receive no credit.

POLICY ON SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for People with Disabilities to develop reasonable accommodations (353-9642 or 355-1293(TTY)). Please notify the instructor regarding any special requirements you have. <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

The Writing Center offers students an opportunity to meet with one-on-one with a consultant while they are engaged in the process of writing class papers and other documents. It also offers consulting on digital writing projects and a Grammar Hotline. The Writing Center is located in 300 Bessey Hall. For information about appointments and satellite locations, see <http://writing.msu.edu/>.

The ESL Writing Lab will assist international students with all aspects of their work, including understanding of course readings to be used in writing papers, planning and revising papers, and proofreading. See <http://elc.msu.edu/esl-lab> for more information and instructions on making appointments.

The Learning Resource Center, located in 202 Bessey Hall, offers academic support seminars and workshops, consults with students about study and learning styles and time management, and provides one-on-one tutoring in such areas as critical reading. For a more detailed description of LRC services and hour, see <http://lrc.msu.edu/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In accordance with MSU's policies on "Protection of Scholarship and Grades" and "Integrity of Scholarship and Grades," students are expected to honor principles of truth and honesty in their academic work. Academic honesty entails, among other things, that students will not plagiarize. This means (1) students will not submit someone else's work as their own (e.g. they will not submit another student's paper etc., nor will they hand in a paper copied in whole or in part from the web or another published source). Academic honesty also means students (2) will not knowingly permit another student to copy and submit their work as that student's own and (3) will not use unacknowledged quotations or paraphrases as part of their work. As provided by university policy, such academic dishonesty or plagiarism may be penalized by a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. Failure in a course as a result of academic dishonesty will also result in written notification to the student's academic dean of the circumstances. Additional discussion of cheating or academic dishonesty is available on the Ombudsman's webpage at <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>