

Philosophy 127P
Kant's Practical Philosophy
Fall 2017
TuTh 10:30-11:50a
Building 200, Room 124

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Kant's Practical Philosophy



In 1781 Kant published the *Critique of Pure Reason*, probably the most important and influential book of philosophy of the modern period. The central idea of the first *Critique* was that human knowledge is best understood in light of the fact that humans are *legislators*, issuers of laws. Kant argues there that the most basic features of the world of our experience derive from laws we issue to nature. The companion idea on the side of the practical philosophy is that human agency is best understood in light of the fact that humans issue laws to themselves. Kant's practical theory centers on the idea of *autonomy*—free, principled, rational self-governance. In this course, we'll consider his prolonged attempt in the 1780s and 90s to work this novel and powerful idea out. The resulting view of human practical life continues to exert a profound influence today.

Requirements

Reading

I have offered suggestions for helpful secondary literature below. These texts should be treated as such, i.e., as secondary. Students should focus their attention primarily on Kant's text.

Lectures

Regular attendance is expected, and participation is encouraged; these account for 15% of students' final grades. Students should exercise common courtesy to their instructors and fellow classmates by avoiding the use of distracting applications during lecture, including email, web browsing, chat programs, etc.

Midterm paper

A short paper (roughly 1500 words in length) is due at midterm. It will account for 35% of each student's final grade. I'll be handing out possible paper topics in advance.

Term Paper

A term paper (roughly 3000-3500 words) on a topic of each student's own design is due during the end-quarter exam period. It will account for 50% of each student's final grade.

Late Assignments

Late writing assignments will be penalized one third of one letter grade (i.e., A- becomes B+) every 24 hours, starting ten minutes after the deadline. Exceptions to the lateness policy will be made only in cases I deem exceptional.

Accessible Education Information

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://oae.stanford.edu>).

Texts

Required Book

Kant, I., *Practical Philosophy* [KPP], trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge).

Recommended Books

Kant, I., *Critique of Pure Reason* [CPR], trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge).

Wood, A., 1999, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge). [[Reserve](#)]

Secondary Sources Available Online or on Reserve at the Library

- Allison, H. E., 1990, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge). [[Reserve](#)]
- Engstrom, S., 2009, *The Form of Practical Knowledge* (Harvard).
- Guyer, P., 2005, *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom: Selected Essays* (Oxford).
- , ed., 2006, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*.
- , ed., 2010, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*.
- Henrich, D., 1994, *The Unity of Reason* (Harvard). [[Reserve](#)]
- Korsgaard, C. M., 1996, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge). [[Reserve](#)]
- Rawls, J., 2000, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Harvard).
- Reath, A., 2006, *Agency and Autonomy in Kant's Moral Theory* (Clarendon).
- Reath, A., & Timmerman, J., eds., 2013, *Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason": A Critical Guide* (Cambridge).
- Wood, A., 1970, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Cornell).

Schedule

1. Introduction: Kant, His life and work

No reading

2. Moral metaphysics

Required: *CPR* The canon of pure reason (A795-831/B823-59)

Recommended: Descartes, *Meditations V*

3. A good will and its law

Required: *GMM* Preface (4:387-92), *KPP*, pp. 43-48; *GMM I* (4:393-405), *KPP*, pp. 49-60

Recommended: Korsgaard 1996, ch. 2, "Kant's analysis of obligation"; Wood 1999, ch. 1, "Common rational moral cognition"

4. The formula of universal law

Required: *GMM II* (4:406-26), *KPP*, pp. 61-77; *MM* (6:211-14), *KPP*, 373-6

Recommended: Wood 1999, ch. 2, "Rational will and imperatives"; Rawls 2000, "The categorical imperative: The first formulation", pp. 162-80; Wood 1999, ch. 3, "The formula of universal law"

More: Engstrom 2009, ch. 6, "The categorical imperative" §§1-5; Korsgaard 1996, ch. 3, "Kant's formula of universal law"

5. The formula of humanity

- Required: *GMM* II (4:426-30), *KPP*, pp. 77-81
- More: Korsgaard 1996, ch. 4, “Kant’s formula of humanity”; Rawls 2000, “The categorical imperative: The second formulation”, pp. 181-99; Wood 1999, ch. 4, “The formula of humanity as an end in itself”

6. The formula of autonomy and the kingdom of ends

- Required: *GMM* II (4:430-36), *KPP*, pp. 81-85; Rousseau, *The Social Contract* Book I
- More: Allison 1990, ch. 5, “Rational agency and autonomy”; Henrich 1994, ch. 3, “Ethics of autonomy”; Rawls 2000, “The categorical imperative: The third formulation”, pp. 200-16; Wood 1999, ch. 5, “The formula of autonomy and the realm of ends”

