

Instructor: Colin McLearn
Course: PHIL 971
Time: R 4:00-6:05 p.m.
Location: Oldfather Hall 1007
Office: Oldfather Hall 1003

<http://colinmclear.net>
UNL Philosophy
Office Hours: By
appointment

Kantian Conceptualism

Our nature is so constituted that our intuition can never be other than sensible; that is, it contains only the mode in which we are affected by objects. The faculty, on the other hand, which enables us to think the object of sensible intuition is the understanding. To neither of these powers may a preference be given over the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind (A51/B75).

Critique of Pure Reason
Immanuel Kant

Course Overview

At least since the seventeenth century, philosophers have distinguished between representations that are conceptual, or conceptually structured, and representations that are not. We'll look at how the conceptual/non-conceptual distinction as it was expressed in the early modern period before turning to the root of much of the contemporary conceptualist movement—Kant's Transcendental Deduction from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. We will closely examine the argument presented in that text as well as the secondary scholarship surrounding and inspired by it. Our goals include getting clearer on the distinction between the conceptual and the non-conceptual, disentangling the different motivations for conceptualism (e.g. epistemic, cognitive, metaphysical), and evaluating its prospects going forward.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students should have a good grasp of both the historical sweep of the conceptualism debate and the specific philosophical issues that characterize it.

Required Materials

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

- York H. Gunther (ed.), *Essays on Nonconceptual Content*
- Immanuel Kant (Guyer & Wood eds.), *Critique of Pure Reason*

All assigned materials will also be put on reserve in the library. Students are expected to bring all relevant materials to class.

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. I further expect you to treat both the texts at hand and your classmates' ideas and writing with openness and respect.
- **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/conceptualism>. 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 a PDF 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. 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

Two Written Essays: 65%

- Paper 1: 5-8 pages. Primarily expository. 20%
- Paper 2: 10-20 pages. Research paper. 45%

Reading Responses: 20%

- Reading responses must be no less than 500 words in length and are due by 8 a.m. of the day we are scheduled to discuss the text in class. Responses should primarily be focussed on asking questions relevant to the reading or class discussion.

Participation: 15%

- 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](#). **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.
- **Reference:** [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu): <http://plato.stanford.edu>.