

# PH3C2-15 Kant's Ethical Theory

**23/24**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Timothy Stoll

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

According to Kant, philosophy seeks to answer just three questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? And, for what may I hope? Answers to the latter two questions comprise Kant's ethical theory, which is the focus of this module. The module is divided into three thematic parts. Part one concerns Kant's theory of moral obligation, in particular his attempt to ground such obligation in pure reason. Part two considers Kant's theories of freedom and of rational faith in the existence of God and immortality of the soul. We conclude, in the third part, by looking at Kant's applications of his moral theory to history and politics.

### Module aims

The principal aim of this module is to provide an introduction to the major elements of Kant's practical philosophy, including his theory of moral obligation, moral epistemology, metaethics, philosophical anthropology, and political theory. We will do so through a study of two of Kant's main ethical treatises (*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*) in addition to a number of shorter essays on various topics. We will attempt to reconstruct and assess Kant's arguments for some of his most famous, and controversial, claims.

### Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Kant and the Age of Enlightenment; Introduction to the “Critical Philosophy”  
Kant, KrV B-Preface (B vii–xxxvii)

Secondary Reading:

Desmond Hogan, “Kant’s Copernican Turn and the Rationalist Tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer (CUP, 2010)

Robert Adams, “Things in Themselves,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 801–25.

Frederick Beiser, “The Enlightenment and Idealism,” [§§I–III] in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (CUP, 2000)

Week 2: Moral Duties and Moral Motivation  
Kant, Groundwork Preface and §I (4:387–405)

Secondary Reading:

Wood and Schönecker, *Immanuel Kant’s Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: A Commentary* (Harvard University Press, 2015), Chs. 1–2. [Hereafter: Wood and Schönecker]

Karl Ameriks, “Kant on the Good Will,” in his *Interpreting Kant’s Critiques* (OUP, 2003)

Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Analysis of Obligation,” *The Monist* 72 (1989): 311–40

Barbara Herman, “On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty,” *The Philosophical Review* 90 (1981): 359–382.

Week 3: The Categorical Imperative; Humanity as an End in Itself; Autonomy of the Will  
Kant, Groundwork §2 (4:406–425)

Secondary Reading:

Wood and Schönecker, Ch. 3

———, *Kantian Ethics* (CUP, 2008), Ch. 5.

J. David Velleman, “Love as a Moral Emotion,” *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338–74 (esp. 344–48).

Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (CUP, 1996), Ch. 3.

Week 4: The Deduction of the Moral Law  
Kant, Groundwork §3 (4:446–463); Review of Schulz (8:10–14)

Secondary Reading:

Wood and Schönecker, Ch. 4

Dieter Henrich, “The Deduction of the Moral Law,” in *Kant’s Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: Critical Essays*, ed. Paul Guyer (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 303–342.

Karl Ameriks, “Kant’s Deduction of Freedom and Morality,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981): 53–79.

## Week 5: Transcendental Freedom and the Fact of Reason

Kant, KpV "Preface" (5:3–14), "Analytic of Pure Practical Reason" (5:42–57), "Critical Elucidation of the Analytic" (5:89–106)

### Secondary Reading:

Allen Wood, "Kant's Compatibilism," in *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 1984) pp. 73–101

Derk Pereboom, "Kant on Transcendental Freedom," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73 (2006): 537–67

Ian Proops, *The Fiery Test of Critique*, Ch. 12

## Week 6: The Highest Good and the Practical Postulates (God, Immortality of the Soul)

Kant, KpV "Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason" (5:107–148)

### Secondary Reading:

Kant, *Critique of Judgment* §§ 87 (5:447–53), 89–91 (5:459–66)

Lawrence Pasternack, "Restoring Kant's Conception of the Highest Good," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 55 (2017): 435–68.

Andrew Chignell, "Belief in Kant," *The Philosophical Review* 116 (2007): 323–360.

Allen Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Cornell University Press, 1970), Ch. 1 (pp. 10–33), Ch. 4

Robert Adams, "Moral Faith," *The Journal of Philosophy* 92 (1995): 75–95

## Week 7: Historical Progress

Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Aim" (8:17–31)

### Suggested Reading:

Kant, *Critique of Judgment* §§83–84; "On the Miscarriage of all Philosophical Trials in Theodicy" (8:253–71).

Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant, History, and the Idea of Moral Development," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 16 (1999): 59–80.

Allen Wood, "Kant's Philosophy of History," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, edited by Pauline Kleingeld, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, pp. 243–262.

Derk Pereboom, "Kant on God, Evil, and Teleology," *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 801–825.

## Week 8: Principles of Justice and Foundations of the State

Kant, "On the Common Saying: That may be Correct in Theory, but it is of no Use in Practice" (focus esp. on Part II, 8:289–307)

### Suggested Reading:

Arthur Ripstein, *Force and Freedom: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy*, Chs. 1, 2 and 6

## Week 9: World Peace

Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace" (8:343–85)

### Suggested Reading:

Paul Guyer, "Nature, Morality, and the Possibility of Peace," in *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (CUP, 2000), pp. 408–34.

Pauline Kleingeld, "Approaching Perpetual Peace: Kant's Defense of a League of States and his Ideal of a World Federation," *European Journal of Philosophy* 12 (3):304-325 (2004).

### Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- understand Kant's key ideas and the contribution they make to moral philosophy, and be able to provide critical responses to his ideas.
- isolate the important claims within readings, understand the structure of arguments, test views for strengths and weaknesses, make pertinent use of examples, and compare the substance of views consistently.

### Indicative reading list

Those seeking general introductions to Kant's life and thought may wish to consult Paul Guyer's *Kant* (Routledge, 2014) and Manfred Kuehn's *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2001). Those interested in some general background on the period of modern ethical thought leading up to Kant may find helpful J.B. Schneewind's *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

The module will focus on reading and grappling with Kant's own work. Each week there is a key reading from one of Kant's texts that serves as the basis for the lectures and seminar discussion. Almost all of our readings are contained in: Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). You may either purchase this volume or access it online (via the library's website).

In addition to the introductory books mentioned above, here are some booklength treatments of Kant's practical philosophy that you might find useful:

Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Paul Guyer, *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: A Reader's Guide* (Continuum, 2007)

Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Jens Timmermann, *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

### Subject specific skills

- close-reading and textual analysis of primary source materials (i.e. Kant's writings), and independent research and assessment of secondary literature

- organisation and articulation of independent responses to the subject matter in written and verbal forms
- construction and defence of critical stances and arguments

## Transferable skills

- comprehension and analysis of complex and nuanced written communications
  - oral and written communication of independent responses to a range of materials
  - presentation of well-reasoned argument in support of a conclusion
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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
2500 word essay	80%	
1000 word essay	20%	

### Feedback on assessment

Feedback on essays will be provided on the coversheet for the essay, addressing standard areas

of evaluation and individual content.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)
  - Year 2 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
  - Year 2 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
  - Year 3 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)
  - Year 3 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
  - Year 3 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
- UPHA-L1CB Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CG Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CH Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CJ Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway) (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CB Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
  - Year 4 of L1CB Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
  - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
  - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
  - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law

- Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MX Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Core option list A for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list F for:

- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list A for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology

This module is Option list B for:

- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
  - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
  - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)

This module is Option list C for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
  - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
  - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
  - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
  - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
  - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list D for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
  - Year 2 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
  - Year 3 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)