

Syllabus
PHIL 3300 (3 Cr.)
Theory of Knowledge
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips
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Class Meets:
TR 8:30a-9:50a in SC 114

COURSE DESCRIPTION: What is knowledge? What is a rational or justified belief? What (if anything) can we know or justifiably believe? How do perception, memory, testimony, etc. contribute to knowledge and justified belief? Does all knowledge and justified belief derive from experience? In this course we will examine and discuss a number of controversies in contemporary epistemology related to the previous questions. The course is designed as an introduction to central debates in the history of epistemology and contemporary epistemology, debates concerning the nature and scope of knowledge and justification. Topics include: (i) the analysis of knowledge and the “Gettier” problem; (ii) skepticism; (iii) the structure of knowledge and justification; (iv) internalism and externalism; (v) specific sources of knowledge and justification (e.g. perception, induction, etc.); and (vi) testimony. These topics are interrelated and will often be discussed in connection with one another.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Critical Thinking: The successful student will be able to differentiate between good and bad reasons for holding philosophical beliefs and will be able to seek out and identify the assumptions that lie at the basis of philosophical positions.
- Inquiry and Analysis: The successful student will be able to break complex philosophical problems into their components, and will be able to identify the consequences and implications of philosophical positions.
- Reading Comprehension: The successful student will be able to analyze and interpret abstract and difficult philosophical writing.
- Writing: The successful student will be able to express abstract and complex philosophical ideas in clear, precise, and logical prose.

Evaluation of these learning outcomes will be done through exams, papers, and in-class presentations.

TEXTS: *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings* edited by Michael Huemer (Routledge, 2002) ISBN: 0415259215
This can be found at the College Bookstore, and is *required*.
Materials not available in the required text will be provided on Canvas.

SOME GENERAL ADVICE: This course presupposes a willingness to work hard and think critically about some very difficult problems. Philosophy is hard, you’ll see. Students who read reflectively and attend class regularly are more likely to remain interested in (and even enjoy) the material, benefit from the class discussions, and develop the philosophical skills and level of comprehension required to do well on the exams and papers. Some notes will be provided every week, but these, the lectures, and class discussion will very likely be hard to follow if you don’t do the readings or if you miss previous classes.

Everyone will get the grade they earn. If you're worried about getting an A, work hard and come to office hours if you are having problems understanding the material. You might still get a B or C because not everybody is excellent at philosophy, but your future does not depend on you getting straight A’s nearly as much as you think it does.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This list of readings is tentative, and the pace is brisk. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis, and the schedule is subject to revision.

Where you see a (*), this reading is *NOT* required, but rather is recommended.

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Week 1

Introduction

Fumerton & Jeske: *Philosophical Analysis, Argument, & the Relevance of Thought Experiments* (Canvas)
*Lemos: Chapter 1 *Knowledge, Truth and Justification* (Canvas)

Weeks 2-5

What is Knowledge?

Ayer: *Knowing as Having the Right to be Sure* (H: 440)
Gettier: *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?* (H: 444)
Pritchard: *Epistemic Luck* (Canvas)
Engel: *Is Epistemic Luck Compatible with Knowledge?* (Canvas)
Lackey: *What Luck is Not* (Canvas)
Stoutenburg: *Epistemic Analysis of Luck* (Canvas)
*Lemos: Chapter 2 *Traditional Analysis and the Gettier Problem* (Canvas)

Weeks 6-8

External World Skepticism

Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*—Meds I & II (H: 513)
Berkeley: *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge* (H: 37)
Hume: *Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy* (H: 46)
Putnam: *Brains in a Vat* (H: 524)
Moore: *Proof of an External World* (H: 602)
Moore: *Hume's Theory Examined* (H: 606)
*Huemer: *Why Study Skepticism?* (Canvas)

[Mid-Term Exam Distributed; Term Paper Thesis/Bibliography DUE]

