

Syllabus

Douglas Marshall
March 29, 2021

KANT'S
METAPHYSICS

1 Logistics

COURSE TITLE: PHIL 273 - Kant's Metaphysics

MEETING TIMES: Spring 2021, T & TH, 10:20 a.m.–12:05 p.m.*

MEETING LOCATION: The Kant Zoom Classroom

INSTRUCTOR E-MAIL: dmarshall@carleton.edu

COURSE WEBSITE:

<https://moodle.carleton.edu/course/view.php?id=35907>

*NOTE ABOUT MEETING TIMES: All times listed are U.S. Central Time, the time in Northfield, MN. I am planning for this course to be *synchronous*. It is important that you be available to attend class meetings via Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

2 Required Texts

You must purchase or otherwise arrange reliable access to the following books:

1. Immanuel Kant (Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Trans.) *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
2. Sebastian Gardner *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Routledge, 1999)

The Guyer and Wood translation of Kant's *Critique* is the only acceptable English translation for purposes of this course. Both books are available at the Carleton bookstore and at Amazon. Other readings will be available on the course website.

3 Course Requirements

1. Reading: You should plan to do all of the required reading from the *Critique of Pure Reason* at least twice. Reading Kant is extremely challenging and rewarding. You will not be prepared if you don't do the Kant reading carefully and critically before we meet to discuss it. The required readings from the secondary literature, while also important, are there primarily to shed light on Kant. I recommend reading Kant first, secondary literature second.

2. Reading Quizzes: There will be two quizzes over the course of the term designed to test whether you are up to speed with the readings and content of Kant's *Critique*. I am tentatively planning to have them in Weeks 3 and 8, but see the course website for details on timing. These quizzes are not something to get stressed out about. You can take the quizzes as many times as you need to get a sufficient score to complete the quiz assignment on moodle.

3. Writing: There will be three main writing assignments over the course of the term. First, there will be an essay of approximately 5 to 6 pages (1500–1800 words) that will treat of a topic in the initial part of Kant's *Critique* up to and including the Transcendental Aesthetic. For your second writing assignment, you will have the option of rewriting your first essay in light of my feedback and replacing your paper grade with the grade you get on your rewritten essay. Finally, you will write a term paper of approximately 10 – 12 pages (approximately 3,000 to 3,600 words) on any topic on the part of Kant's *Critique* that we read in Phil 273. I will distribute suggested paper topics for all written assignments, though you are free to write on a topic of your choosing so long as you discuss that topic with me at least one week before the paper's due date. I ask that you inform me of the topic of your paper by the end of week 6.

4. Class Participation: Participation includes punctual attendance in class, contributions to class and small group discussions, helping with uploading small group discussion chat logs, and regular Moodle logins. I will take attendance at each meeting. I encourage everyone to be part of our class discussions, and I suggest you set a goal of participating actively (like asking a question or describing your response to our readings) once per meeting (though it is fine if this often happens in a small group discussion). I may

also periodically check on your Moodle logins. I expect you to log in to the Moodle at least twice per week, and I suggest that you log in to Moodle at least once every three days. There will be lots of updates to the Moodle as our course progresses.

4 Tentative Schedule of Readings

The heart of this course is the initial part of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* which runs from the title pages through to the Refutation of Idealism, pp. 81–337 in the Guyer and Wood translation (together with a brief section of “The Discipline of Pure Reason”, pp. 628–643). We will read through this initial part of the *Critique* at a pace of roughly 25 pages per week. Our translation includes the texts of the 1781 and 1787 editions of Kant's *Critique*, which we (like everyone else) will refer to as the “A edition” and “B edition”. In some cases when Guyer and Wood give both the A and B edition versions of the text, we will only read the B edition version.

The following weekly breakdown of readings from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is approximate. Please see the course website for up-to-date weekly readings and assignments. The readings for a given week will always be posted by Friday evening of the previous week.

WEEKS 1 - 2: The Prefaces and the B Introduction (pp. 99–124, 136–152)

WEEKS 3 - 4: The Transcendental Aesthetic (pp. 172–192, 628–643)

WEEK 5: Logic and the Categories (pp. 193–218)

WEEKS 6 - 7: Transcendental Deduction of the Categories (pp. 219–266)

WEEK 8: The Schematism, Axioms, and Anticipations (pp. 267–295)

WEEK 9: The Analogies of Experience (pp. 295–321)

WEEK 10: The Refutation of Idealism (pp. 321–337)

As we read through Kant, we will also read the corresponding parts of Gardner's introductory textbook, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*. The most relevant parts are Chapters 1–6 and Chapter 8. The readings from Gardner's book will be given together with the readings from Kant. From time to time, I will also post to the course website other articles from the secondary literature on Kant. Some of the articles will be required reading, others only recommended.

5 Tentative Schedule for Quizzes and Papers

REQUIREMENT	TENTATIVE DUE DATE
Quiz 1	April 16 (Week 3)
First Essay	April 23 (Week 4)
Term Paper Topic	May 6 (Week 6)
Optional First Essay Rewrite	May 14 (Week 7)
Quiz 2	May 21 (Week 8)
Term Paper	June 5 (Week 10)

6 Grading

Term Paper – 50%
Participation – 20%
First Essay – 20%
Quizzes – 10%

See the course website for an explanation of how grades will be assigned to papers. I will use the percentages above to compute a final score at the end of the semester for each student. Your grade for the course will be based on this score, but it will take improvement over the course of the semester into account.

