



*PHL 440:
Seminar in
Values
(Kantian Ethics)*

Class meetings Monday-Wednesday,
2:00-3:50, building 5-123

Instructor Michael Cholbi

E-mail mjcholbi@csupomona.edu

My website: <http://michael.cholbi.com>

Phone 909.869.3845

Office Building 1, room 331

Department office Building 1, room
320

Office hours, winter 2010: Tuesday
10:30-12:00, Friday 1:00-2:00, and by
appointment

PLEASE NOTE: Neither class meetings nor office hours will be held on my state-mandated furlough days. For the winter quarter, those days are:

- Monday, January 25
- Tuesday, January 26
- Wednesday, January 27
- Friday, February 12
- Tuesday, February 16
- Tuesday, March 9

In addition, students should not expect timely responses to e-mails, phone calls, or messages on furlough days.

Description

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was one of the most influential philosophers of all time and is generally classified as the greatest philosophical mind of the Enlightenment. Though Kant's influence in metaphysics, epistemology, etc., has been significant, his influence has perhaps been the greatest in ethics. Over the last forty years in particular, interest in Kantian ethics has increased substantially. The aim of our course is to appreciate the distinctive contribution that Kantianism makes to ethics and to critically consider its plausibility as an approach to theorizing about ethics. We will pursue these goals via

Careful reading and exposition of Kant's own writings on ethics, as well as reading supplementary literature investigate the central themes, claims, and arguments in Kant's ethics. We will also focus critical attention on common objections leveled at Kantian ethics by contemporary ethicists.

Course learning objectives

By the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. describe the goals and motivations of Kant's ethical theory,
2. outline the central claims of Kant's ethics, including his claims concerning the good will, the supreme principle of morality, moral motivation, the Categorical Imperative and the derivation of duties, the role of practical reason, etc.,
3. identify central challenges with respect to interpreting Kant's ethical theory,
4. identify and critically appraise the main objections to Kant's ethical theory, and
5. articulate the influence of Kant's ethics on contemporary ethical theorizing.

Evaluation and requirements

This course will be run in an informal seminar style. Students will be expected to complete the assigned readings prior to each meeting. The meetings will be discussion-based and centered around core problems of interpretation, argument, and criticism.

The course requirements are as follows:

1. For each class meeting, two students will complete and present short *critical summary papers*. These papers should summarize and critically analyze the assigned reading and will serve to guide our in-class discussion. Critical summary papers will not be assigned the final week of class (3/8 and 3/10) so as to allow you more time to work on your term papers. These summary papers are due to me by e-mail (mjcholbi@csupomona.edu) by noon prior to the class meeting. The number of these papers you complete will depend on our final enrollment in the course, but I intend that each student complete no more than *three total*. These will be graded and together will constitute **30%** of your grade.
2. All students are required to submit 1-2 questions for discussion prior to each class meeting. These questions should pertain to issues and concerns in the assigned reading and should be posted in the Discussion Forum on Blackboard. At the end of the quarter, these will be graded and will constitute **20%** of your grade.
3. You are required to complete a *term paper* of 2000-3000 words (8-12 double space pages). Obviously, the paper should address a question or issue in Kantian ethics. I recommend, but do not require, that you use one of your critical summary papers as a starting point for your term paper. I also strongly recommend a conference with me to help you identify your topic, thesis, etc. This paper will be due Thursday, March 18, at 5 p.m. and will constitute **35%** of your grade.
4. Given that this is a seminar-style course, *regular attendance and conscientious participation* are required. I will take attendance in about 1/3 of our class meetings. A guide to classroom participation is posted on Blackboard. This will constitute **15%** of your grade.

Texts

Kant, Practical Philosophy, M. Gregor, trans. and ed. (Cambridge U. Press, 1996)
Wood, Kantian Ethics (Cambridge U. Press, 2007).

Blackboard

We will be using Blackboard **version 9** (<https://bbpilot.csupomona.edu/>) in support of the in-class activities in this course. In order to use Blackboard, you will need to know your university Intranet ID and password. You should be checking the Blackboard site several times weekly for updates on course activities, etc.

