

Kant's Lecture on Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View

Undergraduate Seminar (Proseminar)
Humboldt-University of Berlin, Germany
Department of Philosophy
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WS 16/17

Course Description:

This undergraduate seminar “Kant’s Lecture on Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View” is part of *The Enhancing Life Project* organized by the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, in conjunction with the Protestant Theology Faculty at Ruhr University Bochum, funded by the John Templeton Foundation. My project will be divided into two main parts: In the first part, philosophical anthropology will be spelled out by building a bridge from Kant to Nietzsche in order to develop an *exemplary ethic*. The second part deals with the question in which way that exemplary ethic gives *orientation* in biotechnological development.

Against this overall context, the seminar contributes to the first part of my postdoctoral project: In the course, we aim to deal with the current debates about a meta-, trans- or post-humanism in particular inspired by the new enhancement technologies that challenge us to rethink the notion of humanity respectively of *human self-understanding*. In these debates the *ethical* question is raised of what do we actually want to put into practice. Hitherto common perspectives tackle this question by using approaches dealing with informed consent or risk-benefit considerations. In this undergraduate seminar we want to explore an approach focusing on *philosophical anthropology*. This angle promises to give answers to possible limits of technological development without falling into essentialist pitfalls.

In this seminar, we aim to address the question by reading a classic text of Immanuel Kant. If Kant divides philosophy in four basic questions, then he turns to the philosophical anthropology in the last one by asking: What is a human being? Kant gives one possible answer in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, which he read over 20 years as a lecture before it was published in 1798. In the seminar, we want to shed light upon Kant’s genuine approach to anthropology.

Recommended Literature:

Cohen, Alix (Hg.): *Kant's Lectures on Anthropology. A Critical Guide*, Cambridge 2014.
Gerhardt, Volker: *Immanuel Kant. Vernunft und Leben*, Stuttgart 2002.
Guyer, Paul (Hg.): *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. Cambridge 1992.

Kant, Immanuel: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, transl. by Robert Louden/Manfred Kühn, Cambridge: University Press, 2006. “Kant.Anthro.” below.

N.B. The citation below follows the German standard edition of the Akademie (AA): *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1902ff.

1. Week of October 24: Introduction
2. Week of October 31: Kant.Anthro., pp. 117-130.
3. Week of November 7: Kant.Anthro., pp. 131-142.
4. Week of November 14: Kant.Anthro., pp. 143-152.
5. Week of November 21: Kant.Anthro., pp. 153-166.
6. Week of November 28: Kant.Anthro., pp. 167-181.
7. Week of December 5: Kant.Anthro., pp. 182-201.
8. Week of December 12: Kant.Anthro., pp. 202-229.
9. Week of January 2: Kant.Anthro., pp. 230-250.
10. Week of January 9: Kant.Anthro., pp. 251-264.
11. Week of January 16: Kant.Anthro., pp. 265-282.
12. Week of January 23: Kant.Anthro., pp. 283-302.
13. Week of January 30: Kant.Anthro., pp. 303-319.
14. Week of February 6: Kant.Anthro., pp. 320-334.
15. Week of February 13: Final Discussion

Text: Paul Guyer, *The Inclination toward Freedom*, in: Alix Cohen (Hg.), *Kant's Lectures on Anthropology. A Critical Guide*, Cambridge: University Press, pp. 114-132.