

Fall 2017 Syllabus

I. General Description: Epistemology is the study of knowledge. Do we know anything? Can we know anything? If not, what is it about knowledge that accounts for the fact that we haven't attained it or cannot attain it? If we can know things, what conditions need to be met for someone to know something? What, if anything, should I believe? What is rational for me to believe? Are there any general rules or principles I can follow to insure that my beliefs are rational? If there are any general epistemological rules, are any of them (in any sense) absolutely valid? Are there general rules of belief formation and revision that apply to all sorts of inquiry? Or are all good rules applicable in some particular domains but not others? Are there context-independent facts about what we know or should believe, or does every epistemic claim depend in important ways for its meaning or truth on the context in which it is made? Are my judgments about my own sensations and experiences infallible or fallible? What role do observation, experience and introspection of it play in justifying my beliefs about the world? Is all of our knowledge "based on" experience and/or introspection? What about mathematical and logical knowledge? What about our knowledge of epistemic principles and the validity of rules of inference or rational belief revision? What about our knowledge of the meanings of the words we use? What about our knowledge of the norms we assume when criticizing actions as immoral?

II. Required Reading: *Epistemology: An Anthology*, E. Sosa, J. Kim, J. Fantl, and M. McGrath (eds.), Blackwell, 2nd Edition (2008). The text is available in the bookstore.

III. Schedule of Readings: We will take these as they come.

Topic 1: Skepticism

Barry Stroud, "The Problem of the External World"

G.E. Moore, Selections. (Please read all the writings excerpted from Moore.)

Paper 1 Assigned: 10/16/17

Topic 2: The Analysis of Knowledge

Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

Gilbert Harman, Selections from *Thought*

Recommended: Jonathan Weisberg, "Formal Epistemology," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Section 1: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/formal-epistemology/>

Paper 1 Due: 10/30/17

Topic 3: Foundationalism and Its Critics

Roderick Chisholm, "The Myth of the Given"

Paper 2 Assigned: 11/1/17

Laurence Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"

Quiz Rescheduled for 11/6/17

Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"

Paper 2 Due: 11/15/7

Topic 4: The Relation Between Epistemology and Psychology

W.V.O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized"

Jaegwon Kim, "What is 'Naturalized Epistemology'?"

Topic 5: Testimony

Elizabeth Fricker, "Against Gullibility"

Jennifer Lackey, "Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission"

Final Exam: Friday, December 15, 2017 - 12-3PM

IV. Course requirements: Two (5-6 page) papers (30% each), one quiz (5%), a final exam (30%) and class participation (5%). If you fail to complete any of the four assignments, you will automatically fail the course.

V. Warning: If you cheat or plagiarize you will fail the class and you may be expelled from school. (a) Cheating on an exam and (b) taking material from the web and putting it in your paper without the appropriate acknowledgments are both forms of deceit punishable by failure and expulsion. Please don't do it!