

Introduction to Epistemology

Instructor: Jennifer Wang
Sample Syllabus

Time and Location: TBA

Office hours: TBA (twice a week, 4 hours total)

Course Description

Epistemology is the study of the nature, scope, and limits of knowledge and justification. This course is an introduction to some of the big issues: How do we know (or *do we know*) that we're not just brains in vats? Are the sources of justified belief internal or external? Are there some beliefs which are 'basic' in nature, such as beliefs concerning self-evident truths? We will look into these and other questions.

Course Website

<<url>>

Textbook

Epistemology: An Anthology

Eds. Ernest Sosa, Jaegwon Kim, Jeremy Fantl, and Matthew McGrath

Requirements

Students are required to attend and participate in class, take a midterm, submit 8 short writing assignments, and submit a final paper.

- *Midterm*: The midterm will take place on <<date>>. It will be in-class and closed notes. I will give you more information about it about two weeks prior, though it will likely consist of two short essay responses, with a choice of three prompts.
- *Short writing assignments*: The short writing assignments are 300-word discussions of readings assigned throughout the semester. You will be asked to submit a short assignment about once every week.
- *Final paper*: Final papers should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced. I will meet with each of you to discuss drafts of your final paper.

Attendance and Participation Policy

You are required to attend and participate in every class. Readings are to be done before class. Some short writing assignments will be due on the day of the relevant reading; others will be due after. I will let you know. You will sometimes work with each other in class on collaborative assignments.

Grading

30% Midterm
30% Final paper
30% Short writing assignments
10% Class participation

Schedule

All listed readings are in your anthology unless otherwise indicated.

<<I am assuming the class meets twice a week for an hour and a half, 28 meetings total during the semester.>>

Class 1: Overview of the class

Class 2: Skepticism

- Descartes, *Meditations* I and II (online)
- Stroud, 'The Problem of the External World'

Class 3: Skepticism

- Moore, 'Proof of an External World'
- Moore, 'Four Forms of Skepticism'
- Moore, 'Certainty'

Class 4: The JTB Account of Knowledge

- Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?'
- Goldman, 'A Causal Theory of Knowing' (pdf)

Class 5: The JTB Account of Knowledge

- Zagzebski, 'The Inescapability of Gettier Problems'

Class 6: The Structure of K and J—Foundationalism

- Introduction to Part II
- Chisholm, 'The Myth of the Given'

Class 7: The Structure of K and J—Foundationalism

- Sellars, 'Does Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?'
- Sellars, 'Epistemic Principles'

Class 8: The Structure of K and J—Foundationalism

- Bonjour, 'Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?'

Class 9: The Structure of K and J—Coherentism

- Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge'

Class 10: The Structure of K and J—Cont'd

- Sosa, 'The Raft and the Pyramid'

Class 11: Epistemic Closure

- Dretske, 'Epistemic Operators'
- Stine, 'Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Epistemic Closure'

Class 12: Epistemic Closure

- Nozick, 'Knowledge and Skepticism'

Class 13: Epistemic Closure

- Sosa, 'How to Defeat Opposition to Moore'

Class 14: Review for Midterm

Class 15: **Midterm**

Class 16: Theories of Justification—Evidentialism

- Feldman and Conee, 'Evidentialism'

Class 17: Theories of Justification—Reliabilism/Internalism vs Externalism

- Goldman, 'What is Justified Belief?'

Class 18: Theories of Justification—Cont'd

- Vogel, 'Reliabilism Leveled'
- Bonjour, 'Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge'

Class 19: Theories of Justification—Cont'd

- Goldman, 'Internalism Exposed'

Class 20: Theories of Justification—Cont'd

- Feldman and Conee, 'Internalism Defended'

Class 21: The Ethics of Belief

- Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief' (pdf)
- James, 'The Will to Believe' (pdf)

Class 22: Virtue Epistemology

- Plantinga, 'Warrant: A First Approximation'

Class 23: Virtue Epistemology

- Zagzebski, selections from *Virtues of the Mind*

Class 24: Virtue Epistemology

- Greco, 'Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology'

Class 25: The Problem of Induction

- Hume, 'The Problem of Induction' from *Enquiry* (pdf)
- Russell, 'On Induction' from *Problems of Philosophy* (pdf)

Class 26: The Problem of Induction

- Goodman, 'The New Riddle of Induction'

Class 27: Social Epistemology

- Goldman, 'A Guide to Social Epistemology'
- Fricker, 'Rational Authority and Social Power: Toward a Truly Social Epistemology' (pdf)

Class 28: Social Epistemology

- Lackey, 'Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others'
- **Final paper due**