

Department of Philosophy
Major Philosophers
PHIL 460; 2018

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Topic for 2018: Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is a complex work in which Kant sets out to answer a number of different questions, among them: how is metaphysics possible as science, and more generally, how are synthetic a priori judgements possible? In this course, we will focus on these questions, the relations between them, and how Kant sets out to answer them. Particular emphasis will be placed on Kant's reflections on the proper *method* for metaphysics, and on the method of the *Critique* itself.

We will begin by briefly considering the state of 18th century metaphysics and Kant's changing attitudes towards it in his pre-Critical work. We'll then briefly consider a challenge to metaphysics from a different direction, that is, Hume's analysis of the connection of cause and effect. Kant famously said that it was his recollection of Hume that first interrupted his "dogmatic slumber", and that Hume's attack on the idea of necessary connection implied that "there is not, and cannot be any such thing as metaphysics at all". Not only does Hume's analysis seem to undermine the possibility of metaphysics as a science, but it also has implications for the possibility of a science of nature. In this connection, we will read sections of Hume's *Enquiry concerning human understanding*.

Although we will not read the entire *Critique*, we will attempt to cover those significant portions of it most directly related to the questions above.

Texts: Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is available at The Word bookstore on Milton Street. Other readings will be made available on MyCourses.

Requirements: The requirements for this course are one short (5-page) paper worth 40%, and a longer (10-page) final paper worth 60%. There will be a mandatory peer-review component to each paper, though it will not count towards your mark. Late assignments without a medical note will be penalised half a letter grade per day.

Tentative due dates:

The first draft of the first paper will be due on February 17th; reviews will be due on February 24th; final drafts will be due on March 2nd.

The final paper will be due on April 16th.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).