

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

PHIL 315, Autumn 2010
Tuesday & Friday, 1:10 to 2:25 | Hollander Hall 240

J. Cruz, Williams College Philosophy & Cognitive Science

FROM THE COURSE CATALOG

A close examination of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, arguably the most important work in the Western philosophical tradition.

This is a writing intensive course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787)

The Cambridge edition (1997) translated and edited by Guyer and Wood is available at Water Street Books. Please feel welcome, however, to use any modern unabridged non-electronic copy that is available to you.

Other required readings will be distributed in class.

GRADING

Grading on writing assignments will be anonymous. Please turn in your papers with only your Williams ID number on it in some unobtrusive place.

Anonymous grading is one way of assuring that the collegiality of our interactions does not cloud assessment of your work. One crucial disadvantage to anonymous grading is that the instructors will not know when your work is systematically inadequate and will typically not approach you with concerns about your work. As a result, there is an additional burden of maturity and responsibility on your shoulders. You must elect to visit office hours and to seek out informal opportunities to improve your writing and research.

1. Four Short Essays

1500-2000 words, strictly enforced (approximately 5-7 pages) on assigned topics. For these you will read required secondary literature selected by the instructor. 15% of final grade each.

Short essays will be due on specific Sundays at midnight so as not to interfere with preparation for seminar meetings. Papers turned in late any time the subsequent Monday will be assessed 1 grade step (e.g., A- to B+). Papers turned in any time Tuesday will be assessed an *additional* two grade steps (e.g., A- to B-, counting the

Monday penalty). Papers turned in any time Wednesday will be assessed an additional four grade steps. The only exceptions will be due to medical issues documented by the Deans Office.

2. *Final Paper*

4100-5500 words (approximately 15-20) pages. The final paper may be on any focused topic in the Kant, and should in most cases involve a revision and substantial elaboration of one of your short essays. You will be required to incorporate at least three additional secondary sources which you will research and locate yourself. One of these must not be at all available electronically. 30% of final grade.

The final paper is due on Wednesday, December 15th at midnight. There will be no extensions.

3. *Participation*

Discussion is essential to the vitality of the class. Thoughtful participation in class discussion is also one indicator that you are reading carefully. Thus, participation constitutes *10% of the final grade*.

Many students are concerned with this aspect of the classroom dynamic, but it should not be a source of anxiety. Keep in mind that your first priority is reading the assignments carefully and working diligently on the writing for the course. Thoughtful, honest, and respectful participation derives from these. Every effort will be made to ensure that the class is a welcoming forum for sharing serious ideas. In addition, 'participation' is more inclusive than many students realize. Being attentive and engaged in class, asking clarificatory questions, and discussing aspects of the course with the instructor during office hours all fall under this heading.

CLASS RESOURCES

Office Hours - The instructor is available for office meetings each week in Hollander Hall 306. You may visit individually or in groups. You do not need to have a specific assignment or difficulty in mind in order to come to my office. Wide-ranging conversations about the class, about philosophy, or about intellectual life at Williams are very welcome. By appointment, or during the following open-door times:

Thursdays	1-3
Fridays	10:30-Noon

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related classroom accommodations for this course are encouraged to set up an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible and to contact the Dean's Office (at extension 4262) to better insure that accommodations are provided in a timely manner.

No food or laptops welcome in seminar.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

- September Readings: Preface to the 1st edition ("The 'A' Preface"), Avii-xxii
10 Preface to the 2nd edition ("The 'B' Preface"), Bvii-xliv
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- 14 Readings: Introduction to the 2nd edition ("The 'B' Introduction"), B1-
 30
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- 17 Readings: The Transcendental Aesthetic, sections 1-5, B33-49
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- 21 Readings: The Transcendental Aesthetic, sections 6-8, B49-73
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- 24 Readings: The Transcendental Logic, B74-101
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- Sunday FIRST ESSAY DUE — Kant on Space and Time
26
- For this essay you will read excerpts from two classic discussions and one soon-to-be classic discussion of Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic. They are:
- Kemp Smith, N. (1918) *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*. London: Macmillan and co.
- Strawson, P.F. (1966) *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Methuen & co.
- Van Cleve, J. (1999) *Problems from Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Each excerpt interprets Kant's account and advances serious criticisms. Your goal is to isolate and respond to one (or a few closely related) substantive objection(s). This will require that you read the Kant sympathetically, charitably, and tenaciously.
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- 28 Readings: Analytic of Concepts, B102-115
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- October Readings: Deduction, First Section, B116-B129
1
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- 5 Readings: Deduction, Second Section, B129-146
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- 8 Readings: Deduction, Second Section, B129-169 (reread 129-146)

