

PHIL 404
Historical Figures: Kant
Course Outline Fall 2005

Instructor: Dr. Richard B. Wells
Office: BEL 316 (Inside the MRC Institute)
Office Hours Tue., 1:30 - 2:30 ; Thurs., 10:00 – 11:00
Phone (208) 885-4353
email rwalls@uidaho.edu
Text Required: *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant (Cambridge ed.)
Optional: *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, Paul Guyer (ed.)
On Kant by G. Thomson
Library Resources: various volumes of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Especially recommended: Lectures on Metaphysics, Lectures on Logic.

Kant's gesammelte Schriften in 29 volumes.

Course Description: In 1781 a professor of metaphysics and logic at a second tier university in the Prussian city of Königsberg published a book and forever changed the way we look at the world. The book was *Critique of Pure Reason* and the professor was Immanuel Kant.

Kant established a systematic philosophy for which *CPR* is but the centerpiece. He was the first to draw the distinction between philosophy and science (which up to that day had been called 'natural philosophy'). He was the first to propose the nebula hypothesis in astronomy and to predict the existence of galaxies. Kant's metaphysics of natural science opposed the Newtonian model and presented nature in the form of what we today call a field theory (upon which all of modern physics is based). He proposed a principle of relativity for empirical objective space. He worked toward trying to establish a science of ethics. There is virtually no part of philosophy or science that his system does not deal with.

Kant also single-handedly invented almost all of the terminology later used by German philosophers, much of which has found its way into other modern philosophical schools as well. This is one thing that makes the study of Kant challenging: his thought is so different from anything that had come before, or that has come since, that many of his words have specialized, hair-splitting technical nuances that must be picked up upon if you are to properly understand what he is saying. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that many of Kant's terms do not easily translate into a single English equivalent word, and most English translations of Kant obscure or erase the fine distinctions necessary to properly understand his meaning. Your text is better than most translations but is far from perfect. However, it is well foot-noted with information regarding what German word is being rendered when the translators use a single English word as the translation for several German words.

This semester we undertake the ambitious goal of studying *Critique of Pure Reason* in its entirety. I have divided *CPR* into 15 topics to be covered at a rate of approximately one topic per week. The class will be divided into three study groups for the purpose of helping one another through the often difficult thickets of Kant's presentation. Each Friday each study group will turn in a summary of the previous weeks topics, including group interpretations and stating questions the group has not yet successfully resolved. The study group summaries are to be typed and signed by each member of the study group.

We will also have several individual essays on various questions throughout the semester. Each essay is to be a maximum of five pages (1.5 spacing, 11 point font). Due dates for the various essays are stated below. Each of you will also do a Final Essay summarizing your understanding of the key points of Kant's

philosophy. This essay is not to exceed 15 pages (1.5 spacing, 11 point font). The Final Essay is due in my office Finals Week no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 13.

We will use a two-step approach to understanding Kant: (1) assume that whatever he is saying is correct, no matter how paradoxical or contradictory his words may seem; (2) seek to discover ways in which what he is saying could be correct. By following this tactic, we will be able to read Kant as he meant he should be read and we will develop the proper Critical doctrine of method for the Critical Philosophy. This is not to say that you cannot take issue with Kant's theory; but it is to say that you must first attempt to understand him before you argue with him. The most common error in Kant scholarship, in the words of Professor Stephen Palmquist, is to "adopt the approach of ripping the text to shreds, leaving it in a heap, and blaming Kant for the mess." We will avoid doing this. As Kant said,

Another peculiarity of this sort of science [i.e. critique of pure reason] is that one must have an idea of the whole in order to rectify all the parts, so that one has to leave the thing for a time in a certain condition of rawness in order to achieve this eventual rectification.

Grading: Each regular essay will count as 10% of your grade. The Final Essay counts 30%.

Tentative Course Outline

Topic 1: Propadeutics to *Critique of Pure Reason*. Read the introduction by Guyer & Wood, pp. 1-23 and 66-77. Optional reading: Thomson preface, pp. 3-10; Guyer (CCK), pp. 1-25.

Topic 2: What is metaphysics? Kant's Copernican Hypothesis (CPR pp. 99-124).

first essay: How does the Copernican Hypothesis alter how we must look at ontology? Due Wednesday, Sept. 7 in class.

Topic 3: Introduction to Critical Philosophy (CPR pp. 127-152).

Topic 4: The transcendental aesthetic (CPR pp. 155-192).

second essay: As pure intuitions space and time cannot be described other than by conceptualizing them in terms of what these intuitions do or provide. Such a description is called a *Realerklärung* (real explanation). Provide a *Realerklärung* for Kant's pure intuitions. Due Mon. Sept. 19 in class.

Topic 5: Transcendental Logic (CPR pp. 193-218).

Topic 6: Deduction of the categories of understanding (CPR pp. 219-266).

third essay: What is the real function of the categories? Due Mon. Oct. 3 in class.

Topic 7: Analytic of Principles (CPR pp. 267-337).

Topic 8: Noumena and Phenomena (CPR pp. 338-383).

fourth essay: What is the difference between a phenomenon and a noumenon and how do each relate to object (*Gegenstand*), Object (*Object*), and thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich selbst*)? Due Mon. Oct. 17 in class.

Topic 9: The system of transcendental Ideas (CPR pp. 384-408).

Topic 10: The paralogisms of pure reason (CPR pp. 409-458).

fifth essay: Kant devotes much time to discussing the illegitimate use of the psychological Ideas.

What is the objectively valid use of these Ideas? Due Mon. Oct. 31 in class.

Topic 11: The antinomies of pure reason (CPR pp. 459-510).

Topic 12: Transcendental idealism and the antinomies (CPR pp. 511-550).

sixth essay: What is the objectively valid use of the cosmological Ideas? Due Mon. Nov. 14 in class.

Topic 13: The Ideal of pure reason (CPR pp. 551-623).

Topic 14: The discipline of pure reason (CPR pp. 627-671).

seventh essay: What is the objectively valid use of the theological Ideas? Due Mon. Dec. 5 in class.

Topic 15: Remainder of the doctrine of method (CPR pp. 672-704).

Final Essay: Explain the main doctrines of critique and discuss how Kant's system affects how philosophy and metaphysics are to be carried out. Due Tues. Dec. 13 by 5:00 p.m. in my office.

↖ or

critique one of the essays in the
optional texts against CPR .