Extensions Policy: You may hand in any paper for this class up to 48 hours late without penalty to your grade. When I calculate final grades, I will simply ignore up to 48 hours of lateness for all papers due in PHIL 273.

Aside from the automatic 48 hour extension, you may request an ordinary extension of a paper deadline so long as you make your request *before* the day it is due. Work that is late without an extension or beyond an extension will be discounted at the rate of one-third of a grade per day (A to A-, A- to B+, and so forth). Papers will not be accepted more than one week after the due date except under extraordinary circumstances. In such circumstances, arrangements should be made in consultation with the class deans.

Note about your grade on the first essay: When you hand in your first essay, it will be given an initial grade. If you don't choose to hand in a rewritten paper, then the initial grade will be your final grade for the paper. If you hand in a rewritten paper, your final grade for the paper will be revised to whatever grade you receive on the rewritten version. However,

even though your paper grade will be replaced by the grade received for the rewritten submission, any penalty to the grade due to lateness will remain.

7 Continuity of Instruction in a Time of Crisis

We are living in a difficult time. COVID-19 is interfering with our ability to be at college in the normal way. Deeply disturbing racial injustices are taking place, and so is social unrest. In times like these, we will need to exhibit flexibility with each other throughout the term.

I have done my best to design the course so that everyone can be successful, even if illness or external factors beyond our control mean that some of us may have to be absent for some of the class. If your personal situation is affecting your ability to engage with the course, please contact the Dean of Students Office so we can work towards reasonable accommodations. If technological problems are limiting your ability to participate, please contact the ITS Helpdesk at 507-222-5999 or helpdesk@carleton.edu.

8 Privacy

In some instances, videos of our class will be recorded either by me or by students for purposes of study or review. Class members should not share, replicate, or publish the recording, in whole or in part, or use the recording for any other purpose than for class-related studying. Recordings of class sessions that include student participants should not be saved or used past the end of the term. In particular, I will delete any audio or video recordings that include students within one month after the academic term is over. In return, I ask that you not share the videos I create for purposes of this course.

9 The Writing Center

The Writing Center is offering a full schedule of videoconferences with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the writing center website (<https://www.carleton.edu/writing-center/>). You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their online appointment system (<https://writingcenter.carleton.edu/>).

10 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact disability@carleton.edu or call Sam Thayer ('10), Accessibility Specialist (x4464) or Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services (x5250) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

11 Academic Integrity

All work submitted by you is assumed to be your own original work that has not been submitted elsewhere. Any words or ideas borrowed from other sources must be properly attributed. Any cases of suspected dishonesty will be forwarded to the Academic Standing Committee, as required by Carleton's policy on academic integrity. In confirmed cases of academic dishonesty, I will recommend a penalty ranging from a failing grade for the assignment to failure in the course. Carleton College may pursue further action.

For more information about academic integrity at Carleton and guidelines about how to avoid plagiarism in your work, please go to: <https://www.carleton.edu/writing/plagiarism/>.

12 Course Description

In this course we aim to understand the metaphysics and the theory of cognition developed by Immanuel Kant in his monumental work, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Some of the main questions Kant addresses: How does the mind represent the world? Can we distinguish the way things appear to us from the way they are in themselves? What are space and time? Does every event have a cause? Is it possible to have knowledge independent of experience? We will think about these questions and attempt to shed light on Kant's systematic answers to them by means of careful reading and interpretation of Kant's text.

13 Course Objectives

As we approach Kant, I suggest we keep some objectives in mind:

A. Start to master a philosophical worldview that isn't your own.

In this course we will learn about a systematic philosophical view concerning a broad range of questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. One way to assess your own grasp of Kant's philosophical system is to consider your ability to answer questions of the following sorts: (i) What was Kant's view of the relationship between geometry and space as it is studied by physics?; (ii) What *would* Kant say about the relationship between geometry and space as it is studied by physics—in light of Nineteenth and Twentieth century developments in geometry and physics?; (iii) What *should* Kant say about the relationship between geometry and space as it is studied by physics, if he knew of those later developments?

B. Learn how to write papers in the history of philosophy.

Writing papers in the history of philosophy requires some special skills. Papers in history of philosophy constitute their very own genre. The work you do in your papers will be primarily interpretive, answering questions about what Kant meant by what he wrote and exploring aspects of his philosophical system. In order to write your papers successfully, you will need to draw on Kant's text as evidence for your claims, but you will also need to explain the texts on which your arguments rely. Some of the skills you learn will help you in other settings where source texts are a primary source of evidence. Some of the skills you learn are more general—for example, the skill of articulating a cogent argument in writing.

C. Learn to engage with secondary literature on a philosopher.

As is the case with major philosophical figures such as Aristotle and Descartes, there is a massive secondary literature on Kant that has only grown since the time of Kant's writings. If you are reading Kant and a question occurs to you, chances are that many useful papers have already been written in attempt to answer your question. In this class, we will read some important secondary works on Kant, but we will also learn some general skills that are relevant to tracking down helpful analytical and interpretive work on historical figures in philosophy. This is an important research skill that should be useful to you after the class is over.

D. Be in a position to continue studying Kant after our course is over, either through more coursework at Carleton or on your own. If you'd like to pursue Kant's philosophy further, the next course to take would likely be PHIL 213: Ethics. If you haven't yet taken PHIL 272: Early Modern Philosophy, it is also relevant to understanding Kant.