Immanuel Kant’s Critical Philosophy responded to 19th century British empiricism (and the empiricism of the German Johannes Tetens) by arguing that human knowledge and experience cannot be passively impressed upon us via the senses, but must be actively constructed in accordance with logical (and therefore normative) concepts and principles. Kant thought this entailed that we could not know things as they are in themselves; he called his position ‘transcendental idealism.’ Post-Kantian thinkers argued that the fact that mind contributes to knowledge does not mean reality itself is inaccessible, though it did perhaps entail that empirical science was limited in scope. This movement culminated in the absolute idealism of G.W.F. Hegel.

Two centuries later, Wilfrid Sellars responded to 20th century logical empiricism with “variations on Kantian themes,” emphasizing again the active, norm-governed side of knowledge and experience. But Sellars thought he could reject Kant’s idealism and defend a strong scientific realism: science tells us what there really is. Sellars’ work has inspired many leading philosophers in epistemology and philosophy of mind. Some of them have moved to positions closer to Hegel’s (e.g., Robert Brandom, John McDowell), while others have resisted the idealist impulse strongly, staying with Sellars’ scientific realism (e.g., Ruth Millikan, Paul and Patricia Churchland).

After a brief introduction to Empiricism, we will dive into the responses from Kant and Hegel, juxtaposing readings from their works with readings from Sellars and his followers, comparing and contrasting their positions and arguments. Specific topics will be the nature of intuition and perception (e.g., are there both conceptual and non-conceptual elements in perceptual experience?), concepts and understanding (e.g., how deep does the analogy between language and thought go?), knowledge and conceptual change (e.g., how radical a change can there be in our most basic concepts or categories; could most everything we now believe prove false?).
Course Structure

Though the fundamental idea for this seminar is simple—examining responses to empiricism in both early modern and contemporary philosophy—the plan for this seminar is a bit complex, for it involves bouncing around in time and across philosophical systems.

We start with a quick look at classical empiricism in its most consistent elaboration: the empiricism of David Hume. Hume’s philosophy evoked responses that re-made the philosophical landscape. We’ll read Kant’s *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, and a section of the introductory “Preliminary Conception” in Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. In both cases, we won’t be looking for extremely detailed exegesis; our reading will be targeted to ferreting out what the assessment of and response to empiricism in particular is. Although these are among the easier of the texts written by Kant and Hegel, they are challenging reading in any case. I highly recommend taking reading notes as you work through them, and, of course, being very active readers: do not hesitate to ask questions and challenge the texts, me, and your classmates about their interpretation.

We then jump to 20th century empiricism, using a single example to illustrate its outlines: Moritz Schlick’s “Positivism and Realism”. (Other examples will be available to you as well, e.g., some Carnap and/or Ayer.)

We then take a quick dip into W.V.O. Quine’s classic rejection of latter day empiricism: “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”.

Then we dive into Wilfrid Sellars’ more comprehensive rejection (or is it revision?) of empiricism in “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” [EPM]. This is a difficult essay, and we will spend a good deal of time on it (7 classes), but you will have the advantage of a pretty decent commentary explaining large parts of it, written by yours truly with Professor Triplett.

When we’re done with EPM, all the cards will pretty much be on the table, and we’re ready to get down to detail work. There will be three different tracks made available to the class, directions in which students can pursue a particular topic with greater concentration, eventually writing their final paper on it.

- Track 1: The structure of sense perception/intuition
- Track 2: The nature of concepts and understanding
- Track 3: The dynamic structure of knowledge

It might be that, since it will be a small class, everyone chooses to work in the same track, and we will simply spend the rest of the semester delving into that topic more
deeply. But I am prepared to have different students focusing on different topics, breaking the class up into small working groups with which I will meet separately. In that case, in our final meeting, each working group will present what it has learned about its topic to the other working groups.

**About Me:** My office is Hamilton Smith 249N. The department phone is 862-2060. Office hours will be TR 11-12:30, 3:30-4, and by appointment. Take the appointment part seriously: I know there is no set of office hours that will be convenient for everyone. I can also be reached at 603-325-2035. Email: willem.devries@unh.edu. I prefer talking to students over almost anything else the University requires of me, so please feel free to drop by.

**Syllabus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading/Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday Aug 29, 2017</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Aug 31, 2017</td>
<td>Classical Humean Empiricism. Readings: Sections II and IV of Hume's <em>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em>, (E2.1-2.9, SBN 17-22; 4.1-4.23; SBN 26-40) ; Chapter 3 of Bruce Aune's <em>Knowledge of the External World</em>. Links to both (and some reading questions) on Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday Sep 5, 2017</td>
<td>Hume, Cont'd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Sep 7, 2017</td>
<td>Kant, 1. Reading: Kant's <em>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</em>. (On Canvas) Read the Preface and §§1-5. Akademie pagination for this reading is AK 4: 255-280.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday Sep 12, 2017</td>
<td>Kant, 2. Reading: Kant, <em>Prolegomena</em>, §§6-39; AK 4: 280-326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Sep 14, 2017</td>
<td>Kant, 3. Reading: Finish Kant's <em>Prolegomena</em>. §§40-60; &amp; &quot;Solution&quot;; AK 4:327-371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday Sep 15, 2017</td>
<td><strong>Writing Assignment #1 Due at noon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday Sep 19, 2017</td>
<td>Hegel, 1. Reading: §§19-25 of the <em>Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences</em>. See Canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Sep 21, 2017</td>
<td>Hegel, 2. Reading: In the <em>Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences</em> read A. The First Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity: Metaphysics (§§ 26-36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday Sep 26, 2017</td>
<td>Hegel, 3. Reading: In the <em>Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences</em> read B. The Second Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity (§§ 37--60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Sep 28, 2017</td>
<td>Hegel, 4. Reading: Continue with B. The Second Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity (§§ 37--60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Friday Sep 29, 2017  Writing Assignment #2 due at noon
Tuesday Oct 3, 2017  20th Century Empiricism: Logical Positivism. Reading: Moritz Schlick, “Positivism and Realism” Link on canvas
Thursday Oct 5, 2017  20th Century Empiricism, the Reaction. Reading: W. V. O. Quine’s essay "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (On Canvas)
Thursday Oct 12, 2017  Sellars, 2. Readings: EPM, Parts III and IV, KMG: 218-233. (Yes, we’re skipping II) KMG, chapters 3 & 4: 19-45
Tuesday Oct 17, 2017  Sellars, 3. Readings: EPM, parts V, VI, and VII (KMG: 233-243); KMG chapters 5, 6, & 7.
Wednesday Oct 18  Writing Assignment #3 Due at Noon

