

PHILOSOPHY 351 (A01): EPISTEMOLOGY [12494]
FALL 2019

Class times

Monday & Thursday, 1:00-2:20pm, CLE (Clearihue) A203

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

C: Jack S. Crumley II, *An Introduction to Epistemology*, 2nd edition (Broadview, 2009); ISBN: 9781551119076

CS: Additional readings will be made available via the course's CourseSpaces page

Course Description

Epistemology is concerned with such things as knowledge, justification, evidence, rationality, doubt, truth, scepticism, and many other related topics. This course is an examination of current issues and theories in epistemology. Subjects to be addressed include: analyses of knowledge, and whether knowledge admits of an analysis; the debate between foundationalists and coherentists; the internalism-externalism debate; why we should care about truth; naturalistic and feminist approaches to knowledge; whether knowledge is somehow context-dependent; and what the proper response to scepticism might be. Students will read both the introductory textbook and original readings from leading figures in current epistemology. Upon successfully completing this course, students will have a very good sense of what is happening in contemporary 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) Two mid-term exams (worth 30% each), calling for short essay-style responses. For each exam, students will be given 4 study questions calling for essay-style responses; 3 of these will appear on the exam, and students will have to write a response to two of them.
- b) Several short in-class quizzes (T/F, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, etc.). These may or may not be announced ahead of time (10%).
- c) A final paper (30%). 8-10 pages long; some topics will be suggested. Students may write on a topic of their own design, but only if they obtain the instructor's permission in advance.

Contributions to class discussions may be taken into account in borderline cases – i.e., where a student's final grade is right on the dividing line between grades. Beyond the student's having adequately addressed the topic question(s) on which he/she writes, 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 structure, and so on). For the papers, *the use of outside materials (i.e., any readings not assigned for the course) is prohibited*. All materials used in the papers must be properly cited in the standard way.

Without exception, late papers unaccompanied by a legitimate documented 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 an emergency arise, let the instructor know – ahead of time, if possible. An unexcused absence without a documented excuse on the day of a quiz will result in a score of zero.

The standard University grading scheme will be used. Here is an excerpt from it (the full version is here: <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 course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
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
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	

			and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
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

What follows is *provisional* and *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 as for other class content.) Readings for a given subject/week are listed in the order in which they should be read.

Introduction, Scepticism: Epistemology, arguably, begins when we find ourselves unable to accept sceptical arguments and in need of an adequate response to them.

Week 1 (Sept. 5): Introduction

-C: pp. 15-37 (= Introduction, and first part of Chapter 1)

Understanding Knowledge: Historically, knowledge and justification have been the main topics in epistemology. Over three weeks, we’ll (re)familiarize ourselves with some basic concepts and distinctions, and look at Gettier’s famous argument against the idea that knowledge is justified true belief, as well as some post-Gettier attempts to understand knowledge. We’ll also consider some views that pull apart knowledge and justification, and some general reasons to wonder about the prospects for a satisfactory analysis of ‘knowledge’.

Week 2 (Sept. 9, 12): JTB, Gettier, and JTB+

-C: Chapter 2

-Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (CS)

Week 3 (Sept. 16, 19): can the Gettier problem be solved? is it a good idea to try to analyze ‘knowledge’ in the first place?

-Zagzebski, “The Inescapability of the Gettier Problem” (CS)

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>.

-Williamson, excerpt from *Knowledge and Its Limits* (CS)

Week 4 (Sept. 23, 26): non-justificationist approaches to knowledge

-Nozick, excerpt from *Philosophical Explanations* (CS)

-Dretske, “Epistemic Operators” (CS)

***STUDY QUESTIONS FOR FIRST MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED THURSDAY SEPT. 26**

The Structure of Justification - Foundationalism and Coherentism: A long-standing debate within epistemology, it centers on whether all beliefs owe their justification to other beliefs.

Week 5 (Sept. 30, Oct. 3): foundationalism vs coherentism

-C: Chapters 4, 5

***FIRST MIDTERM: THURSDAY OCT. 3**

Week 6 (Oct. 7, 10): continued

Reliabilism and the Internalism/Externalism Debate: Reliabilism is a recent competitor to ‘internalist’ theories of justification and knowledge. In recent years, the internalism/externalism debate has been a central dispute in contemporary epistemology.

Week 7 (~~Oct. 14~~, 17) [no class Oct. 14 – Thanksgiving]: reliabilism, and the internalism-externalism debate

-C: Chapters 3, 6

-Goldman, “What is Justified Belief?” (CS)

-Bonjour, “Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge” (CS)

Week 8 (Oct. 21, 24): continued

-optional: excerpts from Lehrer (CS)

-optional: Dretske, “Two Conceptions of Knowledge....” (CS)

‘Naturalized’ Epistemology: Since Quine’s famous paper, “Epistemology Naturalized” (1969), whether we ought to ‘naturalize’ epistemology – and what, exactly, that would involve – has been a matter of much controversy.

Week 9 (Oct. 28, 31) ‘naturalism’, pro and con

-C: Chapter 7

-Kornblith, “In Defense of a Naturalized Epistemology” (CS)

-optional: Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized” (CS)

Epistemic Values and Norms: It is standard to assume that truth is the epistemic goal, and that anything that is epistemically valuable owes that value to its contribution to truth. But why would truth have this status? And why should we care about epistemic norms?

Week 10 (Nov. 4, 7): epistemic normativity

- Kornblith, “Epistemic Normativity” (CS)
- Grimm, “Epistemic Normativity” (CS)

***STUDY QUESTIONS FOR SECOND MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED THURSDAY NOV. 7**
***SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED**

Week 11 (~~Nov. 11, 14~~) [no class Nov. 11 – Reading Break]

***SECOND MIDTERM: THURSDAY NOV. 14**

Feminist Epistemology: In some ways allied with naturalistic approaches (as well as themes within social epistemology), feminist theory has challenges various assumptions of traditional epistemology.

Week 12 (Nov. 18, 21): feminist epistemology

- C: Chapter 8
- Longino, “Feminist Epistemology” (CS)

Scepticism (again): We return to scepticism, and look at a number of responses to sceptical arguments, including the recent and controversial contextualist response.

Week 13 (Nov. 25, 28) why not scepticism?

- C: Chapter 1, pp. 38-52
- Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge” (CS)

Week 14 (Dec. 2): catch-up/continued

***PAPERS DUE: MONDAY DEC 9**

Some important administrative dates:⁴

- Tues., Sept. 17: last day for 100% reduction of fees.
- Fri., Sept. 20: last day to for adding first-term courses.
- Tues., Oct. 8: last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date.
- Thurs., Oct. 31: last day for withdrawing from second-term courses without penalty of failure.

⁴ <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2019-05/general/dates.html>.