PI 481: Capstone Seminar in Philosophy
Course Syllabus and Calendar

Section Information
Section 01
Course Delivery Mode Face-to-Face

Instructor Information
Dr. Brett A. Fulkerson-Smith
HSS 314
Email: fulkerson-smithb@triton.uog.edu
Office Phone Number: (671) 735-2815
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-2:30pm
Fridays, 9-11am
Meetings can be scheduled ▨

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Each time this course is offered it covers one specific area of philosophy or one particular philosopher in a seminar format. The course is particularly recommended for those students who wish to develop their skills in careful reading, discussion and debate, and analysis to a high level. The skills cultivated in this course gives students an advantage when it comes to any kind of learning at university (and beyond). The course may be repeated for credit under different topics.

COURSE CONTENT

The content of the course varies each time it is offered. The topic can be a specific school of thought (such as rationalism, empiricism, idealism, Confucianism, Daoism, or Buddhism), a specific philosopher, or an issue in philosophy. While the content varies, the course is offered as a writing intensive seminar for students who wish to improve their writing, debating and critical thinking skills.

This semester, the course offers a thorough reading of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, one of the most influential and challenging works in philosophy. We will explore Kant's revolutionary ideas on knowledge, reality, and the limits of human reason, focusing on key themes like how we come to know what we know, the nature of reality, and the ways our minds shape our understanding of the world.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a German philosopher whose work transformed not only philosophy but also impacted fields like physics, geography, and anthropology. Kant's critical

---

philosophy questioned traditional views on knowledge and set the stage for modern thought across multiple disciplines.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ALIGNMENT MATRIX

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)	Program (PLO)	Institutional (ILO)
Justify philosophical positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way to an advanced level	(A) Justify positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way	Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving
Express philosophical positions orally and in writing precisely and clearly to an advanced level	(B) Express themselves orally and in writing precisely and clearly	Effective oral and written communication
Understand and engage with philosophical perspectives different to their own to an advanced level	(C) Understand and engage with perspectives different to their own	Understanding and appreciation of culturally diverse people, ideas, and values in a democratic context
Analyze real-world problems using philosophical tools to an advanced level	(D) Analyze real-world problems using philosophical tools	Responsible use of knowledge, natural resources, and technology
Reconstruct the positions of philosophers through the close reading of texts to an advanced level	(E) Reconstruct the positions of authors through the close reading of texts	An appreciation of the arts and sciences
Practice philosophical virtues in their interactions with others to an advanced level	(F) Practice philosophical virtues in their interactions with others	An interest in personal development and lifelong learning

NOTE: Outcomes in italics are being assessed Spring 2025.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED TEXTS

This course does not require the purchase of any texts. Course readings will be made available by the instructor for free on Moodle.

STUDENT SUPPORT:

The following is a list of resources that students can turn to when they need support:

- Problems with the course instructions or other content?
  Contact your Instructor for clarification and assistance.
- Technical problems with UOG Moodle system?
  Contact the UOG Moodle Help team by email at moodlehelp@triton.uog.edu or by phone at (671) 735-2620.
- Problems with WebAdvisor or GoTritons student email service?
  Contact the UOG Office of Information Technology (aka: the Computer Center) by email at helpdesk@uog.edu or by phone at (671) 735-2640.
- UOG Library Resources and Services
  Go online to https://www.uog.edu/student-services/rfk-library/
- UOG Student Services
  Go online to https://www.uog.edu/student-services/enrollment-management-student-success/ to contact the Admissions and Records office, Financial Aid office, Student Life office, Housing and Residence, Counseling, Student Health, and other services.

In addition:

Office hours and outside appointments. There's only so much that you as a student can get out of the direct instruction and conversations that takes place during classes. At a small university like ours, office hours are a highly important extension of the classroom.

GRADING INFORMATION

Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Precent Grade	Definition
A+	4.00	98-100%	**Outstanding** Honors-level performance with superior quality and extraordinary distinction.
A	4.00	93-97%	
A-	3.67	90-92%	
B+	3.33	87-89%	**Good** Solid accomplishment, indicating a substantial mastery of course materials and a good command of skills required by the course.
B	3.00	83-86%	
B-	2.67	80-82%	
C+	2.33	77-79%	**Adequate** Students have achieved the level of competency needededfor advancing to a subsequent course that has this course as prerequisite.
C	2.00	70-76%	
D	1.00	60-69%	**Deficient** Minimal passing, but not adequate to take a subsequent course that has this course as prerequisite.
F	0.00	<60%	**Failure** Inadequate to receive credits.

