

Kant and the 19th Century

Syllabus

Course Description

The philosophical ideas and methods of Immanuel Kant's "critical" philosophy set off a revolution that reverberated throughout the 19th century. The only reaction it did not elicit was one of indifference. His revolution polarized the philosophical community, meeting with eager forms of inheritance as well as intense and varied resistance — and, as we shall see, usually *both* within a single thinker's response to Kant. This class will seek to understand the nature of Kant's philosophical innovations and the principle sources of his successors' (dis-)satisfaction with them. This class will seek to introduce students to the outlines of Kant's "critical" philosophy, well as its subsequent reception, as the first two generations of post-Kantian thinkers grappled with and reacted to his ideas. The first half of the course will be devoted to a careful reading of portions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*; while the second half will focus on various aspects of its reception, transformation, and rejection at the hands of Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. The course as a whole will focus on the following five topics: (1) the dialectical relation between skepticism and dogmatism in philosophy, (2) the difference between our theoretical and practical cognitive powers, (3) the proper account of the "finitude" of these powers, (4) the tendency of human reflection to overstep the boundaries of its legitimate employment, (5) what a satisfying treatment of the four preceding topics reveals about what philosophy is and what it can and cannot accomplish.

Required Texts and Readings

The following four required texts have been ordered for the course and are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op:

1. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trns. Norman Kemp Smith
2. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trns. Mary Gregor
3. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Vol 1*, trns. Hong & Hong
4. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Vol 2*, trns. Hong & Hong
5. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo*, trns. Walter Kaufmann
6. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trns. R.J. Hollingdale

The rest of the readings will be available through the course's Chalk website. The readings for each meeting divide into required readings and background readings. Students taking the course for credit are expected to do all of the required reading. The background readings are optional.

Structure of the Course, Requirements and Related Issues

Meeting Times: The course will meet all ten weeks of the quarter on Thursdays. All meetings of the class will be from 12:00pm – 2:50 pm in Social Science 122.

Intended Audience: This course is only open to undergraduates.

Policy on Auditors: Indeed, anyone with a serious interest in the topic is welcome to audit the course.

Chalk: There is a Chalk website for this course (chalk.uchicago.edu). Announcements (modifications to the syllabus, etc.) will periodically be posted there. Students are expected to keep abreast of these. Additional secondary readings will also be referred to that are not presently on the syllabus and those readings will be made available through the Chalk site. But all of the primary required reading is to be found in the books ordered for the course.

Format: The Thursday meetings of the course will have a lecture format.

Work for the course: All undergraduates enrolled in the course for credit are expected to attend class regularly, to be conversant with the required readings, to attend sections regularly, and to be ready to participate in discussion in section.

Undergraduate Discussion Sections: There will be six undergraduate discussion sections for the course. Every undergraduate must be assigned to and regularly attend one of these sections. Weekly attendance of sections is mandatory for undergraduates.

Undergraduate Course Requirements: There are three required elements for the course: (1) mandatory attendance and participation in discussion sections, (2) a short midterm paper (6-8 pages) due by April 28 at 11:59pm, the end of the 5th week; (3) a longer paper (**10-12 pages**) due by June 6 at 11:59pm, the beginning of week 11. Special deadlines will be arranged for graduating seniors. All undergraduate papers are to be delivered to your section leader in a timely manner in electronic form.

Undergraduate Grade Breakdown: 15% for participation in discussion section; 35% for the short midterm paper, and 50% for the long final paper. To pass the course you must receive a passing grade in every required component of the course: A failing grade in any one of the three required components of the course will result in a failing grade for the course as a whole.

Schedule of Meetings, Topics and Reading Assignments

First Meeting (Thursday, March 31): **Introductory Meeting**

Required Readings (to be done after class):

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Avii–xxii; Bvii–xliv
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A726/B754–A736/B764
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A759/B788–A769/B797

Suggested Readings:

Henrich, “Kant’s Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the *First Critique*”

Second Meeting (Thursday, April 7): **Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy I**

Required readings:

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A1/B1–A16/B30; A319/B376–A320/B377
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A50/B74–A55/B79 (Pure General Logic)
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A55/B79–A64/B89 (Transcendental Logic)

Background readings:

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A19/B33–A49/B73
Stephen Engstrom, “Understanding and Sensibility”
Conant, “Varieties of Skepticism”

Third Meeting (Thursday, April 14): **Kant’s Practical Philosophy**

Required readings:

Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Preface and Introduction (5:3–5:16), §§1–7 of the Analytic (5:19–5:33), “On the Warrant of Pure Reason ...” (5:50–5:57), and §§1–6 of Chapter 2 of the Dialectic (5:113–5:134)

Background reading:

Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section 2
Stephen Engstrom, *The Form of Practical Knowledge*, Chapter II

Fourth Meeting (Thursday, April 21): Kant's Theoretical Philosophy II

Required readings:

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B129–169 (B Deduction)

Background readings:

Conant, "Kant's Critique of the Layer-Cake Conception"

Henrich, "The Proof Structure of the B-Deduction"

McDowell, "Notes on the B Deduction"

Fifth Meeting (Thursday, April 28): Kierkegaard I

Required readings:

Kierkegaard, *Point of View for My Work as an Author*, excerpt
The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard, §§ 139, 146, 148, 150-159, 179

Johannes Climacus, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:

"Appendix: An Understanding with the Reader" (pp. 617-623)

"A First and Last Explanation" (pp. 625-630)

Footnote on *Philosophical Fragments* (pp. 270n-277n)

Background reading:

The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard, §§ 126-8, 133-4, 163

Plato, *Theatetus*, 149b-151e

Sixth Meeting (Thursday, May 5): Kierkegaard II

Required reading:

Johannes Climacus, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:

Preface; Introduction; Part One, Chapter One, § 1 (pp. 5-34)

Part One, Chapter One, §§ 2 & 3; Part One, Chapter Two (pp. 34-57)

Background reading:

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power"

Seventh Meeting (Thursday, May 12): Kierkegaard III

Required readings:

F. H. Jacobi and G. E. Lessing “The Spinoza Conversations”
Johannes Climacus, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:
Part Two, Section One, §§ 1-3 (pp. 59-106 in the Hong edition)

Background reading:

Johannes Climacus, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:
Part Two, Section One, § 4; Part Two, Section Two, Chapter One (pp.
106-188)

Eighth Meeting (Thursday, May 19): Nietzsche I

Required readings:

Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer As Educator” (in *Untimely Meditations*)
Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, excerpt
Nietzsche, *Human All-Too Human*, excerpts
Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, excerpts

Background readings:

Conant, “Nietzsche’s Perfectionism”
Emerson, “Self-Reliance”
Conant, “Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Anscombe on Moral Unintelligibility”
Nietzsche, *Ecco Homo*, Selection

Ninth Meeting (Thursday, May 26): Nietzsche II

Required reading:

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Essays I and II

Background readings:

Nietzsche, “Truth and Lie in their Non-Moral Sense”
Conant, “The Dialectic of Perspectivism, I”

Tenth Meeting (Thursday, June 2): Nietzsche III

Required reading:

Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III

Background readings:

Nietzsche, "Truth and Lie in their Non-Moral Sense"

Conant, "The Dialectic of Perspectivism, II"

Nietzsche, *Ecco Homo*, Selection