

PHIL 430: Epistemology

Fall 2019

Instructor: Professor Josh DiPaolo

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Office: Humanities 311C

Office Hours: MW 2:30-4 & By appointment.

Phone: (657) 278-5803

Class Time & Location: MW 10-11:15 PM H125

Tech Support: Student help desk (657) 278-8888 or StudentITHelpDesk@fullerton.edu

Course Description: ‘Epistemology’ literally means the study of knowledge. But the philosophical field of epistemology also studies things like rational or justified belief, evidence, when you should believe certain things, how you ought to manage your beliefs, and how certain social arrangements promote or impede the acquisition of knowledge and rational belief.

Questions we will address include: What is skepticism? Can we know anything about the external world? What is knowledge? To what extent do we depend on others for our knowledge? What are the benefits and costs of this dependence? What are echo chambers? What is fake news? When, if ever, is prejudice epistemically rational? Does rational belief depend on morality?

Note about Philosophy: You may know that philosophy classes differ from other kinds of classes. You will be a **truth-seeker** in this class, **not a mere information consumer**: you will try to answer the questions raised in the course through rational means, rather than just learning what others have thought. This means you are expected to play an active role in class discussions.

Learning Goals

By the end of this semester, you should understand and be able to accurately and clearly explain:

- Some problems posed by the gap between external reality and our minds
- Solutions to these problems
- The problem of analyzing knowledge
- Solutions to this problem
- Some costs and benefits of relying on others for information
- Arguments concerning the rationality of prejudice

Along the way, you will:

- Improve your analytical skills
- Improve your reading skills
- Search for and analyze epistemology in your life outside of the classroom

Texts

All texts will be freely available on Titanium.

There will be around 25-30 pages of very difficult reading per week. Please plan accordingly.

Reading Tip: When reading, attempt to go beyond merely understanding the text and/or finding it interesting. You should constantly be asking: Is that true? Is that a convincing argument? How would the author deal with problem?

Grading Policy

Reading Quiz Pairs	50 Points
Exam	100 Points
Reading Memos	100 Points
<u>Final Paper</u>	150 Points
	400 Points

A+	98-100%	392-400 Points
A	92-97%	368-391 Points
A-	90-91%	360-367 Points
B+	88-89%	352-359 Points
B	82-87%	328-351 Points
B-	80-81%	320-327 Points
C+	78-79%	312-319 Points
C	72-77%	288-311 Points
C-	70-71%	280-287 Points
D+	68-69%	272-279 Points
D	62-67%	248-271 Points
D-	60-61%	240-247 Points
F	0-59%	0-239 Points

Other Required Assignments

1. Philosophy in Life Post 1 and Comments
2. Philosophy in Life Post 2 and Comments

To earn a C- or better, you must complete these assignments.

Grade Changers

- Participation: 25 points will be deducted from your final grade if you do not participate regularly or you are regularly distracting in class.
- Attendance: You have 2 free absences. 2.5 points will be deducted from your final grade for any unexcused absences. Attendance will be recorded starting in the 3rd week of classes.
- Extra Credit: You may complete up to two optional assignments for up to 12 points each. I won't offer other extra credit upon request.

Make-Ups

I would much rather you turn something in late than not at all. If you missed an assignment and would like an opportunity to complete it, please get in touch with me ASAP. If the assignment has been graded and handed back to students, it's very unlikely that a make-up opportunity will be granted. Again, please talk to me ASAP.

Please ask questions about these policies if you're not sure you understand them!

Coursework Descriptions

Attendance: Attendance is required because you won't do well in this course if you don't attend. To find out what you missed when you miss class, come to office hours or ask:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Exam: You will complete one take-home exam. The exam will assess your understanding of course content, not your opinion. It is meant to assess your grasp of the readings and in-class discussions, to provide you with more incentive to reflect on the material, and to allow you to demonstrate what you've learned.

Reading Memos: 6 memos/20 points each. To help you reflect on the readings, you will write reading memos throughout the semester. **They are to be submitted on Titanium before the beginning of class on the first day we are scheduled to discuss that reading.**

Here's what you do: You'll reflect philosophically on some component of the article. This might mean raising an objection, or summarizing and clarifying some point that seemed obscure, or providing some additional argument in support of a claim you take the author to be making. The idea is for you to engage philosophically with the texts before you come to class.

How the Memos will be Scored: If your memo clearly shows me that you made a good-faith effort to carefully read and understand the article, then you will get at least 14 points. If your explanation of the point you discuss is fully accurate, you will get at least 16 points. Scores between 18 and 20 will be reserved for those who offer a cogent critical contribution—who raise some objection or offer some support of their own that challenges or reinforces the author's argument. There are six assigned memos. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest memo score and replace your next lowest **completed** memo score with a 20. (This means you can skip exactly one memo without any loss of points.)