Grading Components and Weights:

Attendance	10%
Assessments of Active Participation	10%
MIMS (14 total)	30%
Scaffolded Research	20%
Research Paper	30%
Course Total	100%
Extra Credit	5%

Attendance: The *sine qua non* of success in this class is attendance. Please make sure that you come to class regularly, and that you are prepared for the class discussion. Attendance will be taken during each class session.

Active Participation: In seminars, students drive the focus and direction of the class. Students' oral communication during class discussions will be evaluated based on their clarity, conciseness, and overall contributions to the discussion. These contributions will be assessed periodically throughout the semester to gauge progress and areas for improvement: at weeks 4, 8, 12, and 16. Self-assessments and assessments by the instructor will follow the following rubric. 60% of each assessment grade will be comprised of the instructor's assessment for the period, while 40% of each assessment grade will be comprised of the student's self-assessment for the same period.

Criteria	1 (Needs Improvement)	2 (Satisfactory)	3 (Good)	4 (Excellent)
Clarity	Oral contributions are unclear, hard to follow	Contributions are mostly clear, but some parts are difficult to understand	Contributions are clear and easy to follow	Contributions are exceptionally clear and articulate
Conciseness	Contributions are rambling or overly complex	Contributions are somewhat concise, but could be shortened	Contributions are concise and to the point	Contributions are precise, focused, and efficient

Make It Make Sense Summaries (MIMS): Much of philosophy is devoted to representing positions or reconstructing arguments accurately and concisely. To develop these skills, each week you will complete weekly summaries of the assigned readings; summaries are due by 11:59pm on Sundays beginning in Week 2. These summaries are designed to help you demonstrate your understanding of the material by accurately explaining the key ideas, arguments, and concepts *in your own words*. The goal is to engage thoughtfully with the text, prioritize the most important points, and communicate them clearly and effectively. This is not an exercise in quoting or paraphrasing extensively but rather an opportunity to process the material and present it in a way that reflects your own understanding. Remember, the key to success is to engage deeply with the text and use your own words to "make it make sense."

Summaries should be exactly 500 words. The document must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced, with standard margins. Content should focus on the main arguments and essential ideas, avoiding unnecessary details or excessive reliance on the author's phrasing. Think of this assignment as explaining the reading to someone unfamiliar with it, making the material accessible and meaningful.

These assignments will be graded based on accuracy, organization, clarity, and adherence to formatting guidelines. Accuracy involves capturing the central ideas and arguments correctly. Organization requires that your summary flows logically and is easy to follow. Clarity ensures that your writing is polished, error-free, and effectively communicates ideas. Finally, adherence to formatting guidelines means that the word count, font, spacing, and overall presentation meet the stated requirements.

Virtual Tokens: Each student will be given 5 virtual tokens. Tokens can only be redeemed to redo MIMS assignments. Tokens may *not* be used to make-up a missed MIMS assignment. To redeem a virtual token, students must submit their revised MIMS assignment in hard copy. At

the top of the page, students should include the MIMS assignment being revised and which token number is being used (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5).

Research and Writing: This class will help you refine your research and writing skills. Each student is expected to write an argumentative essay that defends a thesis related to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. The paper should present a clear and focused thesis that addresses a specific aspect of Kant's philosophy, engaging with relevant scholarly sources to support your argument. You are expected to present a well-reasoned and coherent argument, grounded in evidence from your selected sources, and to anticipate and address a counterargument or objection to your position.

Essays will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- **Clarity of Thesis**: Your thesis should be clearly stated and positioned in response to a specific question or issue within Kant's work. It must be debatable, concise, and sufficiently focused to be addressed within the length of the paper.
- **Logical Structure and Argumentation**: Your paper should be organized in a logical, coherent manner. Each section or part of your paper should contribute to the development of your argument, with clear and well-constructed points that follow from one another. Each argument you make should be supported by evidence from the *Critique of Pure Reason* or relevant scholarly sources.
- **Use of Sources**: You must incorporate between 2-3 scholarly sources that are relevant to your thesis and that contribute meaningfully to your argument. You should not merely summarize these sources but engage with them critically, integrating them into your own reasoning.
- **Anticipation and Response to Counterargument**: A strong argumentative paper considers possible objections to the thesis and responds to them in a thoughtful, reasoned manner. You should address at least one major counterargument to your position and explain why your thesis still holds in light of this objection.
- **Organization and Clarity**: Your paper should be well-organized, with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Transitions between sections should be smooth, and the reader should be able to easily follow the progression of your argument from start to finish.
- **Formatting and Citations**: The paper should follow a consistent citation style (e.g., MLA, APA, or Chicago) and include a bibliography with all sources cited properly.

To support your development of the final research paper, you will complete a series of scaffolding assignments that will help you formulate a thesis, explore resources, draft arguments, and revise your work. These assignments are designed to guide you through the research and

---

writing process in stages, allowing you to refine your ideas and receive feedback before submitting your final essay.

