

PHIL 309 (A01): Kant

CRN# 12753; 1.5 credit units

MTh 11:30-12:50, CLE C109

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Land

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, one of the central texts in the history of Western philosophy. Its guiding theme is Kant's attempt to vindicate the idea that metaphysics provides us with a special kind of non-empirical knowledge. Kant is convinced that (i) any genuinely philosophical knowledge is metaphysical knowledge; (ii) the very possibility of such knowledge is called into doubt by prevalent conceptions of the human mind (such as those of Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, and Hume); and (iii) assuaging this doubt (and thus vindicating metaphysical knowledge) requires a careful analysis of human cognitive capacities. In this course we study the account of our cognitive capacities that Kant proposes and ask whether he succeeds in vindicating metaphysical knowledge. In particular, we consider Kant's claim that the two most basic capacities, sense-perception and conceptual thought, are distinct in nature and yet are required to cooperate in a particular way if there is to be any knowledge at all. In considering this claim we will discuss the following topics: spatial representation; concepts; the relation between empirical knowledge and a priori knowledge; self-consciousness; causality; idealism; and free will. The focus will be on a close study of Kant's text.

Prerequisites

4.5 units of PHIL courses or permission of the Philosophy Department. PHIL 306 or PHIL 308 are strongly recommended prior to PHIL 309, but not a formal prerequisite.

Intended Learning Outcomes

This course has five main objectives. By successfully completing this course you will

- (i) acquire knowledge of Kant's views in metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mind;
- (ii) come to understand some of the considerations motivating these views as well as some of the philosophical problems they face;
- (iii) increase your competence at interpreting historical texts (in particular, texts from the history of philosophy);
- (iv) learn how to follow a single sustained, but very intricate, argument;
- (v) hone key transferable analytical skills. These include reading and analyzing difficult theoretical texts; constructing and assessing arguments; articulating and communicating complex ideas; and composing philosophical essays. Since the ideas covered in this course are hard to understand, I place special emphasis on the clear articulation and communication of complex ideas.

Course Website

This course has an associated website on UVic's *Brightspace* tool. This will be used for assignments, communication, and to make available additional materials. To access your customized *Brightspace* page, sign in to UVic and click on *Online Tools*. You should see *Brightspace* as an option. If you are unable to access *Brightspace*, please contact me.

Texts

There are two required books. The first is available in print at the UVic Bookstore, and the printed version is required:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, 2nd edition, New York: Cambridge UP, 2025

The second required book is available in electronic form through the UVic Library:

James O'Shea, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction and Interpretation*, Durham: Acumen, 2012

Link: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/lib/uvic/detail.action?docID=2036416&query=James+O'Shea%2C+Kant's+Critique+of+Pure+Reason%3A+An+Introduction+and+Interpretation%2C+>

Additional readings are available on *Brightspace*.

Several different translations of the *Critique of Pure Reason* are available in English. None is perfect; each has advantages and disadvantages. The Guyer/Wood translation is our official text in this class. But it is sometimes helpful to consult other translations as well (and of course the German original, if you can). I recommend, in particular, the following two (both are widely available):

- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Norman Kemp Smith, revised second ed., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 (first edition published in 1923)
- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Werner Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996

The German text of the *Critique* (along with the rest of Kant's corpus) is available online at <http://korpora.org/Kant/verzeichnisse-gesamt.html>

Course Format

A mix of lecture and discussion, with some group work components. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material in detail. So you need to read the material carefully and take good notes. Kant is hard, and the readings often dense. You need to read slowly and note points that are unclear, seem implausible etc. To help with this, I will post weekly reading questions. These are meant to focus and guide your reading.

Evaluation

a. Requirements

There are four types of requirements in this course, which are as follows:

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Weight</i>
4 quizzes (out of 6 offered)	Sep 21, Oct 1 Oct 19, Nov 2, Nov 19, Dec 3	4% each
Test #1	Oct 8, in-class	22%
Test #2	Nov 12, in-class	22%
Either: Final Exam	3 hours; exam period	40%
Or: Final Paper	Dec 18	40%

Quizzes

Short quizzes testing your reading and mastery of Kant's terminology. You are required to complete a minimum of four quizzes, but a total of six will be offered. If you complete more than four, only your four highest grades will count. There is no make-up option for a missed quiz. If you have to miss class repeatedly and are therefore unable to complete at least four quizzes, please contact me so we can make alternate arrangements.

