

Syllabus and Course Outline

PHIL 15: Introduction to Knowledge and its Limits

Professor: Matthew Fulkerson
Office Hours: MW 2-3pm H&SS 8073
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Class times and location:
MWF: 12-12:50
CSB 002

Teaching Assistants

Dougherty

McCoy

Course Description

This course will focus on a series of related philosophical issues in the theory of knowledge (epistemology). Topics will include knowledge, justification, the reliability of perception, and the challenge of scepticism. We will consider in particular the nature of knowledge—what knowledge is and what it means to have knowledge. In addition, we will survey those philosophical and scientific methods which purport to secure knowledge.

Required Texts

Epistemology: Contemporary Readings, ed. by Michael Huemer (Routledge)

Additional papers available online.

Requirements

Short Essay 1, 6 pages	30%.
Short Essay 2, 6 pages	30%.
Final Exam	30%
Participation	10%

Extensions will not be granted, except for medical reasons. There will be a late penalty of 5% per day for each day a paper is late, including weekends.

Academic Integrity

The integrity of research and scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For this course, this means that all academic work will

be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. More detailed information concerning the essays and final exam will be made available in class.

In taking this class, all students agree that all required essays will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site. More detailed information about the use of this service will be provided with essay assignments.

All suspicions of academic misconduct will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office according to university policy. Academic misconduct is not just blatant cheating (e.g., copying off another student during an exam), but includes copying other students' essays; copying or using old essays; forgetting to cite material you took from an outside resource; turning in work completed in total or in part by another. This is an incomplete list; if you have questions concerning academic misconduct it is your responsibility to ask me for advice.

Reading Schedule (readings may be adjusted) (H =Huemer, OL=Online)

Week 1: Sep 28: Introduction and General Background,

Introduction, course mechanics, outline, and the epistemological project.

Week 2: Oct 1, 3, 5: The Quest for Certainty

Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapters 1-3; 14-15 (OL here: <http://www.ditext.com/russell/russell.html>)

Roderick Chisholm, *The Problem of the Criterion* (H 590-601)

Week 3: Oct 8, 10, 12: Skepticism (The Challenge)

Descartes, *Meditations* (H: 513-523)

Putnam, "Brains in a Vat" (H: 524-538)

Hume, "Of Scepticism with Regard to Reason" (H 270-274)

Week 4: Oct 15, 17, 19: Skepticism (Problem of Induction)

Hume, Excerpts from *An Enquiry* (H 298-310)

Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* Ch. 6

Nelson Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction" (H 320-332)

Week 5: Oct 22, 24, 26: Skepticism (Replies)

G.E Moore "Proof of an External World" (H: 602-605).

Huemer, "Direct Realism and the Brain in a Vat Argument" (H 575-589)

Peter Klein, "Skepticism and Closure" (H 552-574)

Week 6: Oct 29, 31, Nov 2: Structure of Knowledge (JTB and its Discontents)

First Essay Due in Class Mon Oct 29th

Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (H: 444-446)

Michael Clark, "Knowledge and Grounds" (H: 447-449)

Lehrer and Paxton "Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief" (H: 464-474)

Week 7: Nov 5, 7, 9: The A Priori

Plato, Meno (selection, H 131-140)

Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Ch. 8

A.J. Ayer, "The Elimination of Metaphysics" (H 166-175)

Week 8: Nov 14, 16 (No class on 12th): Justification 1 (Foundationalism and Coherentism)

Laurence Bonjour, "The Structure of Empirical Knowledge" (H 387-401)

William Alston, "Has Foundationalism been Refuted?" (H 402-416)

Week 9: Nov 19, 22 (No class on 23): Justification 2 (Internalism and Externalism)

Alvin Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowledge" (H 450-463)

Matthias Steup: "A Defense of Internalism" (OL/TED)

Week 10: Nov 26, 28, 30: Epistemology Naturalized

Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized." (OL)

*Bishop and Trout, *The Pathologies of Standard Analytic Epistemology* (OL)

Week 11: Dec 3, 5, 7: Testimony

Second Essay Due Mon Dec 3rd

John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (H 219-221)

David Hume, "Of Miracles" (H 221-234)

C.A.J. Coady "Testimony and Observation" (H 239-252)

Final Exam: Thursday, Dec 13th, 11:30-2:30, room tba