In **week 10**, you will submit an initial research proposal that outlines your thesis idea, the specific aspect of *Critique of Pure Reason* you intend to focus on, and an overview of the scholarly resources you plan to engage with. This proposal will allow you to clarify your argument's focus and begin your research. You are encouraged to discuss paper ideas well before this point in the semester.

In **weeks 11-13**, you will focus on researching, locating, and perusing potential scholarly sources for your paper. This phase will involve reading through the materials you've identified in your proposal and searching for additional sources that will strengthen your argument. You are encouraged to meet with your instructor during this period to discuss your ideas, receive guidance, and refine your approach to the research. This time is crucial for deepening your understanding of the topic and ensuring that your sources are directly relevant and robust enough to support your thesis. You should aim to build a comprehensive understanding of the scholarship in your area of focus, identifying key arguments, methods, and debates that will inform your paper. While this is not a formal submission, you should be prepared to share your progress during our meetings and receive constructive feedback that will guide the next steps in your writing process.

In **week 14**, you will submit an annotated bibliography. You will select and annotate 2-3 scholarly sources relevant to your topic, summarizing their content and discussing how they will contribute to your argument. This will help you identify and refine the sources that will best support your thesis.

Finally, in **week 16**, you will submit a draft of your research paper. This draft should represent your current thoughts, with a clearly defined thesis and supporting arguments, as well as a consideration of counterarguments. The draft will give you an opportunity to receive feedback from me and revise your paper before the final submission.

Extra Credit: Like all academic discourses, philosophical conversations are comprised of identifiable discussion moves. In this course, students will practice the most-fundamental discussion moves that they can use to inform the philosophical conversations in class. The deliberate practice of these discussion should benefit students' participation in class.

At the start of each class session, students will dealt three cards, each with a particular discussion move. The goal is to play your hand during the course of the class session. Each card played will earn the student one point for the day's extra credit grade.

This activity will be scaffolded. During the first half of the semester, students are expected to play two of the three cards dealt to them each session. Hence, the maximum number of participation points during this time is 2. After spring break, the expectation is that students will play all three cards, where the maximum number of participation points will increase to 3 per class session. 5% of this grade will be added to the final course grade, as determined above.

Course, Program, and University Policies and Other Information

Academic Misconduct—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UOG community, students accept the expectations of the Student Code of Conduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Code of Conduct Policy in the Student Handbook. (http://www.uog.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook_10.7.16.pdf) For this class, any plagiarism will be evaluated by incident. All incidents, at minimum, will automatically receive a failing grade for the assignment. If an incident of plagiarism occurs more than once in the same course, the student may receive a failing grade for the class.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): The goal of teaching is to impart a process of gathering, understanding, and synthesizing relevant information, inclusive of critical thinking and project details. Language Learning Models (LLMs) essentially eliminate the need for developing technical writing skills, as they can produce polished prose consistently. This technology is likened to word processors that have made handwriting redundant. LLMs efficiently gather and present information, making the task of accumulating and presenting routine information redundant as well. *With the advent of LLMs, then, a well-informed, competently written piece of prose is now a baseline expectation rather than a goal.* This shifts the question to what value-add teachers and students can bring beyond what an AI model can generate in seconds, potentially requiring a rethinking of teaching approaches and pedagogical institutions. Like other labor-saving devices, LLMs allow us to shift our focus to areas that cannot be mechanized, raising the bar for what constitutes acceptable performance.

There are several implications. This shift could potentially increase the focus on critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, as the basics of information gathering and writing are covered by LLMs. Pedagogical methods may need to evolve to accommodate this new reality. Teachers might need to redesign curricula and assessments to emphasize the skills that LLMs can't replicate. The definition of student success and accomplishment could be revised to reflect these changes. It might help level the playing field for students with varying writing abilities, as everyone would have access to the same standard of written work through LLMs, allowing them to focus more on content and critical thinking. On a broader level, this development could

reshape the landscape of education, leading to increased emphasis on developing soft skills like problem-solving, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

But, there are also worries. Some might suggest that the students themselves are not producing the smoothly written, well informed text. Or that there's no evidence of learning in work created through the use of LLMs. Finally, some might believe that students working at a C level will be demotivated by AI working at a B or A level.

It is true that Language Learning Models (LLMs) may generate the polished prose, but this doesn't negate the value of the learning process. The role of students in this new paradigm shifts from being just scribes to becoming editors, synthesizers, and critical thinkers. They would need to direct the AI, verify its outputs, integrate diverse pieces of information, and ensure that the final product aligns with the task at hand. These are high-level cognitive tasks that contribute significantly to their learning.

