

Philosophy 132
Epistemology
Prof. G. Sher
Fall 2013

Topic: Skepticism & The Foundation of Knowledge

Description: The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar in the sense that we focus on original texts and we pursue a line of thought that goes from traditional philosophical concerns to a contemporary philosophical methodology for dealing with some of these concerns. Specifically, we will begin with traditional skepticism (Descartes and Hume) and 20th century “foundationalist” approach to the foundation of knowledge (Carnap), continue to Quine’s two revolutions (new model of knowledge & naturalism), evaluate some of their advantages and shortcomings, and propose a new “foundational holistic” methodology and a new model of knowledge (Sher).

Grades: Midterm - 30%, Paper - 30%, Final - 40%
Office Hours - T 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

Schedule of Classes

Th 9/26	Introduction to Class
T 10/1	Skepticism: Plato, Descartes Plato: “Parable of the Cave” Descartes: <i>Discourse on Method</i> - Parts I, IV, V.
Th 10/3	Skepticism: Descartes Descartes: <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> - Meditations I-III.
T 10/8	Skepticism: Hume Hume: “An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature”
Th 10/10	Skepticism: Hume Hume: <i>An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> - Sections IV, V.
T 10/15	Traditional Foundationalism Sosa: “The Foundations of Foundationalism” Sosa: “The Raft & the Pyramid: Coherence Vs. Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge”

- Th 10/17 New Methodology: Foundational Holism
Sher: “Foundational Holism: An Epistemic Methodology”
- T 10/22 20th-Century Foundationalism
Carnap: *The Logical Structure of the World* - Selection
- Th 10/24 20th-Century Foundationalism
Carnap: “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology”
- T 10/29 Quine’s First Revolution
Quine: “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”
- Th 10/31 Quine’s First Revolution
Quine: “Carnap & Logical Truth”
- T 11/5 **Midterm**
- Th 11/7 An Inner Tension in Quine’s Model of Knowledge
Sher: “Is There a Place for Philosophy in Quine’s Theory”
- T 11/12 A Thoroughly Dynamic Model of Knowledge: Sher
Sher: “Basic Principles & Differences from Quine”
- Th 11/14 Quine’s Second Revolution
Quine: “Epistemology Naturalized”
- T 11/19 Critique of Quine’s Naturalism
Friedman: “Philosophical Naturalism”
- Th 11/21 Back to Basics
Sher: “Epistemic Friction & Freedom”
- T 11/26 Role of Intellect in Knowledge
Sher: “Basic Principles & Differences from Quine” (Reality, Realism, Reason)

Th 11/28 UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

T 12/3 TBD

Th 12/5 TBD

Texts

Carnap, R. 1928. *The Logical Structure of the World* - Selection
Internet Reserves

Carnap, R. 1950. "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology"
Internet Reserves

Descartes, R. 1637. *Discourse on Method* - Parts I, IV, V.
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/descdisc.pdf>

Descartes, R. 1641. *Meditations on First Philosophy* - Meditations I-III.
<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/descartes/meditations/meditations.html>
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/descartes/1639/meditations.htm>
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/descmedi.pdf>

Friedman, M. 1997. "Philosophical Naturalism"
http://ethik.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/inst_ethik_wiss_dialog/Friedman__M._1997._Philosophical_naturalism_In_Proceedings.pdf

Hume, D. 1740. "An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature"
Internet Reserves

Hume, D. 1748. *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* - Sections IV, V.
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/he1.pdf>
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/humeenqu.pdf>
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9662/9662-h/9662-h.htm>

Plato. ~380 BC. "Parable of the Cave"
<http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/platoscave.html>
<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/allegory.html>
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.8.vii.html>

Quine, W.V. 1951. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"
Internet Reserves

Quine, W.V. 1954. "Carnap & Logical Truth"
Internet Reserves

Quine, W.V. 1969. "Epistemology Naturalized"
Internet Reserves

Sosa, E. 1980. "The Foundations of Foundationalism"
Internet Reserves

Sosa, E. 1980. "The Raft & the Pyramid: Coherence Vs. Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge"
http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Course_Websites/Readings/Sosa%20-%20Raft%20and%20Pyramid.pdf

Sher, G. 1999. "Is There a Place for Philosophy in Quine's Theory"
Internet Reserves

Sher, G. 2013. "Epistemic Friction & Freedom"
Internet Reserves

Sher, G. 2013. "Foundational Holism: An Epistemic Methodology"
Internet Reserves

Sher, G. 2013. "Basic Principles & Differences from Quine"
Internet Reserves