7. The system of formulas and the form of willing

- Required: *GMM* II (4:406-36), *KPP*, pp. 61-85 [review]; *GMM* II (4:436-45), *KPP*, pp. 85-93
- Recommended: Wood, “The supreme principle of morality”, ch. 10 in Guyer 2006
- More: Engstrom 2009, ch. 5, “Constraints on willing”, ch. 6, “The categorical imperative”; Guyer 2005, ch. 7, “The form and matter of the categorical imperative”

8. The idea of freedom

- Required: *CPR* On pure reason as the seat of illusion (A298-309/B355-66) [review]; *CPR* Third antinomy (A444-51/B472-9), Transcendental idealism as the key (A491-7/B519-25), Resolution of the third antinomy (A532-7/B560-5)
- Recommended: Allison, “Kant on freedom of the will”, ch. 11 in Guyer 2006
- More: Allison 1990, ch. 1, “The third antinomy”, ch. 3, “Practical and transcendental freedom”; Wood, “The antinomies”, ch. 10 in Guyer 2010

9. The deduction of morality and the extreme boundary of practical philosophy (1785)

- Required: *GMM* III (4:446-63), *KPP*, pp. 94-108

More: Allison 1990, ch. 11, “The reciprocity thesis”, ch. 12, “The deduction in *Groundwork III*”; Korsgaard 1996, ch. 6, “Morality as freedom”

10. Moral skepticism and the idea of a critique of practical reason

Required: Hume, Skeptical doubts & Skeptical solution of these doubts, in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*; *CPrR* Preface & Introduction (5:3-16), KPP, pp. 139-49; *CPrR* “Paradox of method” (5:62-5), KPP, pp. 190-2

Midterm paper due today

11. The fact of reason

Required: *CPrR* On the principles of pure practical reason (5:19-41), *KPP*, pp. 153-73

More: Rawls 2000, “The fact of reason”, pp. 253-71

12. Freedom and morality

Required: *CPrR* On the deduction of the principles (5:42-50), KPP, pp. 173-80; *CPrR* Critical elucidation of the analytic (5:89-106), KPP, pp. 211-25

Recommended: Timmerman “Reversal or retreat?” ch. 4 in Reath & Timmerman 2013

More: Allison 1990, ch. 13, “The fact of reason and the deduction of freedom”; Henrich 1994, ch. 2, “The concept of moral insight”

13. Good and evil and the categories of freedom

Required: *CPrR* On the concept of an object of pure practical reason, KPP, pp. 186-94 (5:57-67); *CPrR* Typic, KPP, pp. 194-8 (5:67-71)

14. The incentives of pure practical reason

Required: *CPrR* On the incentives of pure practical reason, KPP, pp. 198-210 (5:71-89)

More: Reath 2006, ch. 1, “Kant’s theory of moral sensibility”; Engstrom, “The *Triebfeder* of pure practical reason” in Reath & Timmerman 2013

15. The cognition of freedom and the extreme boundary of practical philosophy (1788)

Required: *CPrR* On the warrant of pure reason in its practical use to an extension etc. (5:50-7), *KPP*, pp. 180-6; *CPrR* On the primacy of pure practical reason (5:119-21), *KPP*, pp. 236-8

16. The highest good

Required: *CPrR* Dialectic Chapter 1, Chapter 2 I-II (5:107-19), *KPP*, pp. 226-36; Remark II to Theorem IV, *KPP* (5:25-41), pp. 168-73

More: Wood 1970, chs. 1-3, “Kant’s moral arguments”, “Finite rational vocation”, “The highest good”

17. The practical postulates

Required: *CPrR* Dialectic Chapter 2 II-IX, *KPP*, pp. 236-58 (5:107-19)

More: Wood 1970, ch. 4, “The practical postulates”

18. Personhood and virtue

Required: *CPR* General remark concerning the transition (B428-32); *CPrR* Fundamental law of pure practical reason (5:30-33), *KPP*, pp. 164-6; *Religion* Concerning the original predisposition to good (6:26-8), pp. 50-52

More: Allison 1990, ch. 9, “Virtue and holiness”; Tulipana, “Kant on personal identity and moral obligation”

19. Our moral vocation

Required: *Religion*, Of the radical evil in human nature (6:29-52)

More: Wood 1999, ch. 9, “The historical vocation of morality”; Wood 1970, ch. 6, “Radical evil and divine grace”, pp. 208-31