

Reading Guide Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*

During the lecture “**Perpetual Peace!**?” we will discuss various parts of Kant’s famous book, *Perpetual Peace*. Read pages 534-544 of this book prior to the lecture. In order to help you to understand the book’s argument, I have compiled a list of reading questions. Try to answer these to the best of your ability and bring your answers to the lecture.

1. Before you start reading Immanuel Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*, I would like to invite you to engage in the following thought-experiment. Try to imagine a world inhabited by human beings like you and me. In addition, try to imagine that this is an anarchistic world without states or governments. What do you think life would be in such a world? Would it be a happy anarchy in which individuals can freely pursue their ends and plans or would it be dreadful chaos? Once you have given this some thought, read the final 5 lines on p. 538 and the first 7 lines on p. 537 (“A state of peace ... as an enemy”). What does Kant have to say on this topic? Do you agree with him? And why/why not?

2. On p. 540, Kant stresses the fact that the earth is a globe. Why it is important to keep this in mind when thinking about peace and war?

3. In addition, Kant writes on p. 541: “The intercourse, more or less close, which has been everywhere steadily increasing between the nations of the earth, has now extended so enormously that a violation of right in one part of the world is felt all over it.” Apparently, Kant seems to think that there is some sense in which our world shares a “common fate”. Can you imagine why this would be the case? (If you find this difficult, try to think about this question while keeping in mind that we live in a *globalizing* world.)

4. Kant develops five preliminary articles of peace (the legal steps necessary to establish *peace*). Which ones? Do you think all of these articles are necessary to create peace? Why/why not? And do you think these articles are sufficient to create peace? (in other words, should we add more articles?) Why/why not?

5. Kant develops three definitive articles of peace (the legal steps necessary to ensure the *stability* of peace). What is a republican civil constitution? Give some examples of actually existing states that you think have a republican character. Kant thinks republics will not wage war against other republics. Why not? Do think his argument is plausible? Why/why not?

6. Once Kant has presented the preliminary and definitive articles of peace, he goes on to explain the *natural and political setting in which peace is to be achieved*. According to Kant, “(human) nature” plays an important role in the establishment of peace. How? (When answering this question, try to take into account Kant’s remarks concerning mankind’s natural inclination to wage war, differences of language and of religion, and mankind’s commercial spirit.)