

Philosophy 6240/GerSt 6241: Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Instructor: Andrew Chignell (ac385)

M 3:00-5:00 (sometimes 5:30)

Olin 603

Office: GSH 228

Office Hours: Th 2:45-4:15

An intensive study of the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787). This text is one of the most important in modern philosophy, and we will try to understand why. We will also discuss which of Kant's arguments are of abiding philosophical interest. Topics will 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 existence of God; the immortality of the soul; the status of metaphysics; the relationship between "appearances" and ultimate reality.

Course website: Blackboard (Bb)

Texts:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Ed. and trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood.
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

I have not ordered this since many of you already own it and it is readily available online. I'll put a pdf of the first two weeks' readings up on Bb for those who need to order it.

Other resources:

Introductory:

Jill Vance Buroker. *Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason': An Introduction*. New York:
Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[A good easy-to-middling introduction, with a focus on the first parts of the book]

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 though very introductory survey. If Buroker is too challenging for you, try this one. Tends to slant in the "anodyne" direction in its reading of transcendental idealism.]

Paul Guyer, *Kant*. London: Routledge, 2006.

[A big picture look at Kant's entire life and work by a leading Anglo-American scholar. Not focused on the first *Critique*.]

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.]

Advanced:

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 in the 1980's on various aspects of Kant's philosophy. Not very introductory despite the marketing.]

Paul Guyer (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* New York: Cambridge, 2010 ["CCKrV"]

[Another collection of more recent articles focused on the *Critique*, but again not very introductory, despite the marketing.]

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 small slice 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 the *CCKrV*. If you read German and would like suggestions about resources in that language, please contact me.

Online:

Primary Texts

In German: The University of Marburg Kant site

<http://web.uni-marburg.de/kant/>

Stephen Palmquist's massive portal at Hong Kong Baptist University

<http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/Kant.html>

Secondary Texts

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)

Cornell's own *Kantpapers* site: <http://www.kantpapers.org>

*some of the papers here will require you go via a Cornell library proxy

Written Work:

Paper:

20-25 page paper due on June 1st. Rough drafts accepted through May 15th.

Weekly responses:

Every Monday at noon, you will be asked to submit to Bb a public question or comment about the reading for that day. These shouldn't be long, but they should demonstrate thoughtful attention to the text and refer to a particular passage or two. These reading responses will influence the direction of our discussions.

Final Exam (Optional, open book, take-home):

Multiple choice, short answer, one long answer essay question. I realize this seems lame in a graduate seminar, but the goal is to encourage you to go back and acquire a synoptic feeling for the text as a whole (or at least the parts that we read). It's useful to come away with a sense of the forest as well as the particular trees (or leaves) that you are focusing on in your paper. The exam is open book and will be easy if you've done all the reading and looked back at your notes.

Grading:

Reading responses: 30%

Paper: 50%

Final Exam: 20%

Writing a Philosophy paper:

Papers should adhere to some consistent practice of footnoting and citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.). I don't mind which one you use as long as you are consistent. In general, you won't be expected to use secondary sources in this course, but if you do, be sure to cite them. Here's the Cornell statement on plagiarism, which we are asked to put in our syllabi:

“Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else's work as your own. Regardless of your background, you are responsible for not plagiarizing. See the sections in Cornell's *Policy Notebook* on the 'Code of Academic Integrity' and 'Acknowledging the work of others.' Plagiarism will be prosecuted; it can affect your permanent record.”

On writing a philosophy paper, there is no better on-line guide than Jim Pryor's:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Help with writing: Cornell has a “walk-in” writing service that is available to people taking this course. They won't proofread your papers or edit them, but they will look at your drafts and offer general comments about structure, argumentation, grammar, etc.

More information is available at: www.arts.cornell.edu/writing

Plan of Meetings, and Readings:

Notes

1. For the most part, we will focus on the second or "B" edition of the *Critique*, which was published in 1787. However, there are some important differences between the two editions, and if you decide to write a paper on a particular passage, you should check out the A edition too. See the account of "The Changes in the Second Edition" in Guyer/Wood Introduction (p. 66-73).
2. Reading Kant for comprehension is *hard*. He wasn't a very good or clear writer, and he needed a better editor. So although the reading assignments here are not long, they will take a while, and ideally should be read twice. You might consider reading ahead a bit, and then rereading the relevant selection when we get to it in class.
3. Companion readings from Buroker, Dicker, and Gardner should be obvious, since those books are more or less organized as commentaries on the first *Critique*. As we go along I may add some further optional secondary readings for those who are wanting a deeper dive on a particular topic.

Week 1 (Jan 26): *The possibility of metaphysics*

A preface (Avii-Axxii)

Martin Schönfeld, "Kant's philosophical development" *SEP*

Week 2 (Feb 2): *A priori/a posteriori, analytic/synthetic*

B preface (Bvii-Bxliv)

B860-879

B Introduction (B1-B30)

James van Cleve, *Problems* ch.2: "Necessity, Analyticity, and the *A priori*" (Bb)

Recommended: Des Hogan, "Kant's Copernican Turn and the Rationalist Tradition" *CCKrV* (Bb)

Week 3 (Feb 9): *Sensible conditions: Space and Time*

B33-B45: *Space*

Optional: B46-B58: *Time*

B59-B73: *Transcendental Idealism*

Lisa Shabel, "The Transcendental Aesthetic," *CCKrV* (Bb)

Feb 16: Winter Break

Week 4 (Feb 23): *Conceptual conditions: Metaphysical Deduction*

B74-B116

Axvi-Axvii (again)

Secondary reading: Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* ch. 6 (Bb)

Recommended: Derk Pereboom, "Kant's Transcendental Arguments," *SEP*

Week 5 (March 2): *Conceptual conditions: Transcendental Deduction*

B116-B143

A Deduction, A95-A130

Ameriks, “Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument” (Bb)

Recommended: Pereboom, *SEP* entry on “Transcendental Arguments”

Week 6 (March 9): *Conceptual conditions: Transcendental Deduction, continued*

B129-B169

van Cleve, “Experience and Objects,” *Problems* ch. 7 (Bb)

Recommended: Guyer, “The Deductions” *CCKrV*

Recommended: Allison, “The Transcendental Deduction”

Week 7 (March 16): *Conceptual conditions: Transcendental Deduction, completed*

B116-B169

Secondary reading: Alison Laywine, TBD (**Laywine will visit the seminar**)

Week 8 (March 23): *Principled conditions: Analogies*

Recommended: *Introduction to the Principles* B187-B202

B218-B256

Secondary Readings by Stefanie Gruene (Potsdam) and Tobias Rosefeldt (HU-Berlin) (**Gruene and Rosefeldt will visit the seminar**)

March 30: Spring Break

Read: *Phenomena and Noumena*

B294-B315; optional B316-B349

Week 9 (April 6): *Modality (Postulates) and Skepticism (Refutation of Idealism)*

***Possible visitor: Georges Dicker**

Week 10 (April 13): *Transcendental Dialectic and Ideas of Pure Reason*

Week 11 (April 20): *Psychology (Paralogisms) and Cosmology (Antinomies)*

Week 12 (April 27): *Theology (Ideal of Pure Reason), Regulative principles (Appendix)*

Week 13 (May 4): *Knowledge, Belief, and Hope (Discipline and Canon)*