Reading Quiz Pairs: 6 quiz-pairs. To give you incentive to read the assigned articles carefully when there isn't a reading memo assigned, you will take six reading "quiz-pairs." Your total reading quiz score will be the sum of your five highest quiz pair scores. (No mixing and matching.) This means you can skip exactly one quiz-pair without any loss of points.

This assignment will seem weird at first. By the end of the semester, you'll like it. Here's how it works:

You will have to take each quiz twice: the day we discuss the reading in class and the next day of class. (Hence, "quiz-pair.") There will be five questions on each quiz. And since you already know the questions that will be on the second quiz – **they will be the exact same questions that were on the first quiz** – you can carefully prepare the second time around to ensure that you get a perfect score.

Why so weird?? The purpose of the first quiz is to give you incentive to read the assigned reading carefully before the class in which it will be discussed. The purpose of the second quiz is to reinforce your understanding of that reading after our class discussion. The second quiz also makes the first quiz, which is clearly the harder of the two, less weighty. Thus, this method of incentivizing and evaluating reading comprehension is more forgiving than more traditional reading quiz assignments.

Example: You get 3 out of 5 questions correct on Reading Quiz 1A, and 4 out of 5 questions correct on Reading Quiz 1B. Your quiz-pair score is: 7/10.

Final Paper: This will be a research paper on an issue related to one of the course topics. Your goal is to articulate and defend your own stance on one of these issues. You'll write an 8-10 page paper in which you do the following: (1) Briefly describe the topic on which you're writing. (2) State your thesis very clearly and carefully. (3) Briefly summarize an argument from *at least one* of the papers we read in the class. (4) Carefully and fully defend your thesis in relation to this argument. This paper may be an expanded reading memo. More details to come!

Philosophy in Life Posts: To help you get in the habit of approaching your life philosophically, you will complete two "philosophy in life" posts in the discussion forums on Titanium. For these assignments, you will write about connections between your life and what you've learned or thought about in this course. You will also read and comment on some of your peers' posts.

Participation: Participating in class benefits you and others. We often learn while we attempt to express our thoughts. And since you have a unique perspective, everyone else in the class learns when you share that perspective. Here are some ways to participate:

1. Ask questions about the readings or lectures.

2. Answer questions when asked.
3. Contribute your perspective to a discussion.
4. Raise objections to arguments.
5. Mention a relevant life experience at an appropriate time.
6. Discuss course material with me outside of class.
7. Participate during small group activities.
8. Complete in-class writing assignments.

Communication

Office Hours: I have office hours scheduled on Mondays and Wednesdays this semester. This means I will be available in my office to discuss course material (or other issues) at those times. If my scheduled office hours aren't convenient, feel free to schedule a different time to meet.

"I wish I had come to office hours all semester!"

You can benefit from discussing course material outside of class. **True story:** One semester, a student of mine who never came to office hours earned one of the lowest grades on the midterm. Then he started regularly attending office hours. Right before the final, he told me, "I wish I had come to office hours all semester." He ended up getting one of the highest grades on the final. Don't wait! The course material is difficult. Come discuss it with me.¹

I would like each student to visit my office at least once during the 5th - 7th weeks of the semester.

Contact Policy: Outside of office hours, you can reach me at the email address above. I will respond promptly within 24 hours to most emails. If you do not receive a reply within 24 hours, please talk to me in class or send another email as a reminder. **If you have a question about the course mechanics or schedule, please check the syllabus before emailing.**

Your Responsibilities: I expect you to regularly check your email and Titanium for announcements.

Electronics

Electronic devices are permitted in class, but must be used solely for class purposes. Browsing Facebook, catching all of the Pokemon, and captioning animal pictures are not class purposes. I will prohibit devices if they are not being used appropriately.

Disability & Special Needs

I will do my best to help students with disabilities, special needs, or learning challenges succeed in this course. Students with disabilities who need classroom accommodations, access to technology, or information about emergency building/campus evacuation processes should contact Disability Support Services. Services are available to students with a wide range of disabilities and conditions.

Phone: (657) 278-3112

Website: www.fullerton.edu/dss

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Please only submit work that is *your own*. Doing otherwise is one of the worst mistakes you can make in your academic career. When students plagiarize in my classes, they receive a score of 0 points on the assignment and I refer them to the Dean of Students' office.