Tests

Two in-class written tests consisting of essay questions and focused on exposition of material covered in the preceding weeks. The function of these is for you to practice explaining Kant's complex and difficult ideas clearly. Limited open-book policy: you are free to use the primary text (i.e. the *Critique*).

Final Exam/Final Paper

For this assignment you can choose between two options:

Final Exam: A three-hour written exam consisting of essay questions that cover the entire course content. A mix of exposition of Kant's views and critical assessment of these. Limited open-book. The function of the exam is to test your knowledge of the course material, your skill at explaining Kant's complex and difficult ideas clearly as well as your ability to engage with these ideas philosophically.

Final Paper: A five-page paper (max. 1500 words) on a topic of your choice. To take this option, you must discuss your paper topic with me, in person, no later than December 4th. Without an approved topic, you are not permitted to take the Final Paper option (i.e. you would not get credit for submitting a paper).

b. Late Policy

Unless you qualify for an [academic concession](#) due to unexpected and unavoidable circumstances or conflicting responsibilities, I will not change the due date of assignments nor will I reschedule tests or exams for you. I will accept, without grade penalty, final papers that are submitted up to three days after the due date. However, papers that are submitted in this period will not receive detailed comments. After this grace period unexcused papers will not be accepted.

c. N Grades

If you complete four quizzes, the two tests and the final exam/paper, you will be considered to have completed the course. Failure to complete any one of these requirements will result in a grade of "N" regardless of the cumulative percentage on other elements of the course. N is a failing grade and factors into GPA as a value of 0. In accordance with the University's policy on academic concessions, students who complete all course requirements are not eligible for academic concessions. Consequently, students can request deferrals only for the completion of required course components, not for non-required ones.

Academic Concessions

UVic recognizes its responsibility to offer academic concessions to students whose ability to complete course requirements is interrupted by 1) unexpected and unavoidable circumstances or 2) conflicting responsibilities. In general, academic concessions take two forms:

1. during the term when all course requirements can be completed by the student before the instructor must submit the final grades (these are often informally called "extensions"); and
2. after the term has ended or when course requirements cannot be completed before final grades are submitted (including deferrals, extended deferrals, aegrotats, withdrawals under extenuating circumstances and backdated drops).

For additional details, please see the [regulations](#) and [guidelines](#) on academic concessions.

If you foresee or experience circumstances that prevent you from completing course requirements, please be proactive and contact me right away. The sooner you do, the easier it typically is to address the situation.

Course Schedule (may be adjusted as we go along)

Wk.	Date	Reading
1	Sep 10, 14	Introduction: The project of a critique of pure reason <u>Required:</u> • B-Preface • O'Shea, 11-25

2	Sep 17, 21	Framing the question: synthetic a priori judgments, concepts and intuitions <u>Required:</u> • B-Introduction • O'Shea, 26-49 <u>Recommended:</u> • Lanier Anderson, "The Introduction to the <i>Critique</i>: Framing the Question"
3	Sep 24, 28	Synthetic a priori judgments cont'd.; intuitions and concepts <u>Required:</u> • B-Introduction (re-read) • Add: Transcendental Aesthetic, §1
4	Oct 1, 5	Space and Time <u>Required:</u> • Transcendental Aesthetic, §§2-6 • O'Shea, 78-100 <u>Recommended:</u> • Lisa Shabel, "The Transcendental Aesthetic"
5	Oct 8, 15	<i>Oct 8: Test #1 (in-class)</i> <i>No class on Oct 12 (Thanksgiving)</i> Transcendental Idealism I <u>Required:</u> • Transcendental Aesthetic, §§7 and 8 • O'Shea, 100-115 <u>Recommended:</u> • Henry Allison, <i>Kant's Transcendental Idealism</i>, Chp. 1&2
6	Oct 19, 22	Transcendental Idealism II <u>Required:</u> • Lanier Anderson, "Transcendental Idealism as Formal Idealism" <u>Recommended:</u> • Lucy Allais, excerpt from <i>Manifest Reality</i>
7	Oct 26, 29	Analytic of Concepts: The Metaphysical Deduction <u>Required:</u> • Introduction to the Transcendental Logic (A50/B74-A66/B91)

