

INSTRUCTOR: Colin McLearn  
COURSE: PHIL 871  
TIME: T 3:30-6:05 pm  
LOCATION: 1007 Oldfather Hall  
OFFICE: 1003 Oldfather Hall  
OFFICE HOURS: T 1:00-3:20 & by appointment

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# KANT'S CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.*

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Critique of Practical Reason, 5:161-2  
IMMANUEL KANT

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides an intensive study of the metaphysical, epistemological, and moral doctrines of Kant's mature 'critical' philosophy. Our discussion covers three central themes of Kant's work: his conception of the nature and limits of the rational mind; his critique of traditional metaphysics; and his positive conception of morality as the expression of rational agency. Specific topics covered include: the limits of human knowledge; the role of the mind in the production of experience; the reality of space and time; the nature of matter; reason and its ability to critique itself; knowledge of the self; freedom of the will; the objectivity of morality; the existence of God; the afterlife of the soul; the status of metaphysics; and the relationship between 'appearances' and 'ultimate reality'.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students should have a good grasp of both the broad outline of Kant's mature theoretical and moral philosophy as well as the historical context in which it was articulated. This includes being able to (i) articulate some of the central metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical disputes in the eighteenth-century; (ii) clearly explain Kant's proposed resolutions of these disputes.

## COURSE MATERIALS

The following books are required for this course:

- Immanuel Kant (Guyer & Wood eds.), *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- —. (Gregor ed.) *Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Other readings will be posted on the [course website](#) under "Assignments."

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Preparation:** You are expected to attend every class meeting fully prepared to discuss each assigned reading, to submit written work punctually, and to offer thoughtful and constructive responses to the remarks of your instructor and your classmates. Make sure that you bring the relevant readings with you to every lecture class. I further expect you to treat both the texts at hand and your classmates' ideas with openness and respect.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is required. Up to 1/2 a letter grade will be deducted from your final course grade for every unexcused absence from class after your fifth.
- **Website:** We will use a course website for all materials. The site address is: [phil871.colinmclear.net](http://phil871.colinmclear.net). Upcoming assignments and readings will be posted there. Please let me know if you have any problems. Technical glitches, computer malfunctions and crashing hard drives are not excuses for failing to complete work in this class.
- **Format for Papers:** Please submit work as a .docx or .rtf file. All work must be typed. I will not accept any handwritten work aside from that we do in class. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. Your name, my name, the date and assignment should appear in the top left hand corner of the first page. Your last name and page number must appear in the top right hand corner on each subsequent page. Please staple or paperclip hard copies of papers and drafts. You are responsible for the presentation of your papers.
- **Late Work:** Late papers and assignments will standardly be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade for each day the work is late (for example, from A- to B+, from B+ to B, and so on).

## EVALUATION

### Four Passage Analyses: 20%

- Analyze and explain the point of a particular passage in plain language and in no more than 300 words. Topics will be provided.

### Essay: 40%

- Explain and critically assess a philosophical argument. Topics will be suggested. Paper will be due in *two* drafts.
  - **Undergraduates:** Approximately 4-6 pages (1200-2000 words).
  - **Graduate students:** Approximately 15-20 pages (3750-5000 words)

### Weekly reading responses: 10%

- Write roughly 200 words (500 max) posted on the course listserve by 8 pm the evening before class meets: Your reading responses should detail your observations about a primary text (though one can also relate this to secondary readings. These are *reponses*, not summaries. Move to delimit 1-2 major points or ideas from the reading and discuss them. What do you find interesting or compelling? What do you find logically problematic? What were you simply baffled by?

### Weekly reading précis: 10%

- Write a précis addressing a particular *secondary* text assigned for the week (this should not include my notes). A précis is a rhetorical exercise that asks you to summarize a text, including the claim/argument, supporting evidence, purpose, and audience in 4 sentences. For a helpful example of the form, see: [http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/rhetorical-precis/sample/peirce\\_sample\\_precis\\_click.html](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/rhetorical-precis/sample/peirce_sample_precis_click.html)

### Participation: 20%

- The participation grade takes into account your attendance in class and section as well as the quantity and quality of your participation.

### POLICIES

- **Academic Integrity:** All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with UNL's Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code, available online. **In this course, the normal penalty for any violation of the code is an "F" for the semester.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – It just isn't worth it.
- **University Policies:** This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.
- **ADA:** In compliance with University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.
- **Miscellaneous:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

- **Jargon:** It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "Philosophical Terms and Methods."
- **Help with writing:** Papers should adhere to some consistent practice of footnoting and citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.). I don't really mind which one you use as long as you are consistent. On writing a philosophy paper, there is no better on-line guide than Jim Pryor's. Please consult it.

Hacker's A Writer's Reference is also extremely helpful. Useful online writing help may be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check the Writing Center website for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments.

- **Reference:** The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu> is an excellent online resource.