Varia

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to Cal Poly policies. The copyright for these course materials is held by the instructor; any attempt to distribute or sell this material without instructor authorization is in violation of that copyright. If for any reason, you believe that it is appropriate for you to receive assistance due to physical handicap or learning disabilities, please contact me.

Topics and readings

Introductions to Kant's ethics

Before plunging into Kant's ethics, it may be useful for you to read one of the following introductions to Kant's ethics.

1. Johnson, "Kant's moral philosophy." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/>]
2. Wood, "General introduction," in our Practical Philosophy (xiii-xxxiii)
3. Korsgaard, "An introduction to the ethical, political and religious thought of Kant", from Creating the Kingdom of Ends. (available on Blackboard)

All assigned readings are in Practical Philosophy (page numbers in parentheses) or in Wood's Kantian Ethics (page numbers in parentheses) unless otherwise indicated. Items available on Blackboard are denoted with (Bb). Items marked with an * are optional but recommended.

Wed 1/6 Enlightenment, freedom, and reason; the aims of the Groundwork

- "What is enlightenment?" (17-22)
- Groundwork (43-50)
- Wood (1-23)

Mon 1/11 The good will, duty, and universal law

- Groundwork (50-60)
- Korsgaard, "Kant's analysis of obligation: The argument of Foundations I" (Bb)
- Wood (24-41)

- Wed 1/6 Enlightenment, freedom, and reason; the aims of the Groundwork
- "What is enlightenment?" (17-22)
 - Groundwork (43-50)
 - Wood (1-23)
- Mon 1/11 The good will, duty, and universal law
- Groundwork (50-60)
 - Korsgaard, "Kant's analysis of obligation: The argument of Foundations I" (Bb)
 - Wood (24-41)
- Wed 1/13 Imperatives and the Categorical Imperative
- Groundwork (60-76)
 - Wood (41-42, 66-69)
 - Timmons, "Kant's moral theory" (151-58) (Bb)
- Mon 1/18 NO CLASS (ML King holiday)
- Wed 1/20 Universal law, humanity, and the Kingdom of Ends
- Groundwork (76-93)
 - Wood (68-95)
 - Bergeron and Tramel, "Rightness as fairness: Kant's categorical imperative" (Bb)
- Mon 1/25 NO CLASS (Furlough day)
- Wed 1/27 NO CLASS (Furlough day)
- Mon 2/1 Rules, rigorism, and the Categorical Imperative as a test of maxims
- Timmons, "Kant's moral theory" (158-75) (Bb)
 - Kant, "On a supposed right to lie from philanthropy" (611-615)
 - Wood (240-258)
- * Cholbi, "The murderer at the door: What Kant should have said" (Bb)
- Weds 2/3 Kant's system of duties
- Metaphysics of Morals 365-90, 394-97, 512-518
 - Wood (158-181)
- Mon 2/8 Virtue, duties to virtue, and duties to self
- Metaphysics of Morals 518-36, 546-67
 - Wood (182-192)
- Weds 2/10 Duties to others
- Metaphysics of Morals 568-88

- Mon 2/15 NO CLASS (Presidents' Day holiday)
- Weds 2/17 The highest good and Kant's moral religion
- Critique of Practical Reason 148-49, 226-36, 238-54
 - Early pp. of Religion (Bb)
- Thursday 2/18
- Anne Margaret Baxley, speaking on Kant and virtue at Pomona College, 4:15
- Mon 2/22 Kant and radical evil
- Excerpt from Kant's Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone
- Weds 2/24 Kant's social theory
- "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective" (Bb)
 - Wood, Kant's Ethical Thought (selections from chs. 6, 7)
- Mon 3/1 External right, the universal principle of right, and Kant on property
- Metaphysics of Morals 386-94, 401-18
 - Wood (193-200)
- Weds 3/3 Kant on marriage, sex, and the family
- Metaphysics of Morals 426-32, 548-50
 - Wood (224-240)
- Mon 3/8 Kant on public right and punishment
- Metaphysics of Morals 455-61, 472-78
 - Wood (206-223)
 - Murphy, "Does Kant have a theory of punishment?" (Bb)
- Weds 3/10 Kant on theory and practice
- Kant, "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but of no use in practice" (275-310)
 - Murphy, "Kant on theory and practice" (Bb)