

## Kant and 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Philosophy

**Course Description:** Kant's "critical" philosophy marks a turning point in the intellectual landscape of modern Europe. Once his work found widespread reception in the mid to late 1780's, it became perhaps the most unavoidable reference point across a wide variety of philosophical disciplines, and it remains highly influential in both "analytic" and "continental" philosophy. This course will begin with a reading of some of the key sections of Kant's *magnum opus*, *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which he explains his "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy, his doctrine of "Transcendental Idealism", and his accounts of the "spontaneous" and "apperceptive" character of the understanding. We will then cover on some of the most important developments in 19<sup>th</sup>-century European philosophy. In particular, we will cover the major figures in "German Idealism", Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, each of whom is responding to these central Kantian arguments and claims, before turning to Marx and Nietzsche whose work is, in turn, largely a response to the legacy of Kant and German Idealism. One of our primary goals in the course will be to understand how many of the themes that emerge in these figures continue to shape the modern world in significant ways, including the ideas that human knowledge has a necessary limit, that reason is "autonomous", that human beings are "self-conscious" creatures, that all knowledge is a kind of social achievement and therefore dependent on history, that our common practices of justification are "ideological" expressions of ruling class interests, and that the threat of nihilism characterizes the modern world.

### Assignments and Grade Composition:

Participation & Attendance      10%

All students are expected to regularly attend and participate in class. Your participation grade is, in part, determined by *respectfully* navigating any disagreements that arise in class.

Discussion Questions              20%

During the first class, students will sign up to submit discussion questions for three weeks of class. These questions should be well-motivated and refer to specific claims or arguments made in the reading for that class. The questions will be available to all enrolled students one day before class.

Midterm Paper                      30%

All enrolled students will write a 4-5 page exegetical paper explaining a specific argument or claim made by *one* author in *one* text. Students must select an argument or claim and have me approve the selection.

Final Paper                         40%

All enrolled students will write a 9-12 page argumentative paper that defends a specific claim that engages with the text(s) covered in the course. Students are encouraged, but not required, to incorporate material from midterm papers with appropriate revisions. All students must have their topics approved by me.

### Recommended Secondary:

Henry Allison: *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*

P.F. Strawson: *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*

Lucy Allias: *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and his Realism*

Daniel Breazeale: *Thinking Through Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre: Themes from Fichte's Early Philosophy*

Andrew Bowie: *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction*

Dale E. Snow: *Schelling and the End of Idealism*  
Robert Pippin: *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*  
Terry Pinkard: *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*  
Allen Wood: *Karl Marx*  
Daniel Brudney: *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy*  
Robert Pippin: *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*  
Bernard Reginster: *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*

## **Schedule of Readings:**

### **Part 1: Kant**

#### **Week 1**

*Critique of Pure Reason* (A Preface & B Preface)

#### **Week 2**

*Critique of Pure Reason* (B-Transcendental Aesthetic)

#### **Week 3**

*Critique of Pure Reason* (B-Deduction)

#### **Week 4**

*Critique of Pure Reason* (3<sup>rd</sup> Antinomy)

### **Part 2: Fichte**

#### **Week 5**

*The System of Ethics* (Introduction and Part 1, §1)

#### **Week 6**

*The System of Ethics* (Finish Part 1)

### **Part 3: Schelling**

#### **Week 7**

*Presentation of my System of Philosophy* (Preface; §1-23)

#### **Week 8**

*Presentation of my System of Philosophy* (§24-49)

### **Part 4: Hegel**

#### **Week 9**

*Phenomenology of Spirit* (Introduction)

#### **Week 10**

*Phenomenology of Spirit* (Master/Slave Dialectic)

#### **Week 11**

*Phenomenology of Spirit* ("Absolute Freedom & Terror")

## **Part 5: Marx**

### **Week 12**

“Theses on Feuerbach”

*The German Ideology* (Part 1; A)

### **Week 13**

*The German Ideology* (Part 1; B&C)

## **Part 5: Nietzsche**

### **Week 14**

Selections from *The Gay Science*

### **Week 15**

Selections from *The Gay Science*