

Philosophy 319
Theory of Knowledge
Spring 2005

MWF 3:00pm, Palmer 207
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Description

The theory of knowledge, or epistemology, comprises one of the three core areas of philosophy. In this course, I will introduce you to some of the central questions that occupy contemporary epistemologists and some of the answers that they have advanced.

The questions, in the order in which will address them, are as follows:

1. Can we have knowledge of the external world? Can we know, for example, that we are not plugged into the Matrix?
2. Is knowledge adequately analyzed as justified true belief? If not, what is knowledge?
3. Does knowledge require a foundation? Some of our beliefs are justified in terms of other beliefs. But are there any beliefs that do not derive their justification from other beliefs? If so, how are they justified? If not, how is a regress avoided?
4. If knowledge requires justification, what is justification? What conditions need to be met in order for it to be true that a cognizer holds a justified belief?
5. Are the elements that justify our beliefs always cognitively accessible to us? If I justifiably believe that (say) grass is green, does it follow that I must be aware of what it is that justifies that belief? What of significance turns on this question?

Required Text

Sosa, Ernest, and Jaegwon Kim, eds. *Epistemology: An Anthology*. Blackwell, 2000.

In addition, there may be readings on reserve in Barret Library.

Course Requirements

Your course grade will be determined according to the following elements and percentages. Due dates are subject to change.

1 4 pg. Paper	25%	M, Feb. 13
1 5 pg. Paper	27.5%	F, March 24
1 5-7 pg. Paper	32.5%	F, April 28
Preparation & Participation	15%	continual

As due dates approach, we will discuss the nature of the assignments and strategies for preparing for them.

As part of your preparation & participation grade, you have a standing assignment for each essay read. See the attached assignment sheet.

Attendance

Attendance is required. I will allow 4 absences, whether excused or unexcused. Beyond that, your course grade will be penalized by excessive absences. In extreme cases, an F for the course may be assigned.

Late work policy

I am extremely reluctant to grant extensions on written work, and typically will do so only given circumstances so serious that they require the attention of the Dean of Students (e.g. medical or family emergency). For unauthorized late work, I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade each day (e.g., A- to a B+, or a B+ to a B). Each calendar day counts. Note: you can always submit your paper via e-mail.

Note: In light of fairness concerns, I have decided to rededicate myself to this policy. Be aware that I intend to apply the policy strictly this semester.

Class Conduct

Please treat each other with courtesy and respect. Listen when your classmates offer their insights. Offer your own criticisms constructively.

I expect students to arrive to class on time. Do not make a habit of entering the class 5 min. late. It is distracting to the other students and to me and undermines the course's goals.

The Honor Code

You are expected to observe the Honor Code at all times. All work on graded material should be your own. I encourage you, however, to discuss the course outside of class (with each other and with me). We'll talk about Honor Code restrictions on specific assignments later in the semester.

Reading List
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What follows is a tentative reading list. All the readings listed below are in Sosa and Kim, eds., Epistemology: Anthology. I may add some readings not in this anthology. If I do, they will be put on reserve in Barret Library. In general, we will read the essays in the order they appear. To provide structure, I will make an announcement at the beginning of class about what readings we will be doing for the week and when a given reading reaction is due. You are expected to read the essay to be discussed before the day on which we discuss it. Please note that the reading list is not firm. I may choose to deviate from the order, skip some, or add other, essays. As such, you should be careful to listen for announcements at the beginning of class, as well as check your e-mail occasionally.

Unit I. Skepticism

1. Barry Stroud, "The Problem of the External World."
2. G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World."
3. G.E. Moore, "Four Forms of Scepticism."
4. G.E. Moore, "Certainty."
5. P.F. Strawson, "Skepticism, Naturalism and Transcendental Arguments."
6. Peter Unger, "An Argument for Skepticism."

Unit II. Defining Knowledge

7. Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
8. Peter Klein, "A Proposed Definition of Propositional Knowledge."
9. Gilbert Harman, "Selections from *Thought*."
10. Robert Nozick, "Knowledge and Skepticism."

Unit III. Contemporary Foundationalism and Coherentism

11. Roderick Chisholm, "The Myth of the Given."
12. Wilfrid Sellars, "Does Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"
13. Wilfrid Sellars, "Epistemic Principles."
14. Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid."
15. Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge."

Unit IV. Epistemic Justification

16. Richard Feldman & Earl Conee, "Evidentialism."
17. Richard Foley, "Skepticism and Rationality."
18. John Pollock, "Epistemic Norms."
19. Susan Haack, "A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification."

Unit V. Epistemic Externalism

20. Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"
21. Willaim Alston, "How to Think about Reliability."
22. Earl Conee & Richard Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism."

23. Keith Lehrer, "Externalism and Epistemology Naturalized."
24. Richard Fumerton, "Externalism and Skepticism."
25. John McDowell, "Knowledge and the Internal."
26. Robert Brandom, "Knowledge and the Social Articulation of the Space of Reasons."

Unit VI. The Pyrrhonian Problematic

27. James van Cleve, "Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle."
28. Laurence Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"
29. Ernest Sosa, "Reflective Knowledge in the Best of Circles."

Unit VII. Virtue Epistemology and Proper Cognitive Functioning

30. Alvin Goldman, "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology."
31. Alvin Plantinga, "Warrant: A First Approximation."
32. Linda Zagzebski, "Virtues of the Mind."
33. John Greco, "Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology."