

PHIL 240 004 Knowledge and Reality: Introduction to Epistemology

Time: 2pm - 3.30pm, Tues Thurs

Location: Buchanan D317

Teachers

Jasper Heaton (she/they) - Instructor

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Office Hours: Weds, 12pm, on Zoom (link on Canvas)

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Course Description

In this course we will be exploring various philosophical analyses of the concept and phenomenon of knowledge. We will start with a discussion of skepticism and consider whether we can know anything at all, and following this we will spend some time analyzing the concept of justification, and consider how we justify our beliefs and opinions. We will think a bit about science and look at a particular problem for scientific inquiry, known as the problem of underdetermination. After this we will do some socially critical epistemology. We will look at the idea that knowing is a social activity done by socially situated people. We will explore the ways in which what (and how) we know is informed and influenced by social dynamics, and we will consider how knowledge and ignorance are implicated in systems of oppression. At the end of the course we will think about the relationship between loving and knowing.

This course is designed to give you a sufficient background in epistemology, while also introducing you to how the field of epistemology has been evolving in the last few decades.

Learning Activities

In this course you will:

- Read course materials and attend lectures
- Participate in group discussions
- Write essays
- Give and receive feedback
- Ask questions

Assessments and Weighting

PLEASE NOTE - all written assignments will be completed in-class. **You cannot complete written assignments outside of class.**

Weekly Reading Responses, 15% of Final Grade

Due **BEFORE CLASS** every Thursday (excluding week 1)

Recorded submission

Submit an audio or video file of yourself asking a question about (one of) the reading(s) of that week

Your question should be:

- Roughly one minute long
- Related to a concept, theme, or passage in that reading
- Motivated - that is, you should say why you are asking this question
- Audible (it is your responsibility to ensure that your submission is audible)

Weekly Participation, 15% of Final Grade

Submitted in class every Thursday (excluding week 1)

Completed with your discussion group

Make sure the name and student number of every member of your group is on the file you submit

4 Sentence Essay x2, 20% of Final Grade (10% per essay)

A philosophical essay that defends a thesis against an objection in 4 sentences

These essays will be written **in class**

- Essay 1: written **in class Feb 12**
- Essay 2: written **in class March 5**

Term Paper, 30% of Final Grade

A philosophical essay that defends a thesis against an objection

- Due April 9
- 1,500 words
- The essay will be written **in class** during **weeks 13 and 14**

Final Exam, 20% of Final Grade

A written exam consisting of short questions and one long question

Date TBA

Class Schedule, Topics, and Reading List

PLEASE NOTE - you should complete the week's readings **before class on Thursday that week**

Week	Topic and Activity	Reading
Week 1 Jan 6, 8	Introductions Radical Skepticism and the Question of Knowledge	Rene Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy - read meditations 1 and 2
Week 2 Jan 13, 15	Responses to Radical Skepticism	G. E. Moore, Proof of an External World Jennifer Nagel, Shifting Standards?
Week 3 Jan 20, 22	Humean Skepticism	David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding - read section 4 and part 1 of section 5
Week 4 Jan 27, 29	Skepticism About Science: Underdetermination and Pseudoscience	Kyle Stanford, Underdetermination of Scientific Theory , read sections 1, 2 Sven Ove Hansson, Science and Pseudo-Science , read sections 1, 2, and 3
Week 5 Feb 3, 5	Justification: Internalism and Externalism	Alvin Goldman, What is Justified Belief?
Week 6 Feb 10, 12	Justification: Foundationalism and Coherentism 4 Sentence Essay Due Feb 12	Ernest Sosa, The Raft and the Pyramid , read sections 1-6
Week 7 READING WEEK	No class	No reading

Week 8 Feb 24, 26	Standpoint Theory and the Socially Situated Knower	Nancy Hartsock, The Feminist Standpoint
Week 9 March 3, 5	Knowledge in the Age of “Post Truth” Politics: Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles 4 Sentence Essay Due March 5	Thi Nguyễn, Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles
Week 10 March 10, 12	Epistemic Injustices and the Harming of Knowers	Miranda Fricker, Epistemic Injustice. Read section 2.3 of chapter 2 , and section 7.1 of chapter 7 Gaile Pohlhaus, Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Towards a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance
Week 11 March 17, 19	Knowledge is Power and the Structure of Ignorance	Charles Mills, White Ignorance Anna Cook, Recognizing Settler Ignorance in the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Week 12, March 24, 26	The Epistemology of Resistance	Marilyn Frye, To Be and Be Seen: The Politics of Reality Patricia Hill Collins, Learning from the Outsider Within Christopher Mole, Emancipatory Attention
Week 13 March 31, April 2	Term Paper	No reading
Week 14 April 7, 9	Term Paper	No reading
Date TBA	Final Exam	

Course Policies

Content Warning and Classroom Policy

In this course we will cover a number of topics, issues, and real world events that may have affected the personal lives of students taking this course and the teachers teaching it. While it is important that we be able to freely pursue academic inquiry into these issues, it is equally important we be attentive and sensitive to the different ways people might be affected by these issues and by our study of them. As a student it is your right to bring your personal and lived experiences to your studies in this course. It is also your duty to be respectful of other people’s experiences, no matter how different they are from your own. At its best the study of philosophy is collaborative, constructive, and respectful of individuality. I hope that throughout this course we will all do our best to embody these norms.

University Policies and Support

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of

sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Policy on Late Work

You are expected to submit your assignments by the due date. Failure to do so may result in late penalties or a fail grade for the course.

If **FOR ANY REASON** you are not able to submit your work on time **please contact either the instructor or the TA** to request an extension.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.

Policy on A.I.

You are not permitted to write assignments with the use of generative A.I. Any assignment completed with A.I. will receive a 0. Repeated offences will result in failing the course.

Copyright

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