

Theories of Knowledge

Syllabus (v3)

Course Info

Instructor: Richard Fry, rfry@siue.edu

Meeting Time: M/W, 12:00-1:15PM, Peck Hall 0302

Office Hours: M/W 1:30-2:30PM, Peck Hall 3210

Course Description:

What do we know? How do we know it? The philosophical field of *epistemology* is concerned with these questions. Epistemology seeks to develop a theory of what knowledge is and how we come to have it. In doing so, it births a number of other, related questions: What is it to be justified in holding a belief? Is justification internal or external to my mind? Can we be justified in believing anything at all? Does knowledge vary with context? Can we know anything without experience of the world? We'll explore these and other questions related to knowledge over the course of the semester using classical and contemporary works.

Course Goals:

This course has several goals:

- To use classic and contemporary texts to introduce you to philosophical issues related to what we know and how we know it.
- To improve your analytical reading and writing skills.
- To develop skills essential to academic research, particularly in philosophy.
- To develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others.

Required Texts:

Lemos, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press)

Other course readings will be made available through Blackboard.

You are required to bring **all** readings listed for a class meeting to that class.

Policies

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism:

- You are expected and required to uphold SIUE's standards of academic honesty in this course.
- **Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable.**
- Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.
- Familiarize yourself with what counts as plagiarism and SIUE's policies:
 - <http://www.siu.edu/lovejoylibrary/services/instruction/plagiarism.shtml>,
 - <http://www.siu.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>

Personal Conduct:

- You are responsible for arriving on time, being prepared, and comporting yourself in an appropriate manner. This means treating your classmates with respect and courtesy.
- *You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.*
 - Some of the topics we will address this semester may provoke powerful emotions, so be mindful of how topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class.

Grades:

- Late work: For each 24 hours late after the due date for a piece of written work is submitted, 3% will be subtracted from whatever grade it earns.
 - All work more than a week late will receive an F.
- Extensions: If you need an extension for written work, email me with a brief description of your situation.
 - If I approve an extension, we will work out an appropriate timeframe.
 - Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.
- Grade appeals: If you believe your work deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration.
 - Submit this request *within one week* but no sooner than *one day after* your work is returned.
 - Your written request must explain why you believe the work deserves a different grade.
 - Please note that if a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.
- Missed exams: Missed examinations will be assessed at 0%, unless (a) a doctor's note is provided, or (b) we agree to an alternate examination time *at least 24 hours before the exam* due to, e.g., bereavement/funeral, or (c) evidence of some other catastrophic event is presented.

Changes:

- I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time.
- Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Blackboard.

Assignments and Assessment

More details about these assignments will be distributed online and in class throughout the semester.

Exams (50%)

- There will be two in class (short) essay exams.
- The better of these two will count for 30% of your final grade, the worse for 20%.
- Before each exam, you'll get a study guide with questions, from which the questions on the exam will be drawn.
- See the previous page for policies regarding missed exams.

Final Paper (30%)

- Your final paper for the course will be 2000-3000 words.
- You will select the topic yourself, drawing from readings and topics from after the first exam.
 - I must approve the topic, so please consult with me.
- The paper will be due at the time scheduled for the final exam.
- More details will be provided about this paper in the second half of the semester.

Reading Responses (10%)

- Over the course of the course of the semester, you will submit ten reading responses.
- Each reading response should be 100-200 words and consist of two parts.
 1. It should give your general thoughts regarding some aspect of the reading for the upcoming class.
 2. It should ask a specific question about some specific reading.
- Each class meeting with new reading is an opportunity for a reading response.
- Responses should be submitted to Blackboard before 11:00AM the day of class.

Participation and Compartment (10%)

- This grade includes reading *and bringing* the assigned material, arriving on time, and participating in discussion.
- You can also participate by coming to office hours or emailing me.
- Not coming to class, sleeping, not bringing assigned readings, arriving consistently late, acting disrespectfully to me or your peers (by, e.g., having your phone out), *etc.*, will lose you points.

