

PHI 3486 – Kant’s Political Philosophy

Monsoon 2026, Mondays and Wednesdays 10:10 to 11:40 AC04 LR306

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Office: AC03 316 | **Office Hours:** [By appointment](#)

About This Course: Topic and Goals

This course covers Kant’s political philosophy. We will focus on his main political philosophical work (the *Doctrine of Right*) and on some of his essays. We will also read secondary literature about Kant.

Below are the **goals** for this course:

- Get a broad overview of the main components of Kant’s political philosophy
- Develop your skills at summarizing, questioning, and evaluating philosophical arguments via close examination of the text and via writing and revision of that writing
- Reflect on, refine, and articulate your own views on the various topics we address

Course Content

All course material is available on the course website available through the AMS and at <https://classroom.google.com/c/ODU0ODk1MDYwMDIy>. You are required to bring a hard copy of the reading to class each day. You can print each individual reading, print a spiral-bound copy of the entire course reader at the print shop (approximately ₹510), or purchase a copy of Kant’s *Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press 1999) (approximately ₹5500) and print out copies of the articles.

Assignments

There are 5 kinds of assignments in this class: **reading quizzes**, **500 word papers**, **1,250 word papers**, and **paper consultations**. Late quizzes will not be accepted. There is no penalty for late papers. Your grade also depends in part on **discussion participation**.

Reading Quizzes are to help you focus on the important parts of the reading and to get instant feedback on whether you have understood the reading. There is one quiz per reading. The quiz is due 10:00 AM the day we meet but you should do them much earlier. The lowest 5 reading quiz scores will be dropped.

500 Word Papers are short writing assignments designed to give you practice writing concisely about philosophy and to give you more detailed feedback about how well you are understanding the material.

1,250 Word Papers are medium length writing assignments designed to get you to reflect more deeply on some of the key topics in Kant. Prompts for these papers are available on Google Classroom.

Both sorts of papers are graded as satisfactory or not yet satisfactory. Any not yet satisfactory paper can be rewritten and turned in again up until the end of the course (12 December). You can only submit one paper and one resubmission per week, so if you want to rewrite papers, do not leave all your papers until the end.

Paper Consultations consist of discussing your paper with me. These exist to give you feedback for rewriting your papers, to discourage AI use, to give you practice talking about some topic thoroughly and in detail, and to explore your paper ideas in more detail. They are graded satisfactory or unsatisfactory. You can schedule a paper consultation for any paper you’ve turned in.

Discussion Participation consists of attending class, listening respectfully to me and your classmates, and talking sometimes. You cannot participate without attending, so attendance is part of your participation score. No electronic devices are allowed in class. Accessing electronic devices during class counts as being absent.

Grading

You will earn the highest letter grade for which you meet *all* the requirements. Satisfactory papers can count for multiple categories. I'm pretty sure the requirements below will work fine but they may be adjusted at some point if necessary. Adjustments will only ever raise a grade or leave it the same; they will never lower it.

Requirements for an A: An average score of 75% or better on the reading quizzes. Three or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Three or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Eight or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. Four or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than seven absences.

Requirements for an A-: An average score of 75% or better on the reading quizzes. Three or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Three or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Seven or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. Four or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than eight absences.

Requirements for a B+: An average score of 70% or better on the reading quizzes. Two or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Two or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Six or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. Three or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than nine absences.

Requirements for a B: An average score of 70% or better on the reading quizzes. Two or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Two or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Five or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. Three or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than ten absences.

Requirements for a B-: An average score of 70% or better on the reading quizzes. Two or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Two or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Three or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than eleven absences.

Requirements for a C+: An average score of 65% or better on the reading quizzes. One or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Three or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. One or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than twelve absences.

Requirements for a C: An average score of 65% or better on the reading quizzes. One or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. Two or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. One or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than thirteen absences.

Requirements for a C-: An average score of 65% or better on the reading quizzes. One or more satisfactory 1,250 word papers. One or more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. One or more papers turned in by their suggested due dates. Less than fourteen absences.

Requirements for a D+: An average score of 60% or better on the reading quizzes. One or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Less than fifteen absences.

Requirements for a D: An average score of 60% or better on the reading quizzes. One more satisfactory 500 word papers. Less than sixteen absences.

