

# Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

Professor James Conant

Spring 2012

## Syllabus

### Description of the Course

This course will be devoted to an intensive study of selected portions of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. The focus of the course will be on the Transcendental Analytic and especially the Transcendental Deduction. We will begin, however, with a brief tour of some of the central claims of the Transcendental Aesthetic. Some effort will be made to situate these portions of the first half of the Critique with respect to the later portions of the book, viz. the Transcendental Dialectic and the Doctrine of Method. Although the focus of the course will be on Kant's text, some consideration will be given to some of the available competing interpretations of the book. The primary commentators whose work will thus figure briefly in the course in this regard are Henry Allison, Matthew Boyle, Stephen Engstrom, Martin Heidegger, Dieter Henrich, John McDowell, Charles Parsons, Robert Pippin, Sebastian Roedl, Wilfrid Sellars, and Peter Strawson. Our interest in these commentators in this course will always only be as a useful foil for understanding Kant's text. No separate systematic study will be attempted of the work of any of these commentators. Of particular interest to us will be topics like Kant's criticisms of traditional empiricism, the distinction between sensibility and understanding, and his account of the relation between intuitions and concepts. The aim of the course is both to use certain central texts of recent Kant commentary and contemporary analytic Kantian philosophy to illuminate some of the central aspirations of Kant's theoretical philosophy and to use certain central Kantian texts in which those aspirations were first pursued to illuminate some recent developments in epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

### Instructors

#### Professor

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#### Course assistants

##### **Gilad Nir**

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##### **Zack Loveless**

Office Hours: TBA

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## Texts

All of the following textbooks have been ordered through the Seminary Co-op and are all required texts for the course:

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith. ISBN: 978-0230013384
2. Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, (Dover Press edition), Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz. ISBN: 978-0486256504
3. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, revised trans. Paul Carus and Lewis White Beck ISBN: 978-0023193309
4. Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, Revised and Expanded Edition ISBN: 978-0300102666
5. P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* ISBN: 978-0415040303

Some, but by no means all, of the readings assigned for the course is to be found in one of the five texts above. The rest of the readings will be made available through the Chalk site of the course. If you ever encounter any problem obtaining an assigned reading for the course, you should immediately contact the course assistants for the course by e-mail and let them know about the problem.

## Structure of the Course and Related Issues

**Meeting Times and Location:** The course will meet on Tuesdays, from 3:00 to 6:00pm, in Harper 140.

**Undergraduate Students:** This course is open to any undergraduate who has secured permission to enroll in it.

**Graduate Students:** This course is open to all graduate students.

**Policy on Auditors:** Anyone with a serious interest in the topic is welcome to audit the course.

**Chalk Site:** There is a Chalk website for this course ([chalk.uchicago.edu](http://chalk.uchicago.edu)). All readings listed on the syllabus not available in one of the books ordered for the course are to be found on this site. In addition, a great many readings not mentioned on the syllabus are also to be found on this site. The latter generally pertain to topics discussed in passing in lecture and are made available for students who wish to pursue them further.

**Announcements:** Announcements (modifications to the syllabus, etc.) will periodically be posted to the Chalk site. Students are expected to keep abreast of these.

**Course Participation:** All students are expected to attend class regularly, be conversant with the required readings.

**Undergraduate Discussion Sections:** There will be four undergraduate discussion sections for the course, taught by Gilad Nir and Zack Loveless. Every undergraduate must be assigned to and regularly attend one of these sections. Weekly attendance of sections is mandatory for undergraduates. The time schedules and locations of these sections are: Wednesday 12:30-1:20 in Classics 405; Thursday 3:30-4:20 in Harper 141; Friday, 9:30-10:20 in Harper 150; and Friday, 12:30-1:20 in Classics 111.

**Graduate Discussion Section:** There will be a graduate discussion section for the course. It will be led by Professor Conant. It will meet on Wednesdays, from 3:00 to 4:00pm in Harper 103. The graduate section will begin meeting during the third week of the quarter. It is open to all PhD and MA students either enrolled in or auditing the course. Attendance of the graduate section is an optional component of the course for graduate students enrolled for credit.

**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 Monday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, at 5pm, at the beginning of week 6; (3) a longer paper (12-15 pages) due by 5pm on Friday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, of week 11. Special deadlines will be arranged for graduating seniors. All undergraduate papers are to be delivered to the course assistants, Gilad Nir or Zack Loveless, in hardcopy 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.

**Graduate Course Requirements:** Graduate students taking the course for credit are expected write a term paper at the end of the quarter, due on Friday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, of 11th week at 5pm. Papers are to be submitted via email to Prof. Conant in electronic form. The final paper is the only official requirement for graduate students enrolled in the course. It may be on any topic of your choice pertaining to themes covered in the lecture. Graduate student papers (both M. A. and Ph.D.) should be between 15 and 30 pages.

**Policy on Extensions for Graduate Student Papers:** Graduate students may hand in their final papers after the official due date and still receive credit for the course, only if they have secured permission from the professor to do so. Any student granted an extension should also be aware of the following: such papers will not be graded immediately upon receipt. The later the paper, the less promptly it will be graded.