Week 9-10

Inferential Justification and Knowledge

Carroll: *What the Tortoise said to Achilles* (H: 253)
Fumerton: *Inferential Justification and Empiricism* (H: 259)
*Lemos: Chapter 3 *Foundationalism* (Canvas)
BonJour: *Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (H: 387)
*Lemos: Chapter 4 *The Coherence Theory of Justification* (Canvas)
Alston: *Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?* (H: 402)

Week 11

The Problem of Induction

Hume: *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (H: 298)
Edwards: *Russell's Doubts about Induction* (H: 311)

[Term Paper Outline Due]

Weeks 12-14

Internalism and Externalism

Goldman: *What is Justified Belief?* (Canvas)
BonJour: *Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge* (Canvas)
Goldman: *Internalism Exposed* (Canvas)
Conee & Feldman: *Internalism Defended* (Canvas)
Fumerton: *Externalism and Skepticism* (Canvas)

[Term Paper Due]

Week 15

Testimony

Hume: *Of Miracles* (H: 221)
Coady: *Testimony and Observation* (H: 239)

[Final Exam Distributed]

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ASSIGNMENTS and EVALUATION:

Two Take-Home Exams: You will have two take-home exams over the course of the semester, one at mid-term, and one as a final exam. I will assign the exam on a Wednesday and it will be due on the following Monday. The exams will consist of five (or so) essay questions. You will have to select three of the five (or so) questions, and type complete answers to those questions. Each answer will likely be 3-5 pages. This is a substantial test. They will be open book and open note, but you are expected to complete the exam on your own.

One Term Paper: In addition to the exams, you are expected to write a term paper on any subject you like within epistemology. Your paper should be 2000-3000 words. Since there are a number of cool issues here that we will not have time to cover, you are not limited to the topics or papers that we have covered. You will be required to provide me with a thesis/bibliography by the time I distribute the mid-term exam, and an outline of your paper by the close of week 11, at which time we will have a one-on-one meeting to discuss the paper, so start thinking about which issues are most interesting to you EARLY. Please note that the term paper is due at the start of WEEK 14. I encourage you to meet with me often regarding the paper.

Two Presentations/Short Papers: During the first week I will ask you to sign up to present on, and subsequently write a short paper (roughly 700-1000 words) critically examining one of the texts you have been assigned. You can, of course, do further research on these topics, and build upon the insights of your classmates, but further research is not a requirement of this assignment. I want to encourage you to meet with me a few days (or even better, a week) prior to each presentation.

Note: You may use these short papers as a basis for your term paper if you so desire.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Mid-Term Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Term Paper Thesis/Bibliography: 5%

Term Paper Outline/meeting: 5%

Final Term Paper: 15%

Presentation/Short Paper 1: 10%

Presentation/Short Paper 2: 15%

POLICY:

Late Work: I will accept late exams, but for each 24-hour period that the paper is late, the grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade.

Grade Disputes: If you feel that your work has been unfairly assessed, you may ask that I reconsider. I am, after all, a human who makes mistakes on occasion. I will do so **only if** you submit to me, on paper, a one-paragraph typewritten explanation of why you believe that your work has been unfairly evaluated. You must indicate the grade you believe yourself to deserve and explain clearly why it is that you deserve that grade. Your dispute must be submitted within **one week** of receiving your grade.

Attendance: Excessive absences (6 or more) will hurt you 1 letter grade (as in A- to B-). Philosophy is hard even if you come to class. Skip at your own risk. You are responsible for information that I offer in lecture that is not in the readings. I will not give you notes for unexcused absences because I am a recalcitrant bastard.

Participation in class discussion can raise your grade up to 1/3 of a letter grade.

Plagiarism or academic fraud of any sort will result in an F for the course. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter. Please familiarize yourself with Southern Utah University's *Student Handbook*, which you can find online at <https://www.suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP633Academic.pdf>. I will follow the regulations described in this

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document for dealing with cheating, plagiarism, etc. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism or academic fraud after reading through the student handbook, please do not hesitate to ask me for further clarification.

