

Epistemology

Fall 2012

Course Instructor: Jennifer Nado

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Office Hours: W 14:30-16:30/F 11:30-13:30

Course Number: PHI231/PHI3231

Time: W 16:30-18:00/F 15:30-17:00

Location: W LKK 201/F MB G09

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to epistemology – the study of knowledge. We'll begin by exploring the question of whether human beings really know anything at all, or whether it's possible that everything we think we know might be wrong. This will lead us to look at the meaning of 'knowledge' – what does it take to count as knowing something? We'll then examine a few important controversies in contemporary epistemology that have arisen out of the difficulties surrounding the analysis of knowledge. Next, we'll look at some specific problems for both inductive and deductive reasoning. Finally, we'll discuss some methodological issues in epistemology, covering epistemology's relationship with science and the status of epistemological intuitions.

Required Readings: Required readings are listed on the schedule below. All required readings will be posted in electronic format on the course's Moodle website. Please note that I will sometimes not require you to read the entire paper – instead, I will post the assigned page numbers under the reading links on Moodle. In such cases, everything else should be treated as optional supplementary reading.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will learn to:

- 1) Understand the problem of skepticism
- 2) Understand the basic approaches to the analysis of knowledge
- 3) Characterize foundationalist and coherentist views of justification
- 4) Characterize internalist and externalist views of justification
- 5) Characterize contextualist approaches to knowledge
- 6) Understand the two problems of induction and the related problem of deduction
- 7) Understand naturalist challenges to traditional epistemology

Measurement of Learning Outcomes: Students will be assessed on the basis of several response papers, a final essay exam, and on course attendance and participation.

Assessment:

Response papers: 40%

Final essay exam: 40%

Participation and attendance: 20%

Papers: You will be asked to write four short ‘response’ papers during the term. These should be around 500 words in length (about 2 pages). In each of these papers you will summarize one basic issue we have covered during the term, and you will then briefly present your own thoughts about the topic. I will provide more detailed instructions two weeks before each paper is due. Due dates for the papers are shown on the schedule below. Papers will be turned in via Moodle.

Final essay exam: This will be a take home essay exam taken in place of a final. It will be due one week after the final day of class. For the exam you will write short (about 200-250 word) responses to 6-8 specific questions covering particular aspects of the views discussed in class. These will test your understanding rather than ask you to give your own views. The exam will be turned in via Moodle.

Plagiarism: Citing the materials you’ve used in your papers is extremely important. If you’re quoting from *anywhere*, make sure you’ve listed the source (author, text, *and* page number) in a bibliography at the end, and make sure you’ve put the quoted material in quotation marks followed by the author’s last name and the page number in parentheses (e.g., (Nado 106)). If I discover that you have plagiarized any portion of a paper, you will automatically receive a failing grade.

Attendance/Participation: Philosophy is best learned through discussion and active engagement in a classroom setting. For this reason, a substantial portion of your grade will come from attendance and participation.

I expect you to miss no more than 2-3 classes during the semester, except where emergencies or other excused absences occur. I will take daily attendance, as well as keep track of who contributes to discussion during class. Poor attendance WILL affect your grade. If you have a reason to be away from class, please provide proof of excused absence (Dr’s note, etc.).

Though I understand that many people are too shy to speak in class, in order to get full points in the attendance/participation category you MUST actively participate in the course in some way or another. Speaking in class is the easiest way to get full participation points, but I also look at other forms of participation such as asking questions/discussing course material with me after class, during office hours, or through email.

Schedule:

1. Wednesday, 12 Sept – Course introduction	No Readings
2. Friday, 14 Sept – Skepticism I	Descartes, Meditation I
3. Wednesday, 19 Sept – Skepticism II	Moore, Proof of an external world
4. Friday, 21 Sept – Skepticism III	Unger, A defense of skepticism
5. Wednesday, 26 Sept – Analysis of Knowledge I	Plato, Theaetetus
6. Friday, 28 Sept – Analysis of Knowledge II	Gettier, Is justified true belief knowledge?
7. Wednesday, 3 Oct – Analysis of Knowledge III	Lehrer and Paxson, Knowledge: undefeated justified true belief

	RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE
8. Friday, 5 Oct – Analysis of Knowledge IV	Goldman, A causal theory of knowledge
9. Wednesday, 10 Oct – Foundationalism/Coherentism I	Sosa, The raft and the pyramid
10. Friday, 12 Oct – Foundationalism/Coherentism II	Bonjour, Can empirical knowledge have a foundation?
11. Wednesday, 17 Oct – Foundationalism/Coherentism III	Davidson, A coherence theory of truth and knowledge
12. Friday, 19 Oct – Internalism/Externalism I	Goldman, What is justified belief?
13. Wednesday, 24 Oct – Internalism/Externalism II	Conee and Feldman, The generality problem for reliabilism RESPONSE PAPER 2 DUE
14. Friday, 26 Oct – Internalism/Externalism III	Goldman, Internalism exposed
15. Wednesday, 31 Oct – Internalism/Externalism IV	Conee and Feldman, Internalism defended
16. Friday, 2 Nov – Contextualism I	Dretske, Epistemic Operators
17. Wednesday, 7 Nov – Contextualism II	DeRose, Contextualism and knowledge attributions
18. Friday, 9 Nov – Contextualism III	Sosa, Contextualism and skepticism
19. Wednesday, 14 Nov – Problem of Induction I	Russell, On induction RESPONSE PAPER 3 DUE
20. Friday, 16 Nov – Problem of Induction II	Goodman, The new riddle of induction
21. Wednesday, 21 Nov – Problem of Deduction	Carroll, What the tortoise said to Achilles
22. Friday, 23 Nov – Naturalized Epistemology I	Quine, Epistemology naturalized
23. Wednesday, 28 Nov – Naturalized Epistemology II	Kim, What is naturalized epistemology?
24. Friday, 30 Nov – Epistemic intuitions I	Stich, Reflective equilibrium, analytic epistemology and the problem of cognitive diversity
25. Wednesday, Dec 5 – Epistemic intuitions II	Weinberg, Nichols and Stich, Normativity and epistemic intuitions RESPONSE PAPER 4 DUE
26. Friday, Dec 7 – Epistemic paradoxes and other fun	TBA

IMPORTANT NOTE

“Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations.”