

Phil 15: Knowledge and its Limits

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TAs: Brink & Messina

Centr 113, 10-10:50
Office: HSS 873
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, 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:

All readings will be in *What is This Thing Called Knowledge?* (TTCK) by Duncan Pritchard, or available 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.

Grading:

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

Assignments	Value	Due Date
Essay 1 (6 pgs)	30%	Mon, April 28th
Essay 2 (6 pgs)	30%	Friday, May 23rd
Participation	10%	n/a
Final	30%	6/09, 8-11am

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, background**
M: Introduction, course mechanics, outline
W: Basic logic and philosophical tools
F: The epistemological project
- **Week 2: The Quest for Certainty**
M: Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapters 1; 14-15
(available online [here](#))
W: Russell Chapter 2
F: Russell Chapter 3
- **Week 3: What is Knowledge?**
M: TTCK 1: truth and belief
W: TTCK 2: why should we care?
F: TTCK 3 & Roderick Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion” (TED):
The problem of the criterion
- **Week 4: What is Knowledge? 2**
M: TTCK 4: The structure of knowledge & Gettier, “Is Justified True
Belief Knowledge?” (TED)
W: TTCK 5: Rationality
F: TTCK 6: Virtue epistemology
- **Week 5: Sources of Knowledge**
M: TTCK 7: Perception, **First Essay Due**
W: TTCK 8 & Hume, “On Miracles” (TED): Testimony
F: TTCK 9: The a priori
- **Week 6: Kinds of Knowledge**
M: TTCK 11: Scientific Knowledge
W: TTCK 12: Religious Knowledge
F: TTCK 13: Moral knowledge
- **Week 7: Global Skepticism**
M: TTCK 14 & Descartes, “From the Meditations” (TED):
W: TTCK 15 & G.E Moore: “A Defense of Common Sense”
F: TTCK 16: Truth and Objectivity

- **Week 8: Problem of Induction**

M: TTCK 10 & Hume, “The Problem of Induction” (TED): Induction

W: Russell, “On Induction” (TED): Possible Solution?

F: Goodman, “The New Riddle of Induction” **Second Essay Due**

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

M: NO CLASS – Memorial Day

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

F: Code cont’

- **Week 10: Naturalized Epistemology**

M: Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized.” (TED) W: Bishop and Trout, “The Pathologies of Standard Analytic Epistemology” (TED)

F: Bishop and Trout cont’