The evidence of learning might not be as direct as in traditional assignments, but it is still present. The LLM-generated output will still be guided and refined by students. They will have to engage with the topic at a deep level to guide the model effectively. Evaluating the quality, relevance, and accuracy of the information produced will require understanding the topic. It's a shift from assessing learning based on writing ability to assessing learning based on understanding, critical thinking, and the ability to synthesize and guide an AI to produce quality content.

It's understandable that students may feel demotivated when an AI tool can easily produce work that surpasses theirs. However, this is where it's crucial to redefine success and progress in the classroom. Rather than judging students solely based on the final product, educators can shift towards a model that values the learning process itself. This involves reinforcing the idea that these tools are just that – tools, meant to assist in the learning journey, not replace it. Education must pivot towards fostering skills that AI cannot replicate – empathy, creativity, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, etc. Students should understand that their unique human qualities, ideas, and perspectives hold immense value, and they are not in competition with AI, but instead, learning to leverage it as a resource.

For these reasons, AI Writing tools such as ChatGPT are welcome in this class, provided that you cite when and how you use the tool (see below) or submit a transcript of your interaction with AI.

Here is an example of **Example of attribution language:**

"The author generated this text in part with GPT-3, OpenAI's large-scale language-generation model. Upon generating draft language, the author reviewed, edited, and revised the language to their own liking and takes ultimate responsibility for the content of this publication."

Copyright—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. **The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies.

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community free of all forms of discrimination and harassment in all programs, activities and employment practices as required by Title VII and Title IX and other applicable statutes and policies. If you experience harassment or discrimination, report it immediately to the Director of EEO/ADA & TITLE IX Office, at 671-735-2244, 671-735-2971, TOD 671-735-2243 or eeo-ada@trlton.uog.edu. For immediate assistance in an emergency call 911.

For individuals covered under the ADA {Americans with Disabilities Act), if you are a student with a disability requiring academic accommodation{s), please contact the Student Counseling and Advising Service Accommodations Office to discuss your confidential request. Please provide an accommodation letter from the Disability Support Services/Student Counseling and Advising Service Accommodation counselor. To register for academic accommodations, please contact or visit the Student Center, Rotunda office #6, disabilitvsupport@triton.uog.edu or telephone/(TOD) 671-735-2460.

COURSE CALENDAR

Students will roughly read 15 pages for each class session: sometimes a bit more and sometimes a bit less. It is the expectation that students will complete reading assignments *before* the class during which they will be discussed. It is advised that students complete reading assignments at least two times: once in preparation for the class discussion and at least once afterwards. Students should review all readings and their notes ahead of digestion days, where we will catch our breath and attempt to contextualize what we have read in terms of the Kant's aims in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Course Introduction

> 1/23: Course expectations and Kant's Critical Philosophy; begin reading TODAY!

Part I: Preface & Introduction

> 1/28: 106-124
>
> 1/30: 136-152
>
> 2/2: MIMS 1 due
>
> 2/4: Digestion Day

Part II: The Transcendental Aesthetic

> 2/6: 172-192
>
> 2/9: MIMS 2 due
>
> 2/11: Digestion Day

Part III: The Transcendental Logic

> 2/13: 193-218
>
> 2/16: MIMS 3 due
>
> 2/18: 219-225
>
> 2/20: 245-254
>
> 2/23: MIMS 4 due
>
> 2/25: 254-266; Participation Self-Assessment 1 due
>
> 2/27: 267-285

3/2: MIMS 5 due

3/4: 286-294

3/6: No Class

3/9: MIMS 6 due

3/11: 295-315

3/13: 316-320

3/16: MIMS 7 due

3/18: No Class

3/20: No Class

3/25: 321-337; Participation Self-Assessment 2 due

3/27: 354-365

3/30: MIMS 8 due

4/1: Digestion Day

Part IV: The Transcendental Dialectic

> 4/3: 384-394; research proposal due
>
> 4/6: MIMS 9 due
>
> 4/8: 395-410
>
> 4/10: 445-458
>
> 4/13: MIMS 10 due
>
> 4/15: 459-475

4/17: 476-495

4/20: MIMS 11 due *before* partaking

4/22: 496-510; Participation Self-Assessment 3 due

4/24: 511-527

4/27: MIMS 12 due

4/29: 528-536

5/1: 537-550; annotated bibliography due

5/4: MIMS 13 due

5/6: 551-568

5/8: 569-589

5/11: MIMS 14 due

5/13: Digestion Day; draft of term paper due

Course Conclusion

5/15: Final thoughts; Participation Self-Assessment 4 due

Final Exams

5/19-5/21: Paper presentations; final draft of term paper due