Requirements for a D-: An average score of 60% or better on the reading quizzes. One more satisfactory papers plus paper consultations. Less than seventeen absences.

Email and Office Hours

If you contact me via email, please include “PHI 3486” in the subject line so I know that the email is about this course. You can contact me to meet in my office in AC03 316 by scheduling office hours via the link on Google Classroom or by emailing me to set up a meeting time.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, contact me ahead of time.

Incompletes

If you have been making good progress in the course up until something calamitous occurs, I will typically grant an Incomplete. If you have not been making good progress in the course up until the point where you ask for an Incomplete, I typically will not grant an Incomplete. The purpose of an Incomplete is to allow you to complete what you have started, not to extend due dates for stuff you haven’t done.

AI Tools (ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc.)

“Sapere aude! Have courage to make use of your own understanding!” – Kant

For your own sake, you should not use AI tools in this course. I assign reading and writing assignments because the process of doing them helps **you** develop the thoughts that this class is designed to help you think. Using ChatGPT, Grammarly, and similar AI tools prevents you from thinking these thoughts and thus wastes your time. It also wastes everyone else’s time, because it isn’t useful for me to comment on AI-written papers, nor are your classmates interested in spending time in a classroom with someone who has not adequately engaged with the text. If you are worried that your grammar or spelling are bad, and that you need to fix them with AI, you should not worry, because writing assignments in this course are not graded on their grammar or spelling. If you are worried that you do not understand the readings and you need AI to help you, you should not worry, because my entire job is to help you understand the readings, and anyways AI cannot help you succeed as much as you can by drawing on other resources. You should also not use AI tools at all because they generate [bullshit](#), because they are terrible for the environment, because they rely on training material unethically used without permission in order to generate profits for AI companies, because their classification schemas have been developed through exploitative labor practices that exacerbate inequalities within and across borders, and for other reasons that are divivable via further exploration of the topic. AI use is grounds for a grade reduction in this course, including a reduction to an F.

Paper Grading

A large chunk of the learning you will do in this course comes from writing the papers. It is easy to get AI to write papers. If you use AI to write the papers you will not learn. There are assignments I could use to encourage learning that are not as vulnerable to AI, like in-class tests. These assignments have drawbacks, like testing memory rather than understanding, penalizing students whose facility with written English is not as sophisticated as is required for excelling on in-class writing assignments, emphasizing surface-level rapid first-draft writing rather than writing which requires lots of thinking and revising, and taking up valuable class time. Because these assignments would make the class worse for students who want to learn, I have not chosen to assign them. This means it is easier to use AI in this course than it otherwise would be, and thus easier to avoid learning. There is not a lot I can do about this. Most of the responsibility falls to you to decide how much you want to learn, and thus how much to avoid using AI. I encourage you not to use it at all. The main disincentive for AI use in this course is a paper-grading scheme according to which papers that seem to me to be AI written

will be rejected and counted as not having been turned in at all. This may generate false positives: papers you write yourself may be labeled as AI-written, especially if your style sounds similar to AI. If this happens, schedule a paper consultation with me and talk about your paper with me. This will show me you wrote it, and then the paper will be treated as having been turned in.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Any time you use **words, phrases, ideas, or anything else** in your writing that you did not think up on your own, you must **cite** your source the best of your ability. Words and phrases not written by you must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that you did not write them yourself. Failure to cite a source is **plagiarism** and it's not okay. You should not need to use (or cite) outside sources for this class, but if you do use them, you must cite them. It is perfectly okay to use points made by your classmates in discussion (or anyone else), *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability*. The one exception is that you do not need to cite me in this class, unless you want to. Plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity may entail sanctions like an F in the course.

Schedule

Each day's reading has an accompanying reading quiz due 10 AM that day. You should aim to complete it earlier than 10 AM, ideally. Lectures for the readings should be watched before the readings, although sometimes the lecture will note that it can be watched after the reading instead.

Readings from Kant include three sets of page numbers: the Cambridge edition, the *Akademie* numbering, and the course reader. Other readings only include page numbers from the course reader. The course reader includes the Cambridge endnotes on pages 169-75.

There will be extra meetings each week for the PhD students. You are welcome to attend any of these, as long as you do the relevant reading for that meeting.