Tuesday Oct 24, 2017  Sellars 5. Readings: EPM, Parts IX-XI (KMG: 250-258); KMG Chapters 9-11
Thursday Oct 26, 2017  Sellars, 6. Readings: EPM, Parts XII-XIV (KMG: 258-266); KMG, Chapters 12-14
Tuesday Oct 31, 2017  Sellars, 7. Readings: EPM Parts XV & XVI (KMG: 266-276); KMG, Chapters 15 & 16

Wednesday Nov 1  Writing Assignment #4 Due at Noon

Work Group phase of the course.

Thursday Nov 2, 2017

Sense Perception
Kant
Reading: Kant, Critique of Pure Reason. "The Transcendental Aesthetic"

Concepts
Kant
Reading: Robert B. Brandom, "Kantian Lessons about Mind, Meaning, and Rationality" On Canvas

The Dynamics of Knowledge
Kant - constitutive vs regulative concepts
Reading: Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, Second Analogy(A189/B232-A211/B256); Appendix to the Dialectic(A642/B670-A704/B731)
Thursday Nov 9, 2017

Hegel on Sense Certainty
Reading: Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Chapter One “Sense Certainty” (On Canvas)

Hegel's Concept
Reading: “The Concept in General” from the *Greater Logic*; Chapter 1: “Science, Teleology, and Interpretation” of deVries, *Hegel’s Theory of Mental Activity* (On Canvas)

Hegel and the Dynamics of Knowledge.
Readings: “Introduction” to *Phenomenology of Spirit* (On Canvas)

Tuesday Nov 14, 2017

Sellars on Kant on Intuition. Reading:
Chapter 1 of *Science and Metaphysics* (on Canvas)

Peircean concepts
Readings: "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make our Ideas Clear" (On Canvas)

Sellars on Conceptual Change. Reading:

Thursday Nov 16, 2017

McDowell Objects

Sellars on Concepts.
Readings: “Meaning as Functional Classification”, “Metaphysics and the Concept of a Person” (on Canvas)

Reality and Myth
Reading: Rebecca Kukla, "Myth, Memory and Misrecognition in Sellars’ ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind’," (On Canvas)

Friday Nov 17, 2017

**Term Paper Proposal due**
Hopefully Unnecessary Notes

Attendance: I take attendance every day. The point is not to punish those who do not attend—I find that students who don’t come very regularly do poorly enough on the graded assignments that no further action is warranted on my part. Taking attendance, rather, gives me a solid basis (rather than a vague ‘impression’) on which to award points for steady presence and, even more, contribution to classroom discussion. (A major theme in Existentialism is taking responsibility for yourself. That includes taking responsibility for your own education. And that means getting actively engaged with the material. The ways to engage actively in a philosophy course are writing and speaking. Silent partners in the class do themselves a disservice.)

Electronic devices have become essential tools in modern education; I therefore will not ban their use in class. But you are on your honor to use such devices only for classroom purposes during class. This means no email, texting, websurfing, game-playing, or other distractions. When you are in class, be there. If the class isn’t ‘doing it’ for you, speak up, get involved and make it right. (A major theme in Existentialism is taking responsibility for yourself. That includes taking responsibility for your own education.)

Plagiarism is a betrayal of central intellectual virtues; what it means for your character and personal integrity is devastating. Don’t do it; the results are catastrophic, even if you’re not caught. If you have questions about the proper boundaries, protect yourself and ask me. According to the student handbook, plagiarism is

The unattributed use of the ideas, evidence, or words of another person, or the conveying of the false impression that the arguments and writing in a paper are the student’s own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. The acquisition by purchase or otherwise of a part or the whole of a piece of work which is represented as the student’s own;

2. The representation of the ideas, data, or writing of another person as the student’s own work, even though some wording, methods of citation, or arrangement of evidence, ideas, or arguments have been altered;

3. Concealment of the true sources of information, ideas, or argument in any piece of work.

The penalties for plagiarism can be stiff: from an "F" for an assignment to an "F" for a course, or, in some cases, expulsion from the University. It is in your best interest to make sure you understand the UNH policy.
See http://cola.unh.edu/plagiarism-tutorial-0 for further information.

The University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you think you have a disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Disability Services for Students (DSS), Contact DSS at (603) 862-2607 or disability.office@unh.edu. If you have received Accommodation Letters for this course from DSS, please provide me with that information privately in my office so that we can review those accommodations.