# Schedule of Meetings, Topics and Readings

## First Meeting (March 27) - Organizational and Introductory Meeting

Themes of the course, explanation of approach, overview of the syllabus.

Overview of Kant's philosophy, overview of the structure of the *Critique*.  
Explanation of basic terminology and bibliographical conventions.

Pink slips signed for any undergraduates who want to enroll in the course and have yet to receive permission.

No assigned reading.

## Second Meeting (April 3<sup>rd</sup>) - Prefaces and Introduction

### Required Readings:

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Avii–xxii; Bvii–xliv; A1/B1–A16/B30;  
A319/B376–A320/B377

Kant, *Prolegomena*, “Introduction” and “Preamble”, AA IV 255-264

Kant, *Logic*, Section 1: “The Concept of Logic”, pp. 13-18

Stephen Engstrom, “Understanding and Sensibility”

### Suggested Readings:

Strawson, Peter F., *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 1, pp. 15-44

Heidegger, Martin, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* pp. 3-26

Förster, Eckart, *The 25 Years of Philosophy*, Chapter 1: “Kant's Revolution in the Mode of Thought”

Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Chapter 1,  
Section 1: “An Introduction to the Problem”

### **Third Meeting (April 10<sup>th</sup>) - The Transcendental Aesthetic**

#### **Required Readings:**

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A19/B33–A49/B73

Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Chapter 2, Section 4, "Discursivity and Judgment"

Strawson, Peter F., *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 2, Chapter 1: "Space and Time"

Parsons, Charles, "The Transcendental Aesthetic"

#### **Suggested Readings:**

Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Part 2, Section 4, "Discursivity and Judgment" & 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Part 2, Section 5, "The Sensible Conditions of Human Cognition"

Warren, Dan, "Kant on the Apriority of Space"

Thompson, Manley, "Singular Terms and Intuitions in Kant's Epistemology"

Parsons, Charles, "Kant's Philosophy of Arithmetic",

Beck, Lewis White, "Did the Sage of Königsberg have no Dreams?"

### **Fourth Meeting (April 17<sup>th</sup>) - Transcendental Logic and the Leitfaden**

#### **Required Readings:**

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A50/B74–A84/B116; "Letter to Marcus Herz, May 26, 1789"

Strawson, Peter F. *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 2, Chapter 2: "Objectivity and Unity", Sections 1-2.

Boyle, Matt, "Kant on Logic and the Laws of the Understanding"

#### **Suggested Readings:**

MacFarlane, John, "Kant, Frege and the Logic in Logicism"

Boyle, Matt, "Kant's Hylomorphism"

Tolley, Clinton, "Kant on the Nature of Logical Laws"

Rödl, Sebastian "Logical Form as Relation to an Object"

## **Fifth Meeting (April 24<sup>th</sup>) A-Edition of the Transcendental Deduction**

### **Required Readings:**

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A84/B116–A95/B129; A95–A130  
Henrich, Dieter “Kant’s Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the First Critique”  
Strawson, Peter F., “Imagination and Perception”  
Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 2, Ch. 2: “Objectivity and Unity”, Sections 3-9.

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Pippin, Robert, *Kant’s Theory of Form*, Chapter 6, “The First-Edition Deduction”, pp. 151-166.  
Engstrom, Stephen, “The Transcendental Deduction and Skepticism”  
Sellars, Wilfred, *Science and Metaphysics*, Chapter 1; “Some Remarks on Kant’s Theory of Experience”, & “The Role of Imagination in Kant’s Theory of Experience”  
McDowell, John, “Sellars on Perceptual Experience” & “The Logical Form of an Intuition”  
Kern, Andrea, “Spontaneity and Receptivity in Kant’s Theory of Knowledge”

## **Sixth Meeting (May 1<sup>st</sup>) B-Edition of the Deduction: §§16-21**

### **Required Readings:**

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B129–146.  
Henrich, Dieter “The Proof Structure of the B-Deduction”  
Allison, Henry, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Chapter 3, Section 7: “Objective Validity and Objective Reality”  
Pippin, Robert, *Hegel’s Idealism*, Ch. 2, Section 1 (pp.16-24)

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Kant, *Prolegomena*, Part 2 Section 18-19, AA IV 298-300.  
Allison, Henry, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Part 3, Section 7: “The Transcendental Deduction”  
Allison, Henry, “Reflections on the B Deduction”  
Pippin, Robert, *Hegel’s Idealism*, Ch. 2, Sections 2-4 (pp.24ff.)  
Pippin, Robert, *Kant’s Theory of Form*, Chapter 6, “The Second-Edition Deduction”, pp. 166-187.

## **Seventh Meeting (May 8<sup>th</sup>) B-Edition of the Deduction: §§21-27**

### **Required Readings:**

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B144–169.

