

PHILOSOPHY 451/551 [12534/12539]: ADVANCED EPISTEMOLOGY
SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY
FALL 2018

Class times

Monday & Thursday, 10:00-11:20pm, CLE (Clearihue) B315

Professor

Patrick Rysiew

Office Hours: Thursday 11:30-12:20, Friday 1:00-2:20, or by appointment, Clearihue B321

E-mail: rysiew@uvic.ca

Phone: 721-7520 (my office), 721-7512 (Philosophy Dept.)

Provisional Draft: This early syllabus is intended to give a sense of what the course is like. It is not the final, official outline: readings or dates may change.

Texts:

There is one required TEXT for the course:

Goldman, A. I., & Whitcomb, D. eds. *Social Epistemology: Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780195334616

This book has been ordered into the University bookstore. It's also available from the publisher (<http://www.oupcanada.com/catalog/9780195334616.html>), Amazon (<https://www.amazon.ca/Social-Epistemology-Essential-Alvin-Goldman/dp/0195334612>), and through other online vendors.

Other readings will consist of articles and book chapters from other sources. They will be posted and/or made available via the CourseSpaces page for this class.

Course Description:

A central task of traditional epistemology is to better understand knowledge and justified belief. In addressing these issues, knowers are often portrayed, if only implicitly, as isolated – as cut off from their social surroundings. Social epistemology is a rich and diverse field, concerned with the host of questions that arise when we start think about epistemic agents as the social creatures that they obviously are. These questions include: Is being told that *p* a unique source of knowledge that *p*, or are testimony-based beliefs justified only because we have non-testimonial evidence of the speaker's reliability? How can one rationally decide among competing 'expert' opinions? Does the fact that an epistemic peer disagrees with you give you reason to modify your own views? Are there distinct forms of wrongs arising in the social-epistemic case? In what sense can collective bodies – groups – be said to have beliefs? And, how is the justifiedness of such beliefs be determined? How should we think about the epistemic merits of certain legal and political institutions and practices? To what extent can the idea that the pursuit of truth is of central cognitive-epistemic concern be sustained when we consider the sometimes 'grubbier' motives and practices of scientists, say? What light can computer simulations throw upon various forms of collective epistemic activity? And, what special epistemic issues arise in the case of technologies like the internet and 'knowledge sources' like Wikipedia? Through an examination of such issues, students will be gain an appreciation and understanding of the current state of social epistemology.

Expectations

Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings, and prepared to talk and ask questions about the material. Students who miss a class are responsible for any material covered therein, as well as for finding out what announcements, if any, were made.

Three quick tips for doing well in the course

1. *Come to class.* When you must miss a class, let the instructor know ahead of time if you can; afterwards, talk to a classmate about what happened and try to get their lecture notes; visit the instructor in office hours.
2. *Do the readings ahead of time, and read 'actively'* – pay attention to what you're reading, ask yourself what point(s) the author(s) is trying to make, why this matters, what questions you'd like to ask the author, and so on.
3. If you're having difficulty with any of the course material (readings or lecture content), speak to the instructor – *take advantage of scheduled office hours.*

Evaluation

Students' grades will be based on:

- (a) five short (2pp. max.) "quote and comment" assignments (5% each; 20% total);
- (b) a term paper, approx. 15-20 pp. in length OR two shorter (8-10 pp.) papers, on a topic (/topics) of your choosing, in consultation with the instructor (60%);
- (c) a paper proposal (or proposals), outlining the topic, central theses, and structure/plan for the intended paper(s), approx. 2-3 pp., plus projected bibliography (15%);
- (d) informed participation in the course: 5%.

(a) Short "Quote and Comment" Assignments: At least five times during the course, at the start of the Monday session, a student will hand in a brief critical discussion of some part or aspect of the readings for that week. (You may submit up to seven of these, with the top five being counted towards your final grade.) These comments *must* be typed and *may not* exceed two double-spaced pages; else, they will be returned ungraded. Your name and the course title should be clearly indicated at the top of the page. You should also identify the reading to which you are responding. You should identify a brief passage in the reading that raises an issue or point you wish to discuss. (It often makes sense for you to include a brief quotation from the text as a preface to your remarks.) Offer a brief explanation of what issue or point you find interesting or contentious or confusing, etc., and then provide a brief reasoned response – e.g., a criticism or comment or constructive question, along with reasons for thinking it is important or reasonable, etc. – about the issue being addressed.