¹ Why should you go to office hours? <http://college.usatoday.com/2015/11/28/office-hours/> What are some things you might say in office hours? <https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/node/381050>

The university defines ‘plagiarism’ as “the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another writer” and instructs me to include the following info on my syllabus:

If plagiarism is found in your work, you will be subject to prosecution to the fullest extent of university code, which will result in a failure of the assignment and will probably result in your failure of the course. Confirmation of plagiarism precludes you from being eligible to repeat the course under the university’s course repeat and grade forgiveness policy. For complete details regarding the university’s policies about plagiarism and other forms of cheating, see <http://www.fullerton.edu/integrity/student/AcademicIntegrityResources.asp>
http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/ups/UPS%20300/UPS%20300.021.pdf

Tentative Schedule

Week 1	Reading
8/26 Introductions	No Reading
8/28 Background, Descartes, Cartesian Skepticism	Descartes <i>Meditation 1</i>

Week 2	Reading
9/2 HOLIDAY: Labor Day No Class	No Reading
9/4 Descartes, The Skeptical Problem	Descartes <i>Meditation 2</i>

Week 3	Reading
9/9 The Moorean Response to Skepticism	Moore “Tidbits”
9/11 Problems for Moorean Response	No Reading

Assignments
9/9 Reading Quiz 1A
9/11 Reading Quiz 1B

Week 4	Reading
9/16 The Contextualist Response to Skepticism	DeRose Contextualism & Knowledge Attributions
9/18 Problems for the Contextualist Response	No Reading

Assignments
9/16 Reading Quiz 2A
9/18 Reading Quiz 2B

Week 5	Reading
9/23 The Externalist Response to Skepticism	BonJour Internalism and Externalism
9/25 Problems for the Externalist Response	No Reading

Assignments
9/23 Reading Quiz 3A
9/25 Reading Quiz 3B

Week 6	Reading
9/30 Answering the Skeptic on Their Own Terms	Rinard Reasoning Out of Skepticism
10/2 Skepticism Wrap Up	No Reading

Assignments
9/30 Reading Memo 1 on Rinard

Week 7**Reading**

10/7 The Analysis of Knowledge	Gettier Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?
10/9 The Analysis of Knowledge: Answering Gettier	Nagel Analysis of Knowledge

Assignments
10/7 Reading Quiz 4A
10/9 Reading Quiz 4B
10/10 Philosophy in Life Post (11:59pm)
10/11 Philosophy in Life Comments (11:59pm)

Week 8**Reading**

10/14 Catch-Up/Review	No Reading
10/16 Catch-Up/Review	No Reading

Assignments
10/16 Exam (Submit on Titanium)

Week 9**Reading**

10/21 Dependence on Others for Information	Nagel Testimony
10/22 Echo Chambers	Nguyen Escape the Echo Chamber

Assignments
10/22 Reading Memo 2 on Nguyen

Week 10**Reading**

10/28 Echo Chambers Catch-Up	No Reading
10/30 Fake News & Echo Chambers	Rini Fake News and Partisan Epistemology

Assignments
10/30 Reading Memo 3 on Rini

Week 11**Reading**

11/4 Obligation to Escape Echo Chambers	Worsnip Obligation to Diversify One's Sources
11/6 Deepfakes	Rini Deepfakes and the Epistemic Backstop

Assignments (Read Carefully)
11/4 Reading Memo 4 on Worsnip OR 11/6 Reading Memo 4 on Rini

Week 12**Reading**

11/11 Epistemology of Prejudice: Introduction	Gendler Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias
11/13 Epistemology of Prejudice: Introduction	No Reading

Assignments
11/11 Reading Quiz 5A
11/13 Reading Quiz 5B

Week 13**Reading**

11/18 Prejudice: Acquisition and Maintenance
 11/20 Moral Encroachment

Begby Chs. 4-5
 Basu Radical Moral Encroachment

Assignments

11/18 Reading Quiz 6A
 11/20 Reading Quiz 6B
 11/20 Reading Memo 5 on Basu

Week 14**Reading**

11/25 Doxastic Wrongs
 11/27 HOLIDAY: Fall Break No Class

Basu & Schroeder Doxastic Wrongs
 No Reading

Week 15**Reading**

12/2 Against Moral Accounts of Prejudicial Belief
 12/4 Epistemology of Prejudice: Wrap Up

Begby Chs. 9-10
 No Reading

Assignments

12/2 Reading Memo 6 on Begby

Week 16**Reading**

12/9 Catch-Up/Paper Workshopping
 12/11 Catch-Up/Paper Workshopping

No Reading
 No Reading

Week 17**Reading**

Final Paper Due (Date TBD)

Emergencies

To be prepared for classroom emergencies, please visit: <http://prepare.fullerton.edu>