6AANB021 – Kant’s Moral Philosophy 2014/15

BA Syllabus

Lecturer: John J. Callanan
Email: john.callanan@kcl.ac.uk
Lecture Time: TBA, Tuesday, Semester 2
Lecture Location: TBA
Office Hours: TBA (no appointment necessary, term time only)
Office Location: Room 710, Philosophy Building, Strand Campus
Web: http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/philosophy/people/staff/academic/callanan/index.aspx

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the moral and aesthetic philosophy of Immanuel Kant. This year the course will focus entirely on Kant’s moral philosophy and will involve a reading of a seminal text in the history of moral philosophy, Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* Through a reading of these texts, students will gain a critical understanding of the nature of a Kantian approach to the topics of morality and freedom.

Evaluation

- Formative assessment: 2 x 1500 word essays (Essay 1 due by 12 noon on 20th February, Essay 2 due by 12 noon on 27th March)
- Summative assessment: 2 x 2500 word essays, (both due by 12 noon 15th May).

Policy regarding late work

- Assignments are due in class on the day specified on the syllabus. I will not accept late assignments past the due date.

Notes

- There are two meetings per week: one lecture and one seminar. Lectures are shared with upper-level undergraduates, to whom different regulations will apply; seminars are exclusive to MA students (though other graduate students may be permitted to audit the seminars upon request). Seminars will follow immediately after the lecture.
- Note that the seminar is usually, but not always, a back-up class for the lecture that week; some weeks two different topics will be covered. Therefore, plan your reading ahead of time for each class. On occasion the primary reading will be the same for both meetings but the recommended secondary readings differ.
- This module may be, but need not be, taken in conjunction with 7AAN2039 Kant’s Epistemology and Metaphysics.
- The lecture schedule and reading list are subject to change.
- Individual lecture handouts will be available through my departmental webpage (at the address above, under ‘teaching’). Students are expected to bring both the syllabus and the week’s handout to every lecture, including Week 1.
- Here are some sample essay titles (students may write on any Kant-related topic, though they must confirm their titles with their GTA):
  1. Is a Good Will the source of moral worth? Are Kant’s arguments for this claim convincing?
  2. Do I have a duty to help those in need? Defend your answer with reference to ONE of the formulations of the Categorical Imperative.
3. What are Kant's reasons for conceiving of humanity as an end in itself? Are they compelling?
4. Is there a defensible sense in which the moral law is self-legislated?
5. What is Kant's account of the relation between freedom and morality in the Groundwork? Is it plausible?
6. 'Transcendental idealism is an essential commitment if one wishes to defend his moral theory'. Discuss and evaluate this claim.
7. Is Kant's account of the role of Happiness in moral theory convincing?
8. A critical examination of either (a) the interpretation of Kant as a metaethical constructivist or (b) the philosophical tenability of Kantian constructivism.

Prerequisites
- There are no prerequisites for this course.

Plagiarism Policy
- We're against it. What constitutes plagiarism? See here: http://www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/humanities/depts/philosophy/current/plagiarism.html

Set Text

Students must obtain a copy of the primary reading required for every lecture and seminar. Some versions include:


Primary Reading
- Students are expected to read all the primary material assigned for each meeting.

Secondary Reading
- I list an awful lot of secondary sources below for each lecture and seminar. Don’t try to read all, or even most of it. The list is there is to give students an idea of a range of approaches, and for those who want to look at certain topics in more depth, or for the purposes of their essays. Students are not required to do so, but
I’d expect you to have familiarised yourself with at least one of the secondary readings listed in preparation for each class (e.g. the relevant section of one of the general introductions listed below). The best places to start are with the Cambridge Companions and the introductory works by Buroker and Gardner (see below).

- Note that among the secondary readings for each meeting, there will always be readings available online on either of KCL’s subscriptions to three different Eresources – Oxford Scholarship Online (OSO), EBook Library (EBL), and Cambridge Companions Online (CCON) Access through your king’s email account – search for the resources under the ‘Databases’ link. There are physical copies available of all the books listed below in the Maughan Library (even those that are also available online).
- All the other secondary materials listed are either (a) books available in the Maughan Library at KCL or at the Senate House Library, or (b) articles available online through your KCL username or through Senate House Library E-Collections. It is the student’s responsibility to acquire access to Senate House Library in time for the beginning of the course.
- The only internet resource I occasionally note here is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (http://plato.stanford.edu/). However, it is not an adequate substitute for reading the secondary readings listed. So please use it sparingly. Note also that they have their own very clear citation policy – stick to it if you are using it for written work. Use no other internet sources.

**Provisional Lecture Schedule**

**Lecture One – Kant’s History of Ethics**

**Lecture Two – The Science of the Laws of Freedom**

**Lecture Three – A Good Will**

**Lecture Four – Rationality and Morality**

**Lecture Five – Categorical Imperatives**

**Reading Week**

**Lecture Six – Kant’s Examples**

**Lecture Seven – The Humanity Formulation**

**Lecture Eight – Autonomy and Self-Legislation**

**Lecture Nine – Morality and Freedom**

**Lecture Ten – Kantian Ethics and its Critics**
Some General Introductions to Kant's Thought


Some Collections

Krueger, James & Lipscomb, Benjamin (eds.). *Kant’s Moral Metaphysics*. Berlin: de Gruyter. (EBL)

Some Advanced Works