12 NO CLASS, READING PERIOD

15 Readings: Schematism, B169-187

Sunday 17 SECOND ESSAY DUE — Kant's Deduction and Schematism

For this essay you will offer an interpretation either of Kant's Transcendental Deduction (B edition) or of the Schematism. Your goal is to render as clearly and as comprehensively you can the aim and argument of one of these two crucial parts of the first Critique.

If you write on the TD you will concentrate on B129-169.

If you write on the Schematism you will concentrate on B169-187.

For this essay you will read several short excerpts from the secondary literature on Kant. They are (in order of reading):

Guyer, P. (1992) "The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories." In *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, Guyer, P. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 123-160.

Allison, H. (2004) *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Paton, H. J. (1936) *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience*, Vol. 2. New York: Macmillan.

You are not forbidden from signaling your objections where appropriate, but your first and overriding goal is to give a plausible, charitable interpretation of Kant. Indeed, a wholly interpretive paper would be most welcome. And no matter how excellent your objections are, you will do poorly on this assignment if they do not occur in a rich and spirited interpretive scholarly context.

19 Readings: Axioms and Anticipations, B187-218

22 Readings: First Analogy, B218-232

26 Readings: Second Analogy and Third Analogy, B233-265

29 Readings: Postulates (Refutation of Idealism), B265-294

November Readings: *Phenomena and Noumena*, B294-316

2

5 Readings: Amphiboly, B316-349

Sunday THIRD ESSAY DUE — *Phenomena and Noumena*

7

For this essay you will write on Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena. Your two tasks are to (a) say what the distinction is for Kant, with specific attention to the text and (b) say whether he is entitled to this distinction.

You will read two bits of the secondary literature on Kant. They are (in order of reading):

Dicker, Georges (2004) *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford UP. Excerpt from Chapter 2.

Rescher, Nicholas (1981) "On the Status of 'Things in Themselves' in Kant." *Synthese* 47: 289-299.

It would be reasonable to aim for a roughly 50/50 split in your paper between tasks (a) and (b), above.

9 Readings: Transcendental Dialectic First Book, B350-396

12 Readings: Paralogisms B396-432
[Be careful here, as from B406 you must skip past A348-405]

16 Readings Antinomies, B432-490

19 Readings: Antinomies, B490-595
[Long reading assignment, plan accordingly]

Sunday FOURTH ESSAY DUE — Kant's Antinomies

21

For this essay you will assess Kant's Antinomies. Start with a brief explanation of how Kant thinks we find ourselves spuriously in the grip of the various metaphysical quandaries the antinomies express. Then for at least one

of the antinomies, explain Kant's opposing proofs as well as what he concludes from their opposition (or from the opposition expressed by the antinomies in general). Depending on how much detail you care to give, you may end up treating one, two, three or four antinomies; it is wholly up to you.

You are absolutely welcome to signal your disagreements with Kant, especially if you think that one side of any antinomy is actually more defensible than the other.

You will read two bits of the secondary literature on Kant. They are (in order of reading):

Grier, Michelle, "Kant's Critique of Metaphysics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/kant-metaphysics/>>. (Especially section 4.)

Wood, Allen (2010) "The Antinomies of Pure Reason," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Guyer, P. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge UP, pp. 245-65.

23 Readings: Ideal of pure reason, B595-611

26 NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

30 Readings: Existence of the highest being, B611-659

December Readings: Critique of all speculative theology, B659-732
3

7 Readings: Discipline of pure reason, B735-822

10 Readings: The canon of pure reason, B823-884

FINAL ESSAY DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15TH AT MIDNIGHT