

Theory of Knowledge

PHIL 3610

Instructor: Dr. Wright

Time: 12:30-1:45 Tuesday and Thursday

Office Hours: 3:00-5:00 Tuesday

Office: 101 c Peabody Hall

Email: sawright@uga.edu

Required Text: Greco and Sosa, *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*

Website: Sign in at webct.uga.edu

Course Topic:

This class is a survey of issues in contemporary analytic epistemology. We will focus on a number of different topics, and for each one we will read authors representing different viewpoints and arguments for those viewpoints. The main topics will be: skepticism; epistemic contextualism; defining knowledge; foundationalism and coherentism; epistemic externalism; epistemology naturalized, and feminist and social epistemology.

Course Goals:

One of the goals of this course will be to familiarize you with a number of different positions and debates in recent epistemology. To do this we will spend time differentiating the various positions and then focus on the arguments presented in favor of them. Through the course of the semester you will also learn to analyze these arguments with a critical eye. This critical ability should allow you finally to be able to identify your own position within these issues, and to defend the position you take up with clear and well thought-out arguments.

Assignments:

Reading Assignments: This is a reading intensive class. Carefully reading and re-reading the assigned articles is an important element of this class. You are expected to come to class every day having read and understood the assigned material, and ready to discuss that material. You need to be prepared, because I will be calling on students to answer questions and comment on the reading from the beginning of every class period. Using this understanding we will then be able to move on and critically discuss the arguments in the readings. Such critical discussion is the main activity of philosophy, and is crucial to the development of your own viewpoints and your own arguments for those viewpoints. Your participation in the discussion will be reflected in your participation grade, and you will not do well in this unless you come to class having read and thought about the readings.

In most of the readings for this class, the author will be trying to convince you to agree with their position on an issue. So, fully understanding an article involves not only knowing what the author says, but also thinking critically about the arguments the author gives in favor of what they say, as well as thinking about what reasons you have to either agree or disagree with the author.

Writing Assignments:

Short Commentaries: In order to encourage you to read our authors critically and to think about your own opinion, you will be asked to contribute to the WebCT discussions on the readings approximately once each week. Your contribution may be a question that the reading has left you with, a comment on the reading, or a response to the commentaries that others have posted. Commentaries should be at least 200 words long and should demonstrate that you have carefully done the reading. Your commentaries should be posted on WebCT by the end of the day before the class in which we will discuss the reading. Your dates to contribute

will be determined by your last name; see the schedule on WebCT for exact dates. Your short commentaries will make up 10% of your grade.

Papers: During the course of the semester, you will be asked to write two 5-8 page papers. In each paper you will be asked to present an issue and then argue in favor of your own position on that issue. You will also be asked to consider at least one objection to your position, and respond to that objection. Each paper will determine 40% of your grade.

Attendance and Participation: I expect you to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned material. Participation in class discussion will help you to better understand the material, and to correct and refine your own view of the issues and arguments. From time to time I may have in-class activities or quizzes, and these will also count toward your participation grade. Your attendance and participation will determine 10% of your grade.

Final Exam: The final exam will be optional. It will be in-class, closed book, and cumulative. It may contain a variety of question formats, including essay, short answer, and fill-in-the-blank. The final will be held on December 10 from 12:00 to 3:00. If you choose to take the final exam, it will determine 40% of your grade and replace your lower paper grade.

Grade Appeals:

Any dispute you have about any grade must be presented to me in a one-page typewritten explanation within one week of my handing back the graded material.

Plagiarism/Cheating:

It is very important that all work you submit in this class be your own original words and ideas. You are allowed, even encouraged, to talk to each other before the exam and about your writing assignments. However, all the work you turn in must be your own ideas, in your own words, and any reference to anyone else's words or ideas should be clearly cited. Any instance of plagiarism on written assignments or cheating on in-class exams will result in your failing this class, and will be reported to the University.

Important Dates:

First Paper Due: February 19th

Second Paper Due: April 24th

Final Exam: Tue, May 6, 12:00 - 3:00 pm

Readings: May change. All changes will be posted on WebCT

Skepticism

Michael Williams, Skepticism

G. E. Moore, Proof of an External World

Peter Unger, An Argument for Skepticism

Epistemic Contextualism

Keith DeRose, Contextualism: An Explanation and Defense

Schiffer, Contextualist Solutions to Skepticism

Defining Knowledge

Edmund Gettier, Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?

Peter Klein, A Proposed Definition of Propositional Knowledge

Zabzebski, What Is Knowledge?

Foundationalism and Coherentism

Roderick Chisholm, The Myth of the Given

Wilfrid Sellars, Does Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?

Laurence Bonjour, The Dialectic of Foundationalism and Coherentism

Epistemic Externalism

Alvin Goldman, What Is Justified Belief?

Conee and Feldman, The Generality Problem for Reliabilism

Henderson and Horgan, Practicing Safe Epistemology

Epistemology Naturalized

W.V. Quine, Epistemology Naturalized

Jaegwon Kim, What Is "Naturalized Epistemology?"

Hilary Kornblith, In Defense of a Naturalized Epistemology

Feminist and Social Epistemology

Helen Longino Feminist Epistemology

Frederick Schmitt, Social Epistemology

Louise Antony, Sisters, Please, I'd Rather Do It Myself