Disabilities: I warmly welcome any of you who have disabilities. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Office for Students with Disabilities. The Office for Students with Disabilities determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of these services and aids. Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines. For Southern Utah University's full policy, see: <http://suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP119Disability.pdf>.

Emergency Management: In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://suu.edu/emergency>.

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Suggestions for Further Research by Topic:

For all topics, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is an outstanding resource: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Analysis of Knowledge:

Nozick: *Knowledge*
Klein: *A Proposed Definition of Propositional Knowledge*
Goldman: *A Causal Theory of Knowing*
Plato: *Theaetetus*
Plato: *Meno*
Chisolm: *Theory of Knowledge* [book]
Feldman: *An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counter-Examples*
Kaplan: *It's Not What You Know That Counts*
Lehrer: *Knowledge Truth and Evidence*
Williamson: *Knowledge and Its Limits* [book] (specifically, Intro and Ch.1)

Skepticism:

Lewis: *Elusive Knowledge*
Cohen: *Knowledge and Context*
Cohen: *How to be a Fallibilist*
DeRose: *Solving the Skeptical Problem*
Huemer: *Direct Realism and the Brain-in-a-Vat Argument*
Sextus Empiricus: *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*
Stroud: *The Problem of the External World*
Pryor: *The Skeptic and the Dogmatist*
Vogel: *Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation*
Feldman: *Skeptical Problems, Contextual Solutions*
Unger: *Ignorance*

Structure of Knowledge and Justification:

BonJour: *Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?*
BonJour: *Back to Foundationalism*
BonJour: *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* [book]
Sosa: *The Raft and the Pyramid*
Klein: *Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons*
Chisolm: *The Myth of the Given*
Fales: *A Defense of the Given* [book]
Russell: *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description*
Fumerton: *Metaepistemology and Skepticism* [book]
Haack: *A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification*

Internalism/Externalism:

Goldman: *Strong and Weak Justification*
Greco: *Virtue, Luck and the Pyrrhonian Problematic*
Bergmann: *Externalist Responses to Skepticism*
Bergmann: *Justification Without Awareness* [book]
Conee and Feldman: *Making Sense of Skepticism*
Kornblith: *Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism* [book]
Steup: *A Defense of Internalism*

Alston: *Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology*

Alston: *An Internalist Externalism*

A Priori

Jenkins: *A Priori Knowledge: The Conceptual Approach*
Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*
Quine: *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*
Butchvarov: *The Concept of Knowledge* [book]
BonJour: *In Defense of Pure Reason*
Devitt: *There is No A Priori*
Gendler: *Empiricism, Rationalism, and the Limits of Justification*
Putnam: *Two Dogmas Revisited*
Quine: *From a Logical Point of View* [book—collected articles]

Epistemology and Science (We did not discuss this, but it's cool)

Quine: *Epistemology Naturalized*
Lemos: *Naturalized Epistemology* (Ch. 10)
BonJour: *Against Naturalized Epistemology*
Fumerton: *Skepticism and Naturalistic Epistemology*
Kim: *What is Naturalized Epistemology?*
Stich and Nisbett: *Justification and the Psychology of Human Reasoning*

Self Knowledge (This is also cool):

Gertler: *Introspection*
Gertler: *Privileged Access: Philosophical Accounts of Self-Knowledge* [book]
Ludlow and Martin: *Externalism and Self-Knowledge* [book]
Tye and McLaughlin: *Externalism, Twin Earth, and Self-Knowledge*
Fumerton: *Speckled Hens and Objects of Acquaintance*
Dretske: *Introspection*
Cunning: *Agency and Consciousness*
Chalmers: *The Content and Epistemology of Phenomenal Belief*
Boghossian: *What the Externalist can Know a priori*
Sellars: *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*

Testimony:

Reid: *Inquiry into the Human Mind*
Lackey: *Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission*
Lackey: *Learning from Words*