

Philosophy 215: Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and related notions such as justification, belief, and evidence. We will study both traditional epistemology (which considers belief, disbelief, and agnosticism) and probabilistic epistemology (which takes belief to be a matter of degree). Topics will include: skepticism; the nature of knowledge; the nature of justification; the relationship between knowledge and justification; feminist epistemology; a priori knowledge; peer disagreement; self-locating beliefs; and applications of epistemological principles to puzzling and paradoxical situations, including Sleeping Beauty, Doomsday, Reflection, the Lottery Paradox, and the Cable Guy Paradox.

Course objectives

The aim of this course is for students to be able to:

1. Articulate an overview of issues in epistemology
2. Engage in reasoned, charitable, and detailed philosophical discourse about issues in epistemology with the class community
3. Increase familiarity with the methodology of philosophy
4. Improve the quality of philosophical writing throughout the term
5. Be familiar with basic issues in both formal and traditional epistemology

Required texts

Contemporary Epistemology, ed. Huemer
Social Epistemology, eds. Goldman and Whitcomb

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

ECR = *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings*

SE = *Social Epistemology*

Articles marked with an “*” are on Moodle, accessible through the college’s portal.

August 29 Introduction

Skepticism & Responses

- August 31 Course syllabus
Russell, from *The Problems of Philosophy*, 64-73 ECR
Austin, from *Sense and Sensibilia*, Sections III-IV, 74-78 ECR
Huemer, “The problem of memory knowledge,” 113-123 ECR
- September 5 *Bouwisma, “Descartes’ evil genius”
Putnam, “Brains in a vat,” 524-538 ECR
- September 7 Bonjour, from *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, 387-401 ECR
Chisolm, “The Problem of the criterion,” 590-601 ECR
*Zagzebski, from *Virtues of the Mind*

September 12 **1st 2-page paper due**
Foster, "Induction, explanation, and natural necessity," I-III, 333-339 ECR
Stove, "Another attempt to prove that induction is justified: the law of large numbers," (i)-(ii), 352-363 ECR

September 14 *Lewis, "Elusive knowledge"
Dretske, "The pragmatic dimension of knowledge," 539-551 ECR

Analysis of Knowledge

September 19 Ayer, "Knowing as having the right to be sure," 440-442
Gettier, "Is justified true belief knowledge?," 444-446
Clark, "Knowledge and grounds," 447-449
*Feldman, "An alleged defect in Gettier counter-examples"
Goldman, "A causal theory of knowing," 450-462

September 21 Lehrer and Paxson, "Knowledge: undefeated justified true belief," 464-474 ECR
Nozick, "Knowledge," 475-490 ECR

September 26 **2nd 2-page paper due**
DeRose, "Contextualism and knowledge attributions," 491-505 ECR

September 28 *Brandom, "Insights and blindspots of reliabilism"
*BonJour, "Externalist versions of foundationalism"

Naturalized Epistemology

October 3 *Antony, "Quine as feminist"
Kornblith, "Distrusting reason," ECR

October 5 **Midterm Exam**

Fall Break

October 17 *Foley, "Empirical challenges to self-trust"
*Tversky and Kahneman, "Judgment under uncertainty: heuristics and biases"
*Foley, "The importance of intellectual self-trust"

October 19 *Awesome implicit bias reading

Social Epistemology

October 24 Boghossian, "Epistemic relativism defended," 38-53 SE
Fricker, "Rational authority and social power," 54-68 SE

October 26 Lackey, "Testimony," 71-91 SE

Goldberg, "If that were true I would have heard about it by now," 92-108 SE

October 31 Goldman, "Experts: which ones should you trust?," 109-133 SE

November 2 **5-page paper due**
No Class

Probabilism

November 7 *Lewis, "Why conditionalize?"
*Joyce, "A non-pragmatic vindication of probabilism," selection

November 9 *van Fraassen, "Belief and the will"
*Arntzenius, "Some problems for conditionalization and reflection"

Self-Locating and Self-Sampling

November 14 *Elga, "Self-locating belief and the Sleeping Beauty problem"
*Lewis, "Sleeping Beauty: reply to Elga"
*Weintraub, "Sleeping Beauty: a simple solution"
*Kierland and Monton, "Minimizing inaccuracy for self-locating beliefs"

November 16 *Gott, "Report from the future"
*Bostrom, "The doomsday argument, Adam & Eve, UN++, and Quantum Joe"

Thanksgiving Break

Peer Disagreement & the Epistemology of Groups

November 28 *White, "Epistemic permissiveness"
Feldman, "Reasonable religious disagreements," 137-157 SE

November 30 **Draft of 7-page paper due**
Elga, "Reflection and disagreement," 158-182 SE
*Elga, "How to disagree about how to disagree"
*Lackey, "What should we do when we disagree?"

December 5 Kelly, "Peer disagreement and higher order evidence," 183-217 SE

December 7 List, "Group knowledge and group rationality," 221-241 SE
Fallis, "Wikipistemology" 297-313 SE

December 12 **Last day of class**
Sunstein, "Deliberating groups vs prediction markets," 314-337 SE
Zollman, "The communication structure of epistemic communities," 338-350 SE