Kant calls his ontological theory ‘transcendental idealism’, and presents as one of its central tenets that empirical objects, such as tables and cats, are not things in themselves but mere appearances. But he also expresses his allegiance to what he calls ‘empirical realism’, and asserts that empirical objects are empirically real. Some readers take this to show that by classifying empirical objects as transcendentally ideal Kant cannot mean that they are fully mind-dependent, or that their existence is mind-dependent, in a way comparable to Berkeley’s view. Rather, Kant’s idealism must be weaker, and should be understood as concerning only certain properties of empirical objects, which are otherwise mind-independent. On my view, this ‘tame’ reading of Kant is untenable; he is committed to a strong form of idealism, according to which empirical objects are mind-dependent with respect to all of their properties as well as their existence. The project for this talk is to explain how it is possible for Kant to be both an idealist in this strong sense and an empirical realist at the same time. The key to solving this puzzle lies in recognizing that he is committed to a tiered ontology that comprises different levels of reality.

Thursday, November 30, 2017
5:00 pm Tribble Hall B316