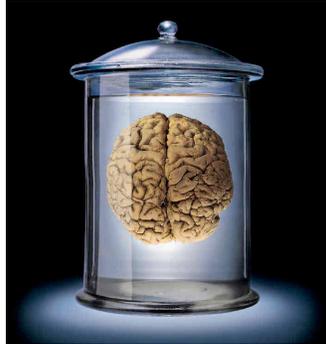


THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2014-15

PHIL 3501G: Epistemology



Winter Term 2015

TU 11:30-1:30 p.m. THU 11:30-12:30 p.m.

Location: TC 343

Instructor: Alkistis Elliott-Graves

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Office Hours: TU 2.30-4.30

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DESCRIPTION

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy directed at understanding what knowledge is and how we acquire it. Of central importance is the issue of *epistemic justification*—when, if ever, are we justified in claiming that a belief or proposition counts as *knowledge*? Throughout the 20th century, analytic epistemologists have provided different and competing responses to this question. The general approach that they take to this question, namely, to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, is referred to as “The Standard Analytic Approach”.

However, philosophers critical of standard approaches have sought alternative ways of understanding what knowledge is and how we come to have it. For example, some have turned to those sciences that study human cognitive processes (e.g., cognitive psychology) in order to identify those reasoning strategies most likely to be “knowledge-producing”. These philosophers take what is referred to as a “Naturalistic Approach”.

However, one limitation of naturalized approaches to knowledge is that their legitimacy is to a significant extent contingent on whether those sciences that study human cognitive processes are knowledge generating. This can only be determined if the methods by which these sciences produce knowledge claims are subjected to adequate scrutiny. The domain of philosophy of science that is intended to serve this function is the “Epistemology of Experiment”. Philosophers who work in this area are interested in determining when investigative strategies used in science are knowledge generating, when they fail to be, and why. Findings from such analyses are often used as a basis for making suggestions as to how to improve these strategies.

In this course, we will consider representative examples of each of these three types of approaches to understanding what knowledge is and how we acquire it. While we will concern ourselves primarily with assessing the merits and failings of paradigmatic examples of each

approach, our ultimate goal is to use the fruits of our analyses to answer for ourselves the questions of what knowledge is and when, if ever, we are justified in claiming that we have it.

TEXTS

- (1) Williams, Michael. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- (2) Additional readings (journal articles) will be made available as pdfs on Owl.

OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will have developed a detailed understanding of a subset of traditional and contemporary approaches to the issues of knowledge and epistemic justification, the ability to critically evaluate these positions, and the capacity to formulate and defend a position on a topic in contemporary epistemology that interests them.

REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Class attendance & Participation:** 20%
- 2. Papers:** 80%
 - Paper 1 (20%) (800-1000 words)
 - Paper 2 (20%) (800-1000 words)
 - Paper 3 (40%) (1000-1500 words)

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

SCHOLASTIC CONDUCT AND OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of this service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is

your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Topics and Readings

(subject to change)

Date	Topic	Reading
Jan 6	Introduction - <i>What is Epistemology and why should we care about it?</i>	- No Reading (Start reading for Jan 8 th)
 Part I. Problems of Knowledge		
Jan 8	The Standard Analysis - <i>What is Knowledge?</i>	- MW Introduction (pp. 1-12) - MW Chapter 1
Jan 13	The Gettier Problem - <i>Knowledge without evidence?</i>	- Gettier, <i>Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?</i> (OWL) - MW Chapter 2 - Optional <i>but recommended</i> reading: MW Chapter 3
Jan 15	Responses to Gettier	- MW Chapter 4 - Clark “Knowledge and Grounds: A comment on Mr. Gettier’s Paper” (OWL) - Zagzebski, “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” (OWL)
Jan 20	Skepticism - <i>Is knowledge possible?</i>	- MW Chapter 5 - Start reading for Jan 22 nd
Jan 22	Skepticism II - <i>Is knowledge about the external world possible?</i>	- Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (excerpts, OWL) - MW Chapter 6
Jan 27	Responses to Skepticism - <i>Overview</i>	- Vogel “Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation” (OWL) - Moore “Proof of an External World” (OWL)
Jan 29	Foundationalism - <i>How does Foundationalism respond to the Skeptical Challenge?</i>	- MW Chapter 7 - Chisholm “The Myth of the Given” (OWL)
★ Jan 30 1st Paper due electronic submission - by 11.59pm		
Feb 3	Foundationalism - <i>Is Foundationalism a satisfactory response to the Skeptical Challenge?</i>	- MW Chapters 8 & 9

Date	Topic	Reading
Feb 5	Coherentism - <i>How does Coherentism respond to the Skeptical Challenge</i>	- MW Chapter 10 - Donald Davidson "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge" (OWL)
Feb 10	Criticisms of Coherentism and Foundationalism	- MW Chapters 11, 12
Feb 12	The best of Both Worlds?	- Haak "A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification" (OWL)
Feb 17 & 19 No Classes - Reading Week		
Feb 24	Contextualism	MW Chapters 14, 15, 16
Feb 26	Contextualism	MW Chapters 15, 16
★ Feb 27 2nd Paper due electronic submission - by 11.59pm		
🎓 Part II. Naturalized Epistemology		
Mar 3	Overview - <i>What is Naturalized Epistemology?</i>	- W. V. O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" (OWL) - Jaegwon Kim, "What is 'Naturalized Epistemology'" (OWL)
Mar 5	Reliabilism	- Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified True Belief?" (OWL)
Mar 10	Reliabilism - Criticisms	- Feldman & Conee "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism" (OWL) - Bonjour "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge" (OWL)
Mar 12	Problems with Naturalized Approaches	- J. D. Trout & Michael Bishop "The Pathologies of Standard Analytic Epistemology" (OWL)
🎓 Part III. Knowledge in Science		
Mar 17	Scientific Skepticism	- Salmon "An encounter with David Hume" (OWL) - Goodman "The New Riddle of Induction" (OWL)
Mar 19	Objectivity	- Longino "Values and Objectivity" (OWL)

Date	Topic	Reading
Mar 24	Feminist approaches to Scientific Knowledge & Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harding “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology” (OWL) - Longino & Lennon “Feminist Epistemology as a Local Epistemology” (OWL)
Mar 26	Data and Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - James Woodward “Data, Phenomena and Reliability” (OWL)
Mar 31	Models vs Experiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Morgan “ “Experiments Versus Models: New Phenomena, Inference and Surprise.” (OWL) - Parker “Does Matter really Matter?” (OWL)
Apr 2	Internal and External Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guala “Experimental Localism and External Validity” (OWL)
Apr 7	Course conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Reading
<p style="text-align: center;">★ Apr 11 Final Paper due electronic submission - by 11.59pm</p>		