Course description:

The course involves an appreciative and critical reading of Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* in light of his ontology and of the principal criticisms of his ethical system.

Required text:


Requirements and grading:

The course grade will be based on several arguments developed in response to especially thorny aspects of Kant’s text that will be identified as they arise. The arguments can be oral or written (but will most likely involve some of both). If a *formal* written argument is called for, the following guidelines apply: *Paper specifications:* • is exactly 950–1,000 words, and includes a word count • is word-processed and free of spelling and grammatical errors • has 1-inch margins on all four sides • is 1- or 1.5-spaced • has numbered pages • has a straight left, and a ragged right margin • has a title • is written in concise, precise, sentences • has a thesis statement within first paragraph • argues in support of the thesis • uses reasons and evidence based on the text to back up the arguments • *cites texts appropriately* • raises at least one objection • gives reason/s for the objection/s • replies to the objection/s without being repetitious

Schedule:

- week of 26 August: mechanics of the course, text
- week of 2 September: Kantian terminology (handout)
- week of 9 September: Preface and Aristotelian background
- week of 16 September: Kantian method and overview of the argument (Robert Paul Wolff’s *The Autonomy of Reason*)
- week of 23 September: Section I: moral worth of actions
- week of 30 September: Section II: the will as practical reason
- week of 7 October: interlude: the 4 cases, the 3 propositions, the 5 formulations, and the 4 examples (all of which are variations within the 4th case)
- week of 14 October: Section II: imperatives
- week of 21 October: Section II: the categorical imperative (CI)
- week of 28 October: Section II: autonomy of the will and human dignity
- week of 4 November: Section III: freedom of the will
- week of 11 November: lying
- week of 18 November: principal criticisms (Lewis White Beck)
- week of 3 December: wrap-up