

## Midterm Assignment

### PHIL 1020: Ethics

#### Immanuel Kant and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

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#### Assignment Overview

This midterm requires you to demonstrate a clear and careful understanding of Kant's moral philosophy as developed in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. You will:

1. Reconstruct one of Kant's central arguments.
2. Apply Kant's theory to a contemporary moral issue.
3. Offer a brief critical evaluation of his framework.

This assignment emphasizes **textual analysis and philosophical precision**. You must support your claims with direct quotations from Kant.

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#### Formatting & Citation Requirements (Mandatory)

- 5–7 pages (1500–2000 words)
- MLA format (12-point font, double-spaced, proper header, Works Cited page)
- Use MLA in-text citations
- Include **direct quotations** from *Groundwork*
- Cite using page numbers or sections
- Include a Works Cited page listing the edition you use

Papers that do not use MLA format or do not include direct textual support will lose points.

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#### Part I: Argument Reconstruction (Approx. 2–3 pages)

Choose **ONE** of the following arguments and reconstruct it carefully and accurately:

##### Option A: The Good Will

Explain Kant's claim that the only thing good without qualification is a good will.

- Why are intelligence, courage, or happiness not unconditionally good?
- What makes a will morally good?
- How does this claim ground the rest of Kant's moral theory?

### **Option B: The Categorical Imperative**

Explain how Kant derives and formulates the Categorical Imperative.

- What is the difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives?
- Why must morality be categorical?
- How does universalizability function as a test?

### **Option C: Humanity as an End in Itself**

Explain Kant's Formula of Humanity.

- What does it mean to treat humanity as an end?
- Why is rational nature morally significant?
- How does this generate duties?

In this section:

- Focus on clarity and fairness.
  - Quote Kant directly.
  - Explain his reasoning step-by-step before evaluating it.
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## **Part II: Application (Approx. 2 pages)**

Apply Kant's moral theory to one contemporary issue.

Possible topics:

- U.S. military involvement over seas
- Lying in professional settings
- Political deception
- Social media manipulation
- Whistleblowing
- Physician-assisted suicide

In this section:

1. Clearly formulate the maxim.
2. Apply the Formula of Universal Law.

3. Apply the Formula of Humanity.
4. Determine whether the action is permissible.
5. Address at least one possible objection.

Be precise. Show that you understand how Kant's test actually works.

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### **Part III: Critical Evaluation (Approx. 1–2 pages)**

Evaluate Kant's moral theory according to your own ethical thinking.

You may consider:

- Is universalization too formal?
- Does Kant ignore consequences?
- Does morality require emotion?
- Is autonomy sufficient as a moral foundation?
- How does Kant handle moral conflict?

Your critique should engage Kant seriously and charitably.

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### **Grading Rubric (100 Points Total)**

#### **I. Conceptual Understanding (25 points)**

- Accurate explanation of key Kantian concepts (good will, duty, maxim, categorical imperative, autonomy, etc.)
- Clear distinctions (e.g., from duty vs. in accordance with duty)
- Demonstrates comprehension of Kant's reasoning, not just conclusions

**A (23–25):** Precise, philosophically rigorous understanding

**B (20–22):** Mostly accurate, minor imprecision

**C (17–19):** Basic grasp but conceptual confusion

**D/F (<17):** Major misunderstandings

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#### **II. Argument Reconstruction (20 points)**

- Logical clarity
- Faithful presentation of Kant's reasoning

- Step-by-step explanation
- Strong integration of quotations

**A:** Clear, coherent, textually grounded reconstruction

**B:** Generally clear but lacking depth or precision

**C:** Some structure but weak textual integration

**D/F:** Disorganized or inaccurate

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### **III. Application of the Categorical Imperative (20 points)**

- Proper formulation of maxim
- Correct application of universalization test
- Correct use of Humanity formulation
- Thoughtful analysis of moral permissibility

**A:** Sophisticated and precise application

**B:** Good application but somewhat mechanical

**C:** Incomplete or confused use of Kant's method

**D/F:** Misapplication or superficial treatment

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### **IV. Critical Evaluation (15 points)**

- Engages Kant seriously
- Raises thoughtful objections
- Avoids strawman criticism
- Shows independent reasoning

**A:** Insightful and philosophically mature

**B:** Solid but somewhat underdeveloped

**C:** Basic critique without depth

**D/F:** Unsupported assertions

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### **V. Use of Textual Evidence & MLA Format (10 points)**

- Regular use of direct quotations
  - Proper MLA in-text citations
  - Proper Works Cited page
  - Clear integration of quotations into analysis
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## **VI. Organization & Writing Quality (10 points)**

- Clear thesis, underlined and identified
- Logical structure
- Strong paragraph transitions
- Minimal grammatical errors
- Professional academic tone

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**Total: 100 Points**