

Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Fall 2023 | Class #: 28693
IDH2930 | Honors, (Un)Common Reads

Time and Location

Tuesdays, Period 5 (11:45 am - 12:35 pm)
Little Hall, 0117

Instructor

Molly Gurdon
molly.gurdon@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:45 pm-1:45 pm or by appointment. Location TBA.

Description

In this seminar, we will undertake a close reading of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Kant is one of the most important figures in the history of philosophy, and his practical philosophy has shaped the development of key concepts in modern moral and political thought, including duty, freedom, law, autonomy, agency, and the relationship between mind and world. The *Groundwork* is a seminal classic of Enlightenment thought and modern moral philosophy. Our reading of it will serve both as an accelerated introduction to Kant, and a starting point for discussions of metaphysics, ethics, the nature of reason, the meaning of progress and the philosophy of history, and the philosophy of law and of religion.

Required Text

Kant, Immanuel. 2012. *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy: Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann. 2nd ed. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge, TAS, Australia: Cambridge University Press.
ISBN: 9781107401068

The assigned reading for each week will come from the *Groundwork*, as noted in our course schedule below. However, all students—and particularly those who have not previously studied philosophy—are strongly encouraged to review the following supplementary readings:

1. Christine Korsgaard's introduction to the *Groundwork* (in our primary text, p. ix-xxxvi)
2. Entries on Kant in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, in particular on Kant himself (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/>) and on his moral philosophy (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/>).

There is an enormous philosophical literature on the *Groundwork*; if a particular theme, question, or idea interests or troubles you, please write to the instructor and I'll be happy to suggest some relevant further reading.

Course Schedule

Aug. 29	<i>Groundwork</i> , Preface 4:387 - end of 4:392, p. 3-8
Sep. 5	<i>Groundwork</i> , First section 4:393 - end of 4:398, p. 9-14
Sep. 12	<i>Groundwork</i> , First section 4:399 - end of 4:405, p. 14-20
Sep. 19	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:406 - end of 4:412, p. 21-27
Sep. 26	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:413 - end of 4:418, p. 27-32
Oct. 3	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:419 - end of 4:424, p. 32-37
Oct. 10	In-class midterm; no new reading
Oct. 17	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:425 - end of 4:430, p. 37-43

Oct. 24	[No class; see note*]
Oct. 31	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:431 - end of 4:436, p. 43-48
Nov. 7	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:437 - end of 4:443, p. 48-54
Nov. 14	<i>Groundwork</i> , Second section 4:444 - Third section end of 4:500, p. 54-60
Nov. 21	<i>Groundwork</i> , Third section 4:451 - end of 4:455, p. 60-65
Nov. 28	<i>Groundwork</i> , Third section 4:456 - end of 4:463, p. 65-72
Dec. 5	In-class final exam; no new reading

**Note:* At some point in the semester—most likely in mid-October—class will be cancelled, as the instructor is expecting a baby and will be giving birth. On our schedule, this cancellation is pencilled in for October 24th, but this is subject to change and the cancellation may be last-minute. I will send out an email when the time comes with further details.

You will notice that the assigned reading for each week is only 5-7 pages. Please don't be deceived by this; while the *Groundwork* is a slim volume, it is notoriously dense and complex. Please give yourself enough time to read slowly and attentively. I strongly recommend that you take notes (preferably by hand) as you read; careful reading and note-taking is by far the best way to ensure comprehension and retention, and will make studying for the midterm and final exams much easier

Grading

I. Attendance and Participation (50%)

This is a text-focused, discussion-based seminar. You should come to class on time and fully prepared to discuss the assigned reading for the week. Your participation grade comprises both active class participation and the submission of written discussion questions:

1. 25% of your grade is based on class participation. An exemplary participant shows evidence of having completed the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens respectfully to other students and the instructor. Half of your participation grade each week depends on being present and respectful in class, and half of it depends on your coming to class having carefully read the assigned text.
2. 25% of your grade depends on the submission, once a week, of either a discussion question or reading reflection. Submissions should be 150-300 words in length and demonstrate close engagement with the text. Submissions should not include lengthy quotes from the text; you may paraphrase as needed (citing page numbers appropriately), but the content of your submission should be your own original work. Submissions should be posted to our Canvas discussion board no later than two hours before class each week (so, 9:45 am on Tuesdays); no credit will be given for late submissions. Students should be prepared to discuss their submissions during class time. Submissions are only due in weeks when there is new/assigned reading; no submissions are required in exam weeks.

Class participation involves, obviously, regular and timely attendance. Students are allowed one free unexcused absence during the semester; any further unexcused absences will result in a 5 point deduction from your *overall course grade*. Please see the Attendance Policy below for further details on excused absences. Students are expected to be present, engaged, and respectful towards the instructor and fellow students. Please avoid cell phone use, and please do not eat in class.

II. Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam will be an in-class, closed-book written exam comprised of short answer and textual identification and analysis questions.

III. Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be an in-class, closed-book written exam comprised of short answer and textual identification and analysis questions.

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Completion credit.

A Note on Technology

To avoid distractions, please silence your phone and put it away during class. Unapproved/inappropriate phone use in class will affect your participation grade for the day.

In the interest both of a productive and engaged discussion, and of protecting your own focus, I strongly encourage you to take notes by hand and keep all technology use to a minimum. However, I understand that some students may need, or simply be more comfortable with, using a laptop to take notes. If you plan to use a laptop in class, please avoid Internet use, and use your laptop only for note-taking. Inappropriate laptop or tablet use will affect your participation grade.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation are expected, and are an important part of your final grade. One free unexcused absence per semester is allowed; any further unexcused absences will result in a 5 point reduction in your overall final grade. Excused absences are permitted consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>). Students requesting an excused absence should email the instructor as soon as possible and may be asked to provide supporting documentation of the reason for their absence.

Make-up dates for in-class exams will only be allowed in the event of a documented illness or emergency. Students should contact the instructor as early as possible to make arrangements.

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates

academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/> , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

Honors Program

Contact: Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519

Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu

Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>