		• Clue to the Discovery of All Pure Concepts (A66/B91-A83/B109) • On the Principles of a Transcendental Deduction in General, §13 (A84/B116-A92/B124) • O'Shea, 116-132 <u>Recommended:</u> • Béatrice Longuenesse, "Kant on A Priori Concepts: The Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories"
8	Nov 2, 5	Analytic of Concepts: Transcendental Deduction <u>Required:</u> • Transition to the transcendental deduction of the categories (A92/B124-B129) • Transcendental Deduction (B), §§16-23 (B131- B149) and §26 (B159-165) • O'Shea, 132-149, 152-157 <u>Recommended:</u> • Barry Stroud, "Kant's 'Transcendental Deduction'"
9	Nov 12, 16	<i>No class on Nov. 9 (reading break)</i> <i>Nov 12: Test #2 (in-class)</i> Analytic of Principles I: Schematism and Analogies of Experience <u>Required:</u> • On the schematism of the pure concepts (A137/B176-A147/B187) • System of all Principles of the Pure Understanding, section II (A154/B193-A158/B197) • Analogies of Experience: General Principle (A176/B218-A181/B224), Second Analogy A189/B232-A211/B256) • O'Shea, 158-164, 173-176, 186-196 <u>Recommended:</u> • Jay Rosenberg, "Simultaneity and Succession"
10	Nov 19, 23	Analytic of Principles II: Analogies of Experience cont'd and Postulates of Empirical Thinking <u>Required:</u> • Third Analogy (A211/B256-A218/B265) • Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General (A218/B265-B294) • O'Shea, 196-204
11	Nov 26, 30	Transcendental Dialectic: First, Second, and Third Antinomy – Conflict <u>Required:</u> • A293/B349-A309/B366, A321/B377-A332/B389, A405/B432-A451/B479 • O'Shea, 50-62

12	Dec 3, 7	<i>Dec 4: Deadline for discussing your Final Paper topic with instructor</i> Transcendental Dialectic: First, Second, and Third Antinomy – Resolution <u>Required:</u> • A490/B518-A558/B586 • O’Shea, 62-77 <u>Recommended:</u> • Markus Kohl, “Kant on Idealism, Freedom, and Standpoints”
Final Exam during Exam Period; date TBA		

Attendance, Recordings and Lecture Notes

You are expected to attend class and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Handouts and slides I use for lecturing will be made available on the course website. However, I elaborate on these in class, so downloading the handouts is no substitute for attending class.

The use of handouts is for your own learning only. You are not permitted to distribute them to others or make them available on the internet (e.g. by posting them on social media). Doing so constitutes a violation of copyright.

It is crucial to your success in this course that you take good lecture notes. Research shows that taking good notes helps your learning. By taking your own notes (and this does *not* mean copying the lecture word for word) you process the material more thoroughly than you otherwise would and you make later reviewing easier for yourself. One good way of taking notes is to annotate handouts or slides.

If you miss class, please ask another student to share their notes with you and/or ask them what happened in class. Often this is a good way not just to get caught up, but also to discuss the material with another student, which is a great learning strategy.

I will not normally record classes. But I may do so in cases where this is a suitable means for enabling student access.

Office Hours

I hold regular office hours. I encourage you to make use of these. No sign-up needed; just drop in. I especially encourage you to come to office hours if there is something you don’t understand or if you are struggling in the course. The sooner you do, the better I will likely be able to help you. The default mode for office hours is in-person, but I would be happy to meet on Zoom. If you prefer Zoom, please email me, so I can set up a meeting.

Announcements and Email

I will regularly communicate course-related information to you using the ‘Announcements’ function in *Brightspace*. Please ensure that you read these announcements. You can configure your *Brightspace* page so that you get notified (by email or text) when a new announcement is posted. Occasionally, I will also email you. Emails will be sent to the address listed in UVic’s system as your contact information. It is your responsibility to make sure that this information is current and to check this email address at least once a day. If you contact me via email, I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner, which generally will be within 48 hours (longer on weekends). To make sure your email does not end up in my spam folder, I encourage you to put the course number in the subject line (i.e. PHIL 309) and use your UVic email address. If you have a question about assignments, due dates, or other course policies, the syllabus should be your first resource. *I will not respond to any emails that ask questions which are answered in the syllabus.* Your second resource should be the discussion board, which is accessible through the course website. You are encouraged to use this feature to discuss questions about course mechanics as well as course content.