Calendar with Topics, Readings and Questions

You are expected to read the material listed before the class-day listed.

Readings from Lemos's *Introduction to...* are listed with page numbers.
All other readings are available *via* Blackboard.

1: Introductions: What's going on here?

23 Aug - Intro to the Course - What'll we talk about? How will I be assessed?
Ellerton, "How Do You Know What You Know is True? That's Epistemology."

2: Historical Background

28 Aug - Beginnings: Plato's Analysis of Knowledge
Plato, *Theaetetus* (excerpt)
Lemos, p.1-17

06 Sept - Some Skeptical Concerns
Sextus, "The Five Modes"

3: Systems of Justification

06 Sept - Foundationalism
Lemos, p.44-61

11 Sept - Objections to Foundationalism
BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (excerpt, p.387-389)
Lemos, p.61-65

13 Sept - Coherentism
Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (excerpt, p.389-394)
Lemos, p.66-80

18 Sept - Objections to Coherentism
BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (excerpt, p.394-401)
Lemos, p.80-84

Interlude: Review and Exam #1

20 Sept - Review for Exam

25 Sept - Exam #1

4: Detour: The Gettier and Lottery Problems

27 Sept - The Gettier and Lottery Problems

Ayer, "Knowing as Having the Right to be Sure"

Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

Lemos, p.22-27

02 Oct - Responses to Gettier

Lycan, "On the Gettier Problem Problem"

5: Back to Justification

04 Oct - Reliabilism

Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing"

Lemos, p.85-90

09 Oct - Objections to Reliabilism

Lemos, p.90-98

11 Oct - Internalism/Externalism

Lemos, p.108-117

16 Oct - Virtue Epistemology

Greco, "Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology"

Lemos, p.98-107

6: Skepticism Returns

18 Oct - Skepticism about Justification (Reprise) and the External World

Aiken, "The Regress Argument for Skepticism"

Descartes, *Meditations* I

23 Oct - External World Skepticism Considered

Greco, *Putting Skeptics in their Place* (excerpt)

25 Oct - Moorean and Relevant Alternatives Responses

Moore, "Proof of an External World"

Lemos, p.139-147

30 Nov - The Problem of the Criterion

Chisholm, "The Problem of the Criterion"

Interlude: Exam #2

01 Nov - Review for Exam

06 Nov - Exam #2

7: Naturalized Epistemology

08 Nov - Naturalized Epistemology

Sinclair, "Quine's Epistemology Naturalized"

13 Nov - Evolutionary Epistemology

Bradie and Harms, "Evolutionary Epistemology"

8: Feminist Epistemology

15 Nov - Feminist Epistemology (1)

Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science," §1-4

27 Nov - Feminist Epistemology (2)

Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science," §5-7

29 Nov - Feminist Epistemology (3)

Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science," §8-10

9: Wrapping Up

04 Dec/06 Dec - Wrap Up

No new reading

Resources

Philosophical Resources

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Philpapers.org: <http://philpapers.org>

Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper: <http://goo.gl/iDzgFb>

Academic Resources

Disability Support Services: Student Success Center, Room 1270

<http://www.siu.edu/dss/> and disabilitysupport@siu.edu

Provides accommodations to disabled students. DSS also has services which students can use to increase skills in learning, time management, and test-taking.

Instructional Services:

<http://www.siu.edu/is/>

Provides instructional support unit for the students, faculty and staff. Helps the underprepared to prepare, the prepared to advance, and the advanced to excel.

Writing Center: in the Academic Advancement Center

<http://www.siu.edu/is/writing/>, 618-650-2045

The writing center assists you as you analyze your paper and explore ways to improve it. Our primary concern is to help you become a better writer. To do this, we challenge you to learn more about composition and the conventions of Standard English.

Health and Wellness Resources

Counseling Services: Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siu.edu/counseling/>

Provides individual counseling, counseling groups, healthy living workshops, consultations, and referrals. Special attention is paid to the ongoing issues affecting college students.

Student Health Clinic Services: Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siu.edu/healthservice/clinic/index.shtml>