

INSTRUCTOR: Colin McLearn  
COURSE: PHIL 471/871  
TIME: R 3:30-6:05 p.m.  
LOCATION: Oldfather Hall 1007  
OFFICE: Oldfather Hall 1003

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<http://colinmclear.net>  
UNL Philosophy  
OFFICE HOURS: T/R 11-12 & by  
appointment

# 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. Topics 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 bodies; 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.

## Required Materials

The required books are available at the UNL Bookstore. They are:

- Immanuel Kant (Guyer & Wood eds.), *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ——. (ed. Gary Hatfield), *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ——. (Gregor & Timmerman eds.), *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## 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.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is required. Absences will not be excused except in documented cases. 1/2 a letter grade will be deducted from your final course grade for every absence after your third one.
- **Website:** We will use a course website for all materials. The site is available at: <http://colinmclear.net/phil-4871-kant.html>. Upcoming assignments and readings will be posted here. 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 either as .rtf or as a .doc or .docx 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. 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

### Paper in two drafts: 70%

- Research paper. Topics will be suggested.

### Presentation: 20%

- Present on current day's reading and lead course discussion for the first third of class.

### Participation: 10%

- The participation grade is based on your overall engagement with the course, including attendance, classroom discussion, and individual meetings with me. Please note: the grade will take into account both the quality and quantity 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 at http://stuafs.unl.edu/code](http://stuafs.unl.edu/code). **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.

- **Misc.:** 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."](#)
- **Writing a Philosophy paper:** 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 references may be found at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).
- **Help with writing:** 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.
- **References:** There is an extraordinary amount of secondary literature on topics relevant to the course. Here are some suggestions:
  - [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu): <http://plato.stanford.edu>. [Most of the entries on Kant are quite helpful.]
  - Jill Vance Buroker. *Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason': An Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. [Good introduction and overview.]
  - Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, Malden: Blackwell, 1995. [Help with terminology, covering the entire Kantian corpus. Also available electronically through the library databases.]
  - Georges Dicker. *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. [Excellent and crystal-clear introduction. A little more argument-focused than Buroker, perhaps.]

- Sebastian Gardner. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*. New York: Routledge, 1999. [A solid introductory survey of the first Critique.]
- Paul Guyer, *Kant*. London: Routledge, 2006. [A big picture look at Kant's entire life and work by a leading Anglo-American scholar.]
- Allen Wood. *Kant*. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. [Another big picture look at Kant's life and work by another leading Anglo-American scholar. More introductory than Guyer's book.]
- Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Explanation and Defense*. New Haven: Yale, 1983. (Revised edition, 2004) [An important topically-structured commentary that defends an "anodyne" reading of Kant's transcendental idealism.]
- Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind*. Second edition. New York: Oxford, 2000. [An advanced but rewarding close reading of the Paralogisms.]
- Karl Ameriks. *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*. New York: Oxford, 2003. [The first section of this book, on the first Critique, contains some classic articles which defend a non-anodyne reading of Kant's transcendental idealism, and also allows there to be much more "metaphysics" in Kant's system than non-anodyne readers like Strawson, Bennett, and Guyer will admit. This reading is now coming back into favor.]
- Jonathan Bennett. *Kant's Analytic*. New York: Cambridge, 1966. [Along with Strawson, Bennett is one of the first "analytic" readers of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Hostile to transcendental idealism, but still sees arguments of value in Kant's work.]
- Jonathan Bennett. *Kant's Dialectic*. New York: Cambridge, 1974. [Companion piece to the above.]
- Michele Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*. New York: Cambridge, 2001 [A close discussion of the main themes in the Transcendental Dialectic. Anodyne reading of transcendental idealism.]
- Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. New York: Cambridge, 1987. [Influential and in-depth treatment of the first Critique, focusing on both epistemology and metaphysics. Not an "anodyne" interpretation: Guyer reads Kant as a genuine idealist, although Guyer himself doesn't like this doctrine and thinks Kant could have done without it.]
- Paul Guyer (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. New York: Cambridge, 1992 [CCK] [Well-known collection of articles by top scholars on various aspects of Kant's philosophy]

- Guyer, Paul (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010. [CCK2] [In-depth articles on each of the major sections of the first *Critique*]
- Guyer, Paul (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006. [CCK3] [Articles on Kant's relationship to modern philosophy, with a heavy emphasis on the first *Critique*.]
- Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*. New York: Oxford, 1998. [Wonderfully clear and concise articulation of yet another reading of Transcendental Idealism.]
- P.F. Strawson. *The Bounds of Sense: An essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Methuen, 1966. [Along with Bennett, Strawson is one of the first "analytic" readers of Kant's theoretical philosophy. Hostile to transcendental idealism, but still sees arguments of value in Kant's work.]
- James van Cleve, *Problems from Kant*. New York: Oxford, 1999. [An advanced but extremely clear commentary, presenting Kant as a non-anodyne, bona fide idealist.]

Note: This is just a sliver of the vast secondary literature on Kant. Participants in the class will not be expected to read anything beyond what is assigned, though you may want to look at these in preparing your final paper. For those interested in readings beyond these, there is a good, topically-structured bibliography at the end of CCK, CCK2, and CCK3. If you read German and would like suggestions about good resources in that language, please contact me.

**TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR:**

THURSDAY	
Aug 28th	Kant's project: Defending the synthetic a priori
Sep 4th	Aesthetic: The ideality of space (and time) - Newton vs. Leibniz vs. Kant
11th	Aesthetic: Is mathematical knowledge synthetic and a priori?
18th	Analytic: Hume's critique of causation & the project of the TD
25th	TD: First step (§15-20)
Oct 2nd	TD: Second step (§21-26)
9th	Schematism & the Second Analogy
16th	Dialectic: The project of the Dialectic, transcendental illusion, and the critique of pure reason
23rd	Doctrine of Method: Kant & Locke (vs. Descartes) on scientific knowledge
30th	Dialectic: Against rational psychology (I)

THURSDAY	
Nov 6th	Dialectic: Against rational psychology (II)
13th	Dialectic: The antinomy of freedom & the ideal of pure reason
20th	Groundwork I
27th	<b>No Class – Thanksgiving Break!</b>
Dec 4th	Groundwork II
11th	<b>Last Day of Class</b> Groundwork III