Student Conduct

The University of Victoria is committed to providing a respectful and productive learning environment. All members of our community, including students, have both the right to experience and the responsibility to help create such an environment. For details on the rights and responsibilities this involves please read through the applicable [university policies](#) as well as the Student Code of Conduct available for download [here](#). This document also contains links to applicable university policies. It is part of your responsibility as a student in this course to know your responsibilities as outlined in the code of conduct (which covers, among other things, attendance and classroom behavior, online conduct in university learning systems, and academic integrity).

The use of cell phones in the classroom is not permitted (except in emergencies). The use of laptops and other electronic devices is permitted exclusively for course-related activities such as taking lecture notes. This means that in almost all cases activities like emailing, browsing, or using social media are not permitted. I expect you to be mindful of the fact that using an electronic device can be distracting to other students. If you use a device, it is your responsibility to take steps to minimize potential distraction (for instance, by sitting in a location that lowers this potential).

Intellectual property of materials on D2L Brightspace

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the course's *Brightspace* site or distributed in class are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the [Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Academic Integrity (Plagiarism etc.)

Violations of academic integrity, such as plagiarism, cheating on exams etc., constitute breaches of university policy and carry serious penalties (e.g. failing the class, being put on disciplinary probation). Note that it is *your responsibility* to be aware of what constitutes plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, and that *ignorance of this is not an acceptable excuse*. For information, please consult [UVic's Policy on Academic Integrity](#) or contact me. To learn more about academic integrity, I encourage you to self-enrol in the [Integrity Matters](#) course in Brightspace. Search for this course under the [Discover](#) tab on your Brightspace homepage.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Online Resources

In my judgment, most uses of Generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Claude) do not promote the intended learning outcomes of this course. For this reason, the use of such tools is not permitted. This course covers very complex philosophical material. There are lots of summaries and expositions of Kant's ideas available online, and AI will base its answers on these. However, these materials are of variable quality and many are misleading or outright wrong. For this reason, I discourage the use not only of AI tools but also of other online resources such as YouTube videos. The required companion book and lectures slides/handouts provide sufficient resources for helping you master Kant's text. Instead of looking online, use these and talk to other students in the course - they are a truly excellent resource for learning!

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you require academic accommodations you need to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal>). Please do so as early as possible. You can find information about academic accommodations through the Centre for Accessible Learning's website (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/programs/academic/index.php>). If you wish to use an academic accommodation to make audio recordings of classes, please inform me of this.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Important Dates (<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>)

- Tue, Sep 22: last day for 100% reduction of fees
- Fri, Sep 25: last day to for adding first-term courses
- Tue, Sep 30: University closed for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Tue, Oct 13: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- Sat, Oct 31: last day for withdrawing from first term courses without penalty of failure

Grading Scheme

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior , shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85-89	A	8	
80-84	A-	7	
77-79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73-76	B	5	
70-72	B-	4	
65-69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities
60-64	C	2	
50-59	D	1	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
0-49	F	0	F is earned by work which, after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is at the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor in a respectful, open-minded manner. If you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores and will follow the UVic policy on [Evaluation of Student Achievement](#). Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

Final grades are not official until they have been approved by the Department Chair or their designate.

Student Wellness

Your mental health is as important as your physical health. During the semester, you might feel overwhelmed, lonely, or stressed about your academic performance. You might experience a personal or family tragedy. The University provides free counselling services, and I encourage you to make use of these in this type of situation. (See [Student Wellness](#) for more information).

Student Resources

The following university resources are available to support you. I encourage you to use them as needed:

- [UVic Learn](#). This is UVic's primary learning resource for students. It offers many workshops and resources to help with academics and learning strategies.
- [Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement \(IACE\)](#)
- [Student groups and resources](#)

Student Experience of Learning Survey (SEL)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (SEL). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the Philosophy Department improve the overall program for students in the future. When the survey is available, you will receive an email with a link. If you do not receive an email invitation, you can go directly to your [SEL dashboard](#). You will need to use your UVic NetLink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet or mobile device. Please think of this important activity as a part of the course.