

PHIL 15 – Introduction to Philosophy:
Knowledge and its Limits

UCSD Spring 2016

TuTh 11:00-12:20, CSB 001

Instructor: Matt Evpak (mevpak@ucsd.edu), HSS 8085

Instructor Office Hour: W 1pm-2pm and by appt.

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TA Office Hours: M 12pm-2pm

Final: Tuesday, June 7, 11:30-2:30

Course Description

The theory of knowledge, or *epistemology*, has always been a core component of Western philosophy. Two of the fundamental questions of epistemology are 1) what is the *nature* of human knowledge?, and 2) what is the *scope* of human knowledge? In other words, what does it mean for us to have knowledge, and how far does our capacity for knowledge reach?

These will be the two guiding questions of the class. We'll critically examine a number of traditional and contemporary ways that philosophers have sought to address them, and the goal is for you to be able to think through the merits and drawbacks of various perspectives on the nature and scope of our knowledge. And as we'll see, epistemology has important consequences for other major philosophical topics (morality, the nature of reality) as well as for other areas of human thought (science, religion).

Course Materials

There's a textbook—*What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?*, by Duncan Pritchard—and you'll also need to have an i-clicker which is registered to your name. You can register it on the course's TritonEd site (<https://tritoned.ucsd.edu/>). *Be sure to bring your i-clicker to class every day, since it'll be used for the purpose of taking attendance.* The textbook and i-clicker are both available for purchase at the campus bookstore.

Coursework and Grades

Your grade is a function of:

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Midterm 1: 20%

Midterm 2: 20%

Final Exam: 40%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and active membership in class are required. This is especially important in discussion section, but you're also welcome to speak up in lecture when you find the content unclear or when you have an objection or misgiving with regard to the claim or idea under discussion.

Lecture attendance will be measured through your i-clicker, so don't forget to bring it with you to lecture every day. There'll be at least one clicker question every lecture (and probably always more than one), and *you'll get attendance credit for a day if you participate in at least half of that day's clicker questions*. So please arrive to class on time and stay until it's over.

Exams

All three tests will be in-class and closed-book, but for each one you'll be allowed a single sheet (front and back) of handwritten—not printed—notes. The tests will consist in a mix of short answer and essay questions, which will ask you to offer your own analysis and evaluation of the claims, arguments, and positions that we examine in class. *The purpose of the tests is for you to demonstrate your ability to think originally and justify your views with reasoned argument, not just to repeat what's been said in class.* You'll need an unmarked blue book at each test.

Schedule and Readings

All readings are from *What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?* Reading schedule is subject to change. Please complete each day's assigned reading before coming to class that day. The text is written at a fairly advanced level, so don't be discouraged if you don't understand all of it; you'll still benefit from having done it, and you're welcome to bring your questions to class.

Week 1: Introduction

Tu 3/29: No reading
Th 3/31: Chapters 1-2

Week 6: Religion

Tu 5/3: Chapter 12
Th 5/5: No reading

Week 2: The Nature of Knowledge

Tu 4/5: Chapter 3
Th 4/7: Chapter 4

Week 7: Morality

Tu 5/10: Chapter 13
Th 5/12: No reading

Week 3: Reason and Experience

Tu 4/12: Chapter 7
Th 4/14: Chapter 9

Week 8: The Mind

Tu 5/17: Chapter 14
Th 5/19: Second midterm

Week 4: Inductive Reasoning

Tu 4/19: Chapter 10
Th 4/21: First midterm

Week 9: Skepticism

Tu 5/24: Chapter 15
Th 5/26: No reading

Week 5: Science

Tu 4/26: Chapter 11
Th 4/28: No reading

Week 10: Realism and Relativism

Tu 5/31: Chapter 16
Th 6/2: No reading

Policies

Technology

Except in cases of need as documented by the OSD, **no technology use will be permitted during class. This includes phones, laptops, tablets, and other such devices.** (But this doesn't apply to your i-clicker, of course.) You're welcome to take notes by hand. I plan to put the lecture slides

on the TritonEd site, so don't worry about copying those down.

Email

Please use only your UCSD email address to communicate with me and Emma about this course. I'll try to respond to student emails within 24 hours, but questions about readings, grades, etc are best taken up in office hours.

Special Accommodations through the Office for Students with Disabilities

Students seeking accommodations for disability are welcome to show me a letter of Authorization for Accommodation from the OSD. Details [here](#).

Academic Integrity

You're responsible for knowing and observing the university's rules on academic integrity. As in any course, you **must** abide by UCSD's [integrity policies](#).