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Office Hours: Thurs. 2-3

Kantian Ethics (PHIL428K)
Syllabus, Fall 2012
TuTh; 12:30pm-1:45; Skinner 1115

In this course we will explore Kant's ethics through a careful reading of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Questions to be raised in the course include: Does Kant have a plausible view of moral worth? Is the theory of agency on which he builds his ethics acceptable? Are any versions of the categorical imperative plausible candidates for the supreme principle of morality?

Texts:

All references to Kant on the syllabus are to the *Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften* edition of his works. [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter (and predecessors), 1902]. Our English edition is: *Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Gregor and Timmermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). This English edition incorporates academy edition page numbering in its margins. We will be focusing on the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, which we will abbreviate as *GMS*.

You are required to bring your book to every class.

Requirements:

Ten short (1-2 page papers) anchored to particular readings.	Due in class	40% of grade
Final paper	Due Dec. 11	40% of grade
In-Class Participation	Attendance is crucial	20% of grade

Academic integrity:

The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination." The Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front of your papers. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor. The Code of Academic Integrity identifies four types of academic dishonesty: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes dishonesty of these four types. Please consult the Code of Academic Integrity <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii100a.html> or speak with the instructor if you would like any further clarification (e.g., on what constitutes plagiarism). Incidents of academic dishonesty will be taken very seriously. Any cases of it will be forwarded to the office of judicial programs.

Policy on Electronic Devices

During class you may not use any phone, computer, or other electronic device, unless you have a documented disability that requires the use of such a device or the device is used exclusively as an e-reader.

Short Papers

In these ten 1-2 page (typed, double-spaced, 12pt font) papers, you should offer an interpretation or, perhaps, critique of a concept, claim, or argument that Kant discusses in our reading for a particular day. You must have these papers ready to turn in before class begins on the day we discuss the reading you focus on.

At least 1 of your short papers must be on a reading assigned for Nov. 20-Dec. 6.

20 total points on the papers will represent a perfect grade. Individual papers will receive: 0 points (unacceptable), 1 point (acceptable), 2 points (good), or 3 points (outstanding). (In theory it is possible to get 10 extra-credit points on the papers. This will be the only possibility for extra credit in the course.)

Except in extreme circumstances (e.g., extended illness), no late papers will be accepted. It's largely up to you to determine when to turn in a short paper. Needless to say, it would probably not be prudent to put all of your papers off until the end of the semester.

Long Paper

You must write a paper that attempts to understand and/or criticize a philosophical claim or argument Kant makes in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. If your paper is interpretative—your main aim is to figure out what Kant is claiming or arguing—then you must critically consider alternatives to the interpretation you favor. If your paper criticizes a philosophical claim Kant makes, then you must offer evidence that he makes this claim, explain what the claim amounts to, and consider at least one response to your criticism that it is plausible to think Kant might make. Your paper must be 7-10 pages in 12-point, double-spaced type.

You must clear your topic with me via an office visit or email on or before Nov. 8.

Initial Version

An initial version of your paper (a printed copy) is due on Nov. 15. On that day, it will be evaluated by one of your peers. This version of your paper must be complete and properly proofread. It must *not* be a rough draft. (If you do not have your paper in class on Nov. 15, you will be penalized 1 full grade on your final paper. Only a university-approved excuse will free you from this penalty.)

Second Version

A second version of your paper, revised in light of peer review comments, is due on Nov. 20. Please email this version of your paper to me as a Word file (.doc or .docx) with your name in the file name. Please put "Kant paper" in the email's subject line. I will make comments on this paper and send it back to you, along with a provisional grade. (If you do not email your paper to me by Nov. 20, you will be

penalized 1 full grade on your final paper for every day which the paper is late. Only a university-approved excuse will free you from this penalty.)

Final Version

A final, hard copy, version of your paper is due on Dec. 11. (If you do not turn in your paper on Dec. 11, you will be penalized 1 full grade for every day the paper is late. Only a university-approved excuse will free you from this penalty.)

Grading:

Your final grade will depend on the percentage you earn of the total points possible in the class: A+: 98-100; A: 94-97; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-79; C: 74-76; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-69; D: 64-66; D-: 60-63. Failure to complete an assignment will result in your receiving no points (a zero) for that assignment.

Policy on Medically Necessitated Absence from Class

I will accept as an excused absence a self-signed note from a student who has missed a single class session, attesting to the date of an injury/illness. The note must contain an acknowledgement by the student that the information is true and correct and that providing false information is prohibited under Code of Student Conduct. A student is obligated to make a reasonable attempt to inform me in advance of his/her injury/illness.

A student who experiences a prolonged absence, namely, either three or more class sessions consecutively, four or more sessions non-consecutively, or an injury/illness preventing attendance at a Major Scheduled Grading Event is required to provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or an outside health care provider, verifying the dates of treatment and the time period during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Turning in the initial version of the long paper, as well as participating in peer review will count as a Major Scheduled Grading Event, as will turning in the second, and final versions of the long paper.

Religious Observances:

You will not be penalized for any absence that results from religious observance. However, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor in advance of any intended absences for religious observance.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities should inform the instructor of their needs as soon as possible so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Schedule:

(Readings might be altered as the course progresses. If there are any changes, they will be announced.)

Date:	Theme:	Reading:
30 Aug.	Introduction	
4 Sept.	Introduction: Structure and Aims of GMS	Preface (GMS 387-392)

6 Sept.	Introduction: GMS I	GMS 393-405
11 Sept.	Introduction: Kant's Theory of Agency	GMS 406-421
13 Sept.	Preface	GMS 387-392
GMS I		
18 Sept.	good will	GMS 393-394
20 Sept.: No Class		
27 Sept.	reason and happiness	GMS 395-396
2 Oct.	duty and moral worth	GMS 397-399
4 Oct.	duty and respect for law	GMS 400-401
9 Oct.	arriving at the moral law	GMS 402-405
GMS II		
11 Oct.	duty and the a priori	GMS 406-412
16 Oct.	the will and imperatives	GMS 412-416
18 Oct.	the will and imperatives (more)	GMS 417-419
23 Oct.	arriving at the categorical imperative	GMS 420-421
25 Oct.	applying the categorical imperative: suicide, false promising	GMS 421-424
30 Oct.	applying the categorical imperative: perfecting oneself, beneficence	GMS 421-424
1 Nov.	applying the categorical imperative and its apriority	GMS 421-427
6 Nov.	arriving at the formula of humanity	GMS 427-429
8 Nov. Final date to have paper topic approved	applying the formula of humanity	GMS 429-430
13 Nov.	kingdom of ends	GMS 431-435
15 Nov. Version 1 of long paper due	peer review of long paper	
20 Nov. Version 2 of long paper due	crystallizing the argument thus far	GMS 436-439
Thanksgiving Break		
27 Nov.	autonomy and heteronomy	GMS 440-445
GMS III		
29 Nov.	freedom and autonomy	GMS 446-448
4 Dec.	freedom and autonomy (more)	GMS 449-453
6 Dec.	how a categorical imperative is possible and the frontier of moral inquiry	GMS 453-463
11 Dec. Final version of long paper due	conclusion	