18TH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY: HUME AND KANT

WINTER 2002

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

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Offices Hours:

1) Mon. 11:30 - 1:30.
2) Tues. 11:30 - 12:30.
3) By Appointment.

COURSE GOALS:

As the subtitle indicates, this course is devoted to two of the most famous 18th-century philosophers: Hume and Kant. Hume is arguably the most sophisticated proponent of the English empiricist tradition he inherits and reinterprets from Shaftesbury, Locke, and Berkeley. We will study Hume as the arch skeptic of the rationalist tradition of modern philosophy (1600-1800). Rationalists modeled philosophy upon mathematical knowledge, which was, according to them, grounded in reason alone. Against the very idea of apriori knowledge — that is, knowledge from reason alone “before” any sensory experience — Hume launched a devastating skeptical attack. In its stead, Hume proposed to study humans just as Sir Isaac Newton had proposed to study nature: namely, through observation and experimentation. We will study Hume, then, as a distinctively modern thinker committed to the idea that humans are natural beings that should be studied by the “experimental method.” A central goal of the course is to examine Hume’s contribution to contemporary scientific or “naturalistic” approaches in the study of human life. Another goal of the course is to examine Kant’s remarkable inheritance and critical redeployment of both rationalist and empiricist traditions. Like Hume, Kant has both a negative program of criticizing the traditions he inherits and a positive program of placing the study of humans and nature on a secure footing. Accordingly, we will study Kant as a critic of “metaphysics” in all of its forms, whether rationalist, empiricist, or classical. More specifically, we will study Kant’s famous first “critiques” as an orchestrated, positive response to Hume’s skepticism regarding mathematical and causal knowledge as well as human freedom. We will examine Kant’s contribution, then, to contemporary criticism of “naturalistic” approaches to the study of knowledge and morality. Although we will discuss
Hume’s and Kant’s moral theories and, indeed, their systematic approach to philosophy as such, we will focus in this course upon their epistemological theories.

**EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, quizzes, a midterm paper and a final paper.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation: Seminar presentations, classroom discussion and email</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>correspondence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>1 @ 20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>8 @ 2.5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper (10-15 pages)</td>
<td>1 @ 25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**POLICIES:**

Open, respectful and critical discussion is crucial to the success of this seminar. Quizzes offer students and teacher the opportunity to identify and to clarify central terms/concepts. The midterm examinations test comprehension of key philosophical issues, and the final paper offers students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. The final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

**TEXTS:**


**RECOMMENDED SECONDARY READINGS:**


**GERMAN ACROSS THE CURRICULUM COMPONENT:** Selected passages from Kant’s Kritik der reinen Vernunft may be read in the German original. GAC students will be given alternative assignments and weekly tutorials.

**BRIDGE READING COMPONENT:** Students interested in linking course material to their
major course of study will be given special readings and assignments. Tutorial meetings are required, and the final paper must be completed in consultation with professor in home department.

Psychology: Students interested in exploring the philosophical foundations of learning theory and developmental psychology will be given readings that link course material to these prominent research traditions in psychology. See Psychology Bridge-Readings (Philosophy Homepage).

READING SCHEDULE

1. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION: THE KANTIAN LEGACY
TUESDAY: WEEK ONE

1. Introductory Lecture: “Rationalism, Empiricism, and Idealism.”

2. THE THEORY OF IDEAS:
THURSDAY:

1. Introduction.
3. Quiz #1.

3. HUME’S CONCEPTION OF SPACE AND TIME:
TUESDAY: WEEK TWO

1. Quiz #1.
2. Part 2: “Of the Ideas of Space and Time” (26-66.)

THURSDAY:

1. Part 2: “Of the Ideas of Space and Time” (26-66.)
2. Quiz #2.

4. HUME’S CONCEPTION OF CAUSALITY AND KNOWLEDGE:
TUESDAY: WEEK THREE


THURSDAY:

2. Quiz #3.

5. HUME’S SKEPTICAL CHALLENGE:
TUESDAY: WEEK FOUR


THURSDAY:

2. Quiz #4.
3. Paper Due.

6. KANT’S A WAKENING FROM DOGMATIC SLUMBER:

TUESDAY: WEEK FIVE


THURSDAY:

1. Introduction (41-65).

7. KANT’S TRANSCENDENTAL AESTHETIC: THE SENSORY FORMS OF EXPERIENCE:

TUESDAY: WEEK SIX


THURSDAY:

2. Quiz #5

8. KANT’S TRANSCENDENTAL ANALYTIC: THE INTELLECTUAL FORMS OF EXPERIENCE:

TUESDAY: WEEK SEVEN


THURSDAY:
1. “Transcendental Logic” (Continued).
2. “The Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding” (Continued).

**8. THE TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION:**

**TUESDAY:**


**THURSDAY:**

2. Quiz # 7.

**TUESDAY:**


**THURSDAY:** (Make-up class: Thanksgiving)

2. Quiz # 8.

**8. THE REFUTATION OF IDEALISM:**

**TUESDAY:**

1. “Refutation of Idealism” (244-252).

**THURSDAY:**

1. Closing Comments.
2. Student Evaluations.

**FINALS WEEK**