PHI 3140
Kant’s Ethical Theory
Winter 2011
Wednesday: 13:15 – 16:15

Professor: Mahmoud Masaeli
Office: 235, Gigues Hall
Phone: (613) 236-1393, ext. 3439
E-mail: mmasaeli@uatpaul.ca
Office hours: Thursdays 13:30-17:30

Course Objective:

This course covers some of the major arguments of Kant’s ethical theory, based primarily on the *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals*. However, since his theory should be understood in relation to a wide range of philosophical issues especially those of metaphysics and politics, the scope of discussion goes beyond the *Groundwork* and covers the issues in *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Metaphysics of Morals*. The course is divided into three parts: Kant’s ethical theory within his architectonic philosophy, Kant’s ethical theory, and Kant’s political ethics. The topics to be covered include: the place of Kant’s ethical theory in his architectonic philosophy; Kant’s analysis of obligation; maxims and imperatives; the formula of universal law; Kant’s moral psychology; the formula of humanity; Kant’s theory of value; the highest good, God and immortality, and what is the Enlightenment, and Kant’s theory of perpetual peace.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course, students will:

- Have an understanding of the intellectual situation within which Kant developed his ethical account,
- Be acquainted with Kant’s ethical theory fit into his architectonic philosophy,
- Be familiar with the key ethical assumptions concerning the moral function of reason on Kant’s ethical theory,
- Have been required to examine the grounding of Kant’s ethical theory in both the academic literature and the major contemporary moral practice,
- Be familiar with influence of Kant on contemporary ethical theorists.
Course Evaluation:

1. Class attendance and participation (20%): You are expected to attend all classes, to have prepared the readings prior to class, and to participate actively in the class discussion. You earn class participation marks through thoughtful contributions to the discussions and attendance.

2. Presentation (30%): You are required to give a critical analysis of the topic that you choose for your presentation and provide at least three thought-provoking questions for the entire class for further discussion. Please forward the outline of your presentation and the questions through e-mail to all participants and the instructor at least forty eight hours before the time of presentation. The questions must show evidence of intellectual effort. Presentation’s length would be of maximum 30 minutes followed by 30 minutes of discussions and questions.

3. Term paper (50%): The research paper, approximately around 15 pages in length. The topic must be related to the course. In writing your paper you should follow one of the standard styles of writing (it is suggested to follow Chicago Manual of Style). It needs to a bibliography of at least six sources. Bonus points will be given for using and citing primary sources.

Late paper policy:  
Papers should be handed in by the due date. For the late papers you need proven medical certificates. Late assignments will be deducted one letter-grade category per day i.e. a B+ paper received two days late will be downgraded to B-.

Required Texts:


3. Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*

4. More texts will be provided depending on the discussing themes. I will email you the scanned text. A hardcopy of the text will also be available on reserve in the library.

Recommended Works:

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Vasilis politis ed. (London, J. M. Dent, 2002). We read introduction, pp. xxviii; pp. 3-28; and more selections,
5. Thomas Vernor Smith, *From Descartes to Kant; Readings in the Philosophy of the Renaissance and Enlightenment*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1940),

**Course Schedule:**

**Part One: Kant’s Philosophical Sketch**

**Week 1**

I) Introduction

II) Kant and the Project of Enlightenment

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

- Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Chapter one: An Introduction to the Ethical, Political, and religious Thought of Kant, pp. 3-42;
- Thomas Vernor Smith, *From Descartes to Kant; Readings in the Philosophy of the Renaissance and Enlightenment*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1940), B790.S55

**Week 2**

**Reviewing the First Critique**

Required Reading:

- *Critique of Pure Reason*: introduction, pp. xxviii and 3-28;
Recommended Reading:

- Daniel Sutherland, “The Point of Kant’s Axioms of Intuition,” Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 86, no. 1 (March 2005): pp. 135-159;
- Theodor Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann eds., Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001);

**Week 3**  
The Influence of Plato, Stoic, and Rousseau

**Weeks 4**  
**Argument for Groundwork**
I) The Notion of the Good Will
II) Analysis of Obligation

**Part Two: Kant’s Ethical Theory**

**Weeks 4**  
**Argument for Groundwork**
I) The Notion of the Good Will
II) Analysis of Obligation

Required Reading:

- Hand out will be distributed.

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, vii-xv; preface and first section, 1-18;

Recommended Reading:

- Korsgaard, “Kant’s Analysis of Obligation: The Argument of *Groundwork I*,” pp. 43-76;

**Weeks 5**

The Categorical Imperative and its Formulation

Maxims and Imperatives

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, second section, pp. 19-31
- Introduction to the *Groundwork*, xv-xvii

Recommended Reading:

- Korsgaard, “Creating the Kingdom of Ends,” pp. 188-224; and
- Section III of “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason”

**Week 6**

Humanity as End in itself

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, second section, pp. 32-38;

**Week 7**

Formula of Universal Law

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, Second Section, pp. 19-34;

Recommended Reading:

Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law,” pp. 77-105,
Herman, “Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons”;
Rawls, Kant Lecture II “The Categorical Imperative: The First Formulation”;

**Week 8**

Study week, no class

**Week 9**

Moral Psychology

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, Second Section, pp. 34-36;

Recommended Reading:

- *Critique of Practical Reason*, Chapter III up to the “Critical Elucidation,” 62-75 (5: 71-89)
- Rawls, Kant Lecture IX “The Moral Psychology of the Religion”;

**Weeks 10**

The Formula of Humanity

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, Second Section, pp. 36-51 (4: 428-445)

Recommended Reading:

- *Critique of Practical Reason*, Chapter II, pp. 50-58 (5: 57-68)
- Korsgaard, "Kant's Formula of Humanity," and “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil"
- Rawls, Kant Lecture III “The Categorical Imperative: The Second Formulation”;
- Kant Lecture IV “The Categorical Imperative: The Third Formulation”;

**Week 11  Kant’s Theory of Value**

Required Reading:

*Groundwork*, second section, pp. 40-47;

**Week 12  The Highest Good, God and Immortality**

Required Reading:

- *Groundwork*, third section, pp. 52-59;
- *Critique of Practical Reason*, pp.110-14;

Recommended Reading:

- Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness,” pp. 249-274;

**Part Three: Kant’s Political Ethics**

**Week 13  I. Kant’s Political Ethics**
**II. Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch**
Required Reading:

- Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*

Recommended Reading:

- Metaphysics of Morals, 6:221-33;