Optional General Background Extra Reading: Arthur Ripstein, *Force and Freedom*

26 August (possible holiday): Kant, "An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?" (13-22/8:35-42/1-8)

28 August: Kant, "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice" Part II (290-304/8:289-307/23-37) (if 26 August was a holiday, this class will be a discussion of 26 August's reading)

29 August (Saturday) (if 26 August was a holiday): No new reading; discussion of 28 August's reading

Week 1 Extra Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* chapters 13, 14, 17,

2 September: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Introduction to the Doctrine of Right 386-97/6:229-2:242/43-54

Week 2 Extra Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* chapters 18, 19 paragraphs 1 and 2 only, 21

9 September: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Part I Chapter I 401-411/6:245-6:257/55-65

11 September: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Part I Chapter II §10 and Sections I and II 411-26/6:258-6:276/65-80

12 September (Saturday): Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals, Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Part I Chapter II Section III up through page 436 (426-36/6:276-6:289/80-90)

Week 3 Extra Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 9

16 September: Rafeeq Hasan, “The provisionality of property rights in Kant’s *Doctrine of Right*” 176-202

18 September: J. P. Messina, “The postulate of private right and Kant’s semi-historical principles of property” 203-22

Week 4 Extra Reading: Alex Ding Zhang, “The Force and the Place of Provisional Property in Kant’s *Doctrine of Right*”

23 September: Hongjian Tan, “What is Provisional Possession?” 223-42

25 September: Lucy Allais, “What Properly Belongs to Me: Kant on Giving to Beggars” 243-60

Week 5 Extra Reading: Rafeeq Hasan, “Freedom and Poverty in the Kantian State”

30 September: Jennifer Uleman, “External Freedom in Kant’s *Rechtslehre*: Political, Metaphysical” 261-84

Week 6 Extra Reading: David James, “Independence and Property in Kant’s *Rechtslehre*”

14 October: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals, Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Part I Chapter III §41 and 42 (450-2/6:305-8/91-3) and Part II pages 455-66/6:311-23/94-105

16 October: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals, Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Part II pages 466-478/6:323-337/105-17

Week 7 Extra Reading: Japa Pallikkathayil, “Kant on the State”

21 October: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals, Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Part II pages 478-492/6:337-355/117-131

23 October: Kant, “On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice” Part III 304-9/8:307-313/37-42

Week 8 Extra Reading: S. M. Love, “Communal Ownership and Kant’s Theory of Right”

28 October: Luke Davies, “Kant on Civil Self-Sufficiency” 285-307

30 October: Nicholas Vrousalis, “Interdependent Independence: Civil Self-Sufficiency and Productive Community in Kant’s Theory of Citizenship” 308-325

Week 9 Extra Reading: Mike Gregory, “Does the Kantian State Dominate?: Freedom and Majoritarian Rule”

4 November: Elisabeth Theresia Widmer, “Kant’s Republican Account of Citizenship” 326-36

6 November: Kant, “Toward perpetual peace” pages 317-338/8:343-70/134-55

Week 10 Extra Reading: Huaping Lu-Adler, “Slavery and Kant’s *Doctrine of Right*”

11 November: Kant, “Toward perpetual peace” pages 338-51/8:370-86/155-68

13 November: Charles Mills, “Kant and Race, Redux” 337-69

Week 11 Extra Reading: Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent”

18 November: Lucy Allais, “Kant’s Racism” 370-405

20 November: Helga Varden, “Kant’s Non-Absolutist Conception of Political Legitimacy – How Public Right ‘Concludes’ Private Right in the “Doctrine of Right”” 406-26

Week 12 Extra Reading: None (paper discussions)

25 November: Pauline Kleingeld, “Kant’s Second Thoughts on Colonialism” 427-51

27 November: Arthur Ripstein, “Kant’s Juridical Theory of Colonialism” 452-76

Week 13 Extra Reading: None (course conclusion)

PhD Students

For graduate students enrolled in this course for credit, there are two options:

1. Grading as per the standards above, except with extra course meetings added as required meetings for the purposes of attendance tracking.
2. Grade based on attendance plus a term paper of 5,000 to 7,500 words. Topic due 30 October, outline due 12 November, paper due 12 December.