(b) Research Paper: Students will write a research paper (or two shorter such papers) on a topic (/topics) of their choosing, subject to the instructor's approval. Students will provide a preliminary plan for their papers in the form of a research proposal (see next item). Final papers – either the single, longer paper, or the second of two shorter papers -- are due **Monday December 10th, by 1pm** (my mailbox, Phil. Dept. office). For those writing two shorter papers, the first of these will be due **Monday October 22nd at the start of class.**

(c) Paper Proposal: The paper proposal has four elements. First, you should provide a brief but suitably descriptive title for your project. Second, you must provide a brief description of the

general philosophical terrain you wish to explore in your research. Here you should identify and briefly characterize any key background theories or assumptions that shape your project. You should also briefly motivate philosophical interest or importance of the general project. Third, you must provide a description of the particular dimensions of the philosophical issue or problem you plan to address in your essay. This should include a provisional characterization of the argument you anticipate developing in your essay. Fourth, you must provide a preliminary bibliography of material you will draw upon in writing your essay. The bibliography must include at least 5 philosophy articles or books. The completed proposal should be approximately 2-3 double-spaced pages long PLUS the bibliography. The **final** deadline for submission of paper proposals – for either the single longer paper, or the second of two shorter papers -- is **Monday November 5th at the start of class**. Students who turn their proposals in by a reasonably earlier time will get written feedback, and may revise and resubmit their proposal in light of it. For students who choose the two-paper option, the first paper proposal will be due **Thursday Oct. 11th at the start of class.**)

(d) Participation: By its nature, this is not a matter that is easily quantified; nor are clear and useful criteria for optimal performance on this component easily articulated. Students are expected to be regular, active, and thoughtful participants in the life of the course. Bear in mind that this is an advanced course, that a good portion of class time will be devoted to discussion, and that much of what you learn in the course will be from other students. For these reasons alone, and quite apart from issues about grades, it is in students' interest to read the material ahead of time, to be prepared and willing to talk about it in class, to actively participate in the course, to intend in-class comments and questions to be ultimately constructive and helpful, and so on.

In general, evaluation of students' written work will be based on: evidence of comprehension of the materials and issues addressed; evidence of original and critical thought with regard to that material; the extent to which the student stakes out a position and provides good reasons and arguments for it; the extent to which the student communicates his/her ideas clearly (using complete and grammatical sentences, correct terms, a clear essay structure, and so on). All materials used on any of the assignments must be properly cited in the standard way.

Without exception, late papers unaccompanied by a documented medical excuse will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day or portion thereof, starting as soon as the due date and time have passed. Should such a medical emergency arise, let the instructor – ahead of time, if possible. An unexcused absence without a documented medical excuse on the day of a quiz will result in a score of zero.

The standard University grading scheme will be used (full version: <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/grading.html>)

Passing Grades	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90 – 100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	

			course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
B+	6	77 – 79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student’s full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. It is each student’s responsibility to know the University’s regulations in this regard. The Policy on Academic Integrity is published in the University Calendar.¹ Other resources concerning cheating and plagiarism include the Libraries’ plagiarism guide,² and the Learning and Teaching Centre’s information for students.³

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Note that what follows is subject to revision, at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class. (If a student misses a class, he/she is responsible for finding out whether any such announcements were made, as well for other class content.)

Readings for a given subject/week are listed in the order in which you should read them.

Week 1 (Sept. 6): Introduction to the course, and to the subject

Week 2 (Sept. 10, 13): Foundations of Social Epistemology. ‘Classical’ vs ‘Anti-Classical’ conceptions of Social Epistemology, the current state of the research.

1. Goldman, “A Guide to Social Epistemology” (G&W, Ch. 1)
2. Longino, *The Fate of Knowledge*, Ch. 2, “Taking Social Studies of Science Seriously” (CourseSpaces)
 - Recommended: Goldman & Blanshard, “Social Epistemology”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-social>

¹ <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>.
² <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php>.
³ <https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/students/resources/expectations/index.php>.

Week 3 (Sept. 17, 20): Testimony I: Reductionism, anti-Reductionism, and testimonial knowledge. Is another person's telling you that p a distinct source of knowledge that p , on a par with other 'basic' sources (perception, inference, etc.)? Is *not* having heard or been told that p a source of knowledge that not- p ?

1. Fricker, "Critical notice: Telling and trusting: Reductionism and anti-reductionism in the epistemology of testimony", *Mind* 104: 393-411 (1995) (CourseSpaces)
2. Lackey, "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others" (G&W, Ch. 4)
3. Goldberg, "If That Were True, I Would Have Heard it By Now" (G&W, Ch. 5)

Week 4 (Sept. 23, 27): Testimony II: Epistemic dependence. How are experts determined socially? How do we decide between expert testimonials?

1. Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence", *Journal of Philosophy* 82: 333-349 (1985) (CourseSpaces)
2. Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" (G&W, Ch. 6)

Week 5 (Oct. 1, 4): Peer Disagreement I: What is peer disagreement? How does it factor into social epistemology?

1. Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreements" (G&W, Ch. 7)
2. Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement" (G&W, Ch. 8)
3. Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence" (G&W, Ch. 9)

Week 6 (Oct. 8, 11): [no class Oct. 8th – Thanksgiving] Peer Disagreement II: Further thoughts on peer disagreement and higher-order evidence.

1. Christensen, "Higher-Order Evidence", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81(1): 185-215 (2010) (CourseSpaces)

Week 7 (Oct. 15, 18): Social Power, Epistemic Injustice, Ignorance: Are there distinctly epistemic forms of wrongdoing arising in our social exchanges? What special challenges does ignorance, including willful ignorance, pose?

1. Fricker, "Rational Authority and Social Power: Towards a More Truly Social Epistemology" (G&W, Ch. 3)
2. McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice", *Philosophy Compass* 11/8 (2016): 437-446 (CourseSpaces)
3. Alcott, "Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types", in Sullivan & Tuana eds., *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (2007) (CourseSpaces)

Week 8 (Oct. 22, 25): Collective Epistemology (the epistemology of groups): Can groups have beliefs? Can group beliefs be rational or justified, in the same ways as for individuals? What is the relationship between group beliefs and the beliefs of their members?

1. Pettit, "Groups with Minds of their Own" (G&W, Ch. 11)

2. Lackey, "Collective Epistemology", in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intentionality*, Jankovic and Ludwig, eds. (2017), pp. 196-208 (CourseSpaces)
3. Thagard, "Explaining Economic Crises: Are There Collective Representations?" *Episteme* 7(3): 266-283 (2010) (CourseSpaces)

Week 9 (Oct. 29, Nov. 1): Social Epistemology and Science, Practice & Theory: Are there relevant social-epistemic considerations that undermine the epistemic *bona-fides* of science? Or do social-epistemic factors contribute to the credibility of science?

1. Kitcher, "The Division of Cognitive Labor", *Journal of Philosophy* 87(1): 5-22 (1990) (CourseSpaces)
2. Strevens, "The Role of the Priority Rule in Science", *Journal of Philosophy* 100(2): 55-79 (2003) (CourseSpaces)

Week 10 (Nov. 5, 8): Law and Politics: Epistemic Properties of Legal Practice & Judicial and Political Systems: Systems of justice are fundamentally social practices and institutions whose goal it is to decide responsibility – to attribute praise and blame. What are the best ways to do this? And, how should we think about the deliberative processes that are widely thought to be a part of a healthy democracy? What are its (epistemic?) strengths and limitations?

1. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World*, Ch. 9 ("Law") (CourseSpaces)
2. Laudan, "Thinking about Error in the Law" (G&W, Ch. 12)
3. Gallagher & Crifasi, "Mental Institutions", *Topoi* 28 (1): 45-51 (2009) (CourseSpaces)
4. Richardson, "Democratic Intentions", *The Modern Schoolman* 74 (4): 285-300 (1997) (CourseSpaces)

Week 11 (Nov. 12, 15): [no classes, Nov. 12-14, Reading Break] Continued

Week 12 (Nov. 19, 22): Computers Simulations of Social Knowledge Networks: Combined with the burgeoning field of "Big Data" and "Social Networking", computer simulations are now widely used to study every aspect of social network dynamics. Philosophers have also begun to model the dynamics of belief and knowledge in social circumstances.

1. Weisberg & Muldoon, "Epistemic Landscapes and the Division of Cognitive Labor", *Philosophy of Science* 76(2): 225-252 (2009) (CourseSpaces)
2. Douven, "Simulating Peer Disagreements", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 41: 148–157 (2010) (CourseSpaces)

Week 13 (Nov. 26, 29): Internet Epistemology: Our increasing reliance on technological and informational resources can't be denied. What are the potential benefits and costs of sources such as Wikipedia, and of the internet more generally?

1. Thagard, "Internet Epistemology" (CourseSpaces)
2. Fallis, "Wikipistemology" (G&W, Ch. 13)
3. Frost-Arnold, "Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability", *Episteme* 11(1): 63-81 (2014) (CourseSpaces)

Week 14 (Dec. 3): [last day of classes = Dec. 5] TBA

Some important administrative dates (<https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/general/dates.html>)

- Tues., Sept. 18: last day for 100% reduction of fees
- Fri., Sept. 21: last day to for adding first-term courses
- Tues., Oct. 9: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- Wed., Oct. 31: last day for withdrawing from second-term courses without penalty of failure