McDowell, John, “Hegel’s Idealism as a Radicalization of Kant”, Sections 1-4

Land, Thomas, “Kant’s Spontaneity Thesis”

Bauer, Nathan, “Kant’s Subjective Deduction”

### **Suggested Readings:**

McDowell, John, “Reply to Pippin”, “On Pippin’s Postscript”

Pippin, Robert, “Leaving Nature Behind”, “On McDowell’s Response”,  
“McDowell’s Germans”

Land, Thomas, “Kantian Conceptualism”

Bauer, Nathan “Peculiar Intuition”

McDowell, John, “Sensory Consciousness in Kant and Sellars” & Self-Determining Subjectivity and External Constraint”

## **Eighth Meeting (May 15<sup>th</sup>) 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Analogies, Refutation of Idealism**

### **Required Readings:**

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A176/B218–A211/B256; B274–279.

Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 2, Ch. 3: “Permanence and Causality”

Boyle, Matt, “Sortalism and Perceptual Content”

Roedl, Sebastian, *Categories of the Temporal*, Ch. 6: “Generic Thoughts”

### **Suggested Readings:**

Melnick, Arthur, “The Second Analogy”

Allison, Henry, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Part 3, Sec. 9:  
“The Analogies of Experience”

Warren, Dan, “Kant’s Dynamics”

Boyle, Matt, “Tack-On Theories of Rationality”

## **Ninth Meeting (May 22<sup>nd</sup>) Refutation of Idealism (continued) & The Ground of the Distinction of All Objects into Phenomena and Noumena**

### **Required Readings:**

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B274–279; A235/B294–A260/B315.  
Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Part 1, Secs 2-3  
Warren, Daniel, “Things in Themselves”  
Heidegger, Martin, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant*, pp. 67-70.  
Pippin, Robert, *Kant's Theory of Form*, Chapter 7, “Appearances and Things in Themselves”, pp. 188-215.

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Carl, Wolfgang, “Kant's Refutation of Problematic Idealism”  
Edmunds, Dina “The Refutation of Idealism”  
Strawson, Peter F., *The Bounds of Sense*, Part IV: “The Metaphysics of Transcendental Idealism”  
Allison, “The Non-Spatiality of Things in Themselves for Kant”

## **Tenth Meeting (May 29<sup>th</sup>) Introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic, the Logic of Illusion, and the Transcendental Doctrine of Method**

### **Required Readings:**

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A293/B349–A338/B396; A707/B735–A794/B822  
Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 3, Chap. 1: “The Logic of Illusion”  
Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Part 4, Sec. 11: “Reason and Illusion”

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A405/B432–A462/B490; A794/B822–A856/B884  
Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Part 3, Chapters 2, 3 & 4: “The Soul”, “The Cosmos”, and “God”  
Allison, Henry, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Part 4, Sections 12-14  
Moore, Adrian, “The Transcendental Doctrine of Method”



Kant's derives the image of "tribunal of truth" or "trial" from the article "Critique" in the Encyclopédie (IV: 494): "appeler au tribunal de la vérité". It is worth considering the meaning of "critique" in more detail. -Kant's critique is directed upon "pure reason", i.e. reason itself (we already noticed that). Reason assumes here five different (self-referring) roles: 1) it is the accused, 2) the prosecution 3) the defense 4) the judge 5) and who enacts the law, at the same time. -the judicial critique of the higher human faculty. However, the Critique of Pure Reason should not be read as a demolition of reason's cognitive role. Kant certainly wants to delimit the bounds of reason, but this is not the same as arguing that it has no role in our knowledge. Three points are crucial: (A1.1) the relation of reason to empirical truth; (A1.2) reason's role in scientific enquiry; and (A1.3) the positive gains that come from appreciating reason's limits.[1] In addition, sound philosophical reasoning requires that reason gain knowledge of itself—a task that the first Critique begins, but does not complete (A1.4). When Kant speaks of the "unity of reason" in the first Critique, he means that reason gives "unity a priori through concepts to the understanding's manifold cognitions" (A302/B359; cf. A665/B693, A680/B780). Following Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (1781, 1787), this work presented a sophisticated idealist theory that viewed geometry as a description of the structure of spatial intuition. According to Kant, the Critique of Pure Reason comprised a treatise on methodology, a preliminary investigation prerequisite to the study of science, which placed the Newtonian method (induction, inference, and generalization) over against that of Descartes and Wolff (deduction from intuitions asserted to be self-evident). Kant's monumental book the Critique of Pure Reason was arguably the most conceptually revolutionary work in the history of philosophy and its impact continues to be felt throughout philosophical debates today. However, it is a notoriously difficult work whose basic meaning and lasting philosophical significance are both subject to ongoing controversy. Critique of Pure Reason (German: Kritik der reinen Vernunft; 1781; second edition 1787) is a book by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in which the author seeks to determine the limits and scope of metaphysics. Also referred to as Kant's "First Critique", it was followed by his Critique of Practical Reason (1788) and Critique of Judgment (1790). In the preface to the first edition, Kant explains that by a "critique of pure reason" he means a critique "of the faculty of reason in general, in