

## Phil 15: Knowledge and its Limits

---

Professor: Matthew Fulkerson  
email: mfulkerson@ucsd.edu  
TAs: Braich & Sutter

CSB 002, 12-12:50  
Office: HSS 8073  
Hours: Weds 2-3pm

---

### Course Description:

This course will focus on a series of related philosophical issues in the theory of knowledge (epistemology). Topics will include knowledge, justification, perception, testimony, science, skepticism, Non-Western, and feminist approaches to knowledge. 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:

The book *Knowledge: A very short introduction* by Jennifer Nagel, is the only required book. All other readings will be made available online or through the TED site for the course.

### Course Mechanics:

**TA and Discussion Sections:** TBA

**TED:** There is a TED site for the course. All handouts, slides, homework assignments, and supplementary readings (if any) will be made available through this site. It is your responsibility to check this site regularly.

**Lectures and discussion:** I lecture with slides. The slides will be used to focus discussion and organize complex material; they are not a substitute for the readings. The slides will be made available on TED a few days *after* lecture. Students are expected to take careful notes and will be held responsible for the material discussed in class not found on the slides or in the readings.

**Reading Assignments:** Students are expected to read each selection prior to class (preferably more than once). You should take notes while reading, keeping track of questions or issues that arise. You should bring both the reading and the notes/questions to class. Readings from *Knowledge* are not listed; you will be expected to be familiar with the relevant sections as we go along.

## Grading:

There are two short essays, a final exam, and a discussion section grade:

Assignments	Value	Due Date
Essay 1 (6 pgs)	30%	Mon, April 27th
Essay 2 (6 pgs)	30%	Friday, May 29th
Section	10%	n/a
Final	30%	6/10, 11:30-2:30

## Course Policies:

To avoid penalties for late assignments, students must provide official documentation explaining why the assignment could not be handed in on time. Late homework without documentation will not be accepted. Late papers without documentation will receive a late penalty of 1/3 letter grade for each day a paper is late, including weekend days (no exceptions).

**Turnitin:** Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism (via the TED interface). 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.

**Academic Integrity:** 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.

## Tentative Reading Schedule (subject to change):

- **Week 1: Introduction, Implicit Bias**  
M (30th): Introduction, course mechanics, outline  
W (1st): Tamar Gendler, “On the Epistemic Cost of Implicit Bias,” (TED);  
F (3rd): NO CLASS
- **Week 2: The Quest for Certainty**  
M (6th): Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapters 1, 2 (available online [here](#))  
W (8th): Descartes, “Selections from *The Meditations*” (TED)  
F (10th): Jessica Wilson, “The regress argument against Cartesian skepticism” (TED)
- **Week 3: What is Knowledge?**  
M (13th): Roderick Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion” (TED)  
W (15th): Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (TED) F (17th): Coherentism, Foundationalism, and Infallibilism (Nagel)
- **Week 4: Non-Western Epistemology**  
M (20th): Jonathan Stoltz, “Buddhist Epistemology” W (22nd): Richard Hayes, “On the Buddha’s Authority: A Translation of the Pramanasiddhi Chapter of Dharmakirti’s Pramanavarttika”  
F (24th): Hayes, Continued
- **Week 5: Testimony**  
M (27th): Hume, “On Miracles” (TED) **First Essay Due** W (29th): Jennifer Lackey, “The Nature of Testimony”  
F (1st): Lackey, Continued
- **Week 6: Contextualism**  
M (4th): Keith DeRose, “Contextualism: An Explanation and Defense”  
W (6th): DeRose, Continued  
F (8th): Richard Feldman, “Skeptical Problems, Contextualist Solutions”
- **Week 7: Epistemology and Decision Making**  
M (11th): L.A. Paul, “What you can’t expect when you’re expecting”  
W (13th): Paul, Continued F (15th): Selection from Bishop and Trout, *Epistemology and the Psychology of Human Judgement*

- **Week 8: Epistemology of Perception**

M (18th): James Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist” (TED)

W (20th): Susanna Siegel, “Cognitive Penetrability and Perceptual Justification”

F (22nd): Siegel, Continued

- **Week 9: Feminist and Social Epistemology**

M (25th): NO CLASS – Memorial Day

W (27th): Lorraine Code: “Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?” (TED)

F (29th): **SECOND ESSAY DUE**; Code, Continued

- **Week 10: The Future of Epistemology**

M (1st): Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized” (TED)

W (3rd): Bishop and Trout, “The Pathologies of Standard Analytic Epistemology” (TED)

F (5th): Bishop and Trout, Continued