

# Syllabus for Epistemology Seminar Spring 2008

## Topic: Virtue Epistemology

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Wright  
Meeting: Thursday 3:30-6:00  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-5:00  
Instructor e-mail: [sawright@uga.edu](mailto:sawright@uga.edu)  
Course web page: Log on at [webct.uga.edu](http://webct.uga.edu)

### **Topic of this Course:**

In this seminar we will be focusing on the topic of Virtue Epistemology. Virtue epistemology is a relatively recent development in contemporary epistemology. It is marked by a change in the central question of epistemology from “What is a Good/Justified Belief?” to “What is a Good Believer?”. This change of approach is motivated in different ways for different authors, as well as implemented in a variety of different ways. We will begin this seminar by considering the main players in the field of contemporary virtue epistemology, and by looking closely at the different theories that they offer. We will then turn to debates between these different theorists, and others, about virtue epistemology ought to be implemented. We will cover debates about internalism vs externalism and reliabilism vs responsibilism as well as discussions about the proper analysis of knowledge and the proper role of understanding in epistemology. Finally we will look at areas where virtue epistemology makes contact with issues in cognitive science and ethics. The connection with cognitive science will raise questions about the use of rules in our reasoning about, and implementation of, the epistemic virtues. The connection with ethics will start with a focus on ethical luck and us to a debate about the acceptable level of luck in epistemology.

### **Assignments for this Course:**

*In-class Presentation:* During the course of the semester all students will be asked to make one presentation. This presentation should last between 10-20 minutes and should consist of exegesis of the assigned readings, as well as any comments or criticisms you would like to make. You are encouraged to sign up to present on a topic that interests you, as making this presentation may serve to help you prepare to write your term paper.

*Term Paper:* Approximately 20 pages in length. This paper should take up an issue discussed in class (or a related issue in epistemology) demonstrate your understanding of the basic concepts and debates in that area, and then defend a position of your own in this area. You are encouraged to talk with me about your topic as soon as you have a rough idea what it may be and I will suggest supplementary readings for you in that area. Due April 29.

### **Reading schedule** (May be revised)

All readings not in the assigned texts will be made available on-line through WebCT

Jan 10: Introduction

(optional) Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on Epistemology by Matthias Steup

Jan 17: Sosa, Ernest – “The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge”, “Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue”, and “A Virtue Epistemology”

## The Basics

Jan 24 Goldman, Alvin – “Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology”  
Greco, John – “Agent Reliabilism”

Jan 31 Zagzebski, Linda – *Virtues of the Mind*

Feb 7 Zagzebski, Linda – *Virtues of the Mind* cont.

Feb 14 Roberts and Wood *Intellectual Virtue*

Feb 21: Wood and Roberts *Intellectual Virtue* cont.

## Issues in Virtue Epistemology

Feb 28: Annas, Julia – “The Structure of Virtue”  
Monmarquet, James – “An ‘Internalist’ Conception of Epistemic Virtue”  
Code, Lorraine – “Towards a Responsibilist Epistemology”

March 6: Greco, John – “Two Kinds of Intellectual Virtue”  
Zagzebski, Linda “From Reliabilism to Virtue Epistemology”  
Sosa, Ernest “Proper Functionalism and Virtue Epistemology”

March 13: No Class – Spring Break

March 20: No Class – Pacific APA

March 27 Greco, John – “Knowledge as Credit for True Belief”  
Sosa, Ernest – “Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue”  
Zagzebski, Linda – “What is Knowledge”

April 3:  
Zagzebski, Linda – “Recovering Understanding”  
Riggs, Wayne – “Understanding ‘Virtue’ and the Virtue of Understanding”

April 10: Roberts – “Virtues and Rules”  
Horgan and Tienson “Representation Without Rules”  
DeMoss --Aristotle, Connectionism, and the Morally Excellent Brain

April 17:  
Axtell – “Felix Culpa - Luck in Ethics and Epistemology”  
Sherman, Nancy & White, Heath – “Intellectual Virtue: Emotions, Luck, and the Ancients”

April 24:  
Greco – “Virtue and Luck, Epistemic and Otherwise”  
Pritchard, Duncan – “Virtue Epistemology and Epistemic Luck”