

# PHIL 1001: INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Fall 2019

## Location & Time

1:25 – 2:20PM — Monday/Wednesday/Friday  
McMicken 205

## Instructor

Matthew Willis  
Office: McMicken Hall 257

Email: willi4m7@mail.uc.edu  
Hours: 3 – 4:00PM Wednesday

## Course Description & Objectives

This course is an introduction to the area of philosophy known as epistemology. Generally speaking, epistemology is the study of knowledge. Questions like: “what is knowledge?”, “how do we know things?”, “can we know anything?”, and “what makes some beliefs more justified than others?” are all *epistemological* questions. In this course, we will survey the central themes and topics of, and some of the major contributions to, epistemology in both historical and contemporary philosophy. Students will learn the historical origins of many contemporary debates in epistemology, become acquainted with current debates in epistemology, learn to recognize and reconstruct philosophical arguments, and learn to employ some of the techniques introduced in the course in their own philosophical argumentation and writing.

As this is an introductory philosophy course, students are not expected to have any prior experience with philosophy. However, this does not mean that it will be exceptionally easy (though it should not be exceptionally difficult either). The readings for this class can be highly technical and it may prove difficult to fully understand the authors’ positions with a single read-through. While I expect everyone to make an attempt at fully working through the texts on their own, I will also guide you through each of the readings.

## Texts

All required texts for this course will be provided through Blackboard.

## Requirements & Grading

Small Papers (15% each, two total) — Students will write two short papers (between 1 and 2 pages long) addressing a topic specified by the instructor.

Midterm Assignment (30%) — The midterm assignment will be a collection of short essay questions. Students will submit the midterm through SafeAssign on Blackboard in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format.

Final Paper (40%) — Near the end of the semester, I will make several prompts available for you to choose from. Addressing one of these prompts should take between 3 and 5 pages. Students will submit their papers through SafeAssign on Blackboard in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Writing

a philosophical paper can be difficult, for this reason, notes on how to best structure your writing will be given prior to assigning the final paper.

### **Policies**

**Late Assignments** — Unless in the case of a documented medical or family emergency, late submissions of any assignment will be penalized by one letter grade per class day beyond the assigned due date. Assignments submitted more than one week later than the assigned due date will not be accepted unless special circumstances apply. If you anticipate the need to turn in an assignment late, please bring it up to me *ahead* of time – I will do what I can to accommodate any reasonable request.

**Electronic Devices** — As all slides will be made available on Blackboard, the use of laptops and other portable electronic devices (while not prohibited) should be limited. Please respect the instructor and your fellow students by not engaging in distracting behavior such as texting, listening to music, etc. during class – you too are entitled to this respect.

**Code of Conduct** — The University of Cincinnati's code of conduct will be in effect. Those in violation will fail the course and be subject to applicable penalties from the University. UC's rules are available at the following link: [http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Academic\\_Integrity.html](http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Academic_Integrity.html)

NOTE: Any act of cheating on an exam or paper is grounds for receiving a grade of F in the course. Plagiarism is an act of cheating. Plagiarism does not have to be done intentionally to count as plagiarism. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the guidelines here: [http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Academic\\_Integrity.html](http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Academic_Integrity.html)

This syllabus may change at the instructor's discretion.

### **Special Needs and Accommodations**

I want all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed in this course. If you have a disability (visual, hearing, physical, psychological, cognitive, learning, ADD, medical condition, etc.) which may influence your performance in this course, the university will make reasonable accommodations for you to ensure an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. If you require accommodations due to disability, please contact the Disability Services Office at 513-556-6823, Campus Location: 210 University Pavilion. You will be provided an Accommodation Form indicating your accommodation needs for the semester. Please present this form to me as soon as possible to ensure your accommodation needs are discussed, agreed upon, and provided.

Any student requiring accommodation for religious observances should notify the instructor in advance so that adequate accommodation can be provided.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Mon, Aug 26	Introductions; syllabus review	–
Wed, Aug 28	What is epistemology?	Clifford, “Ethics of Belief”
Fri, Aug 30	The possibility of knowledge	Descartes, <i>Meditations I &amp; II</i>
Mon, Sep 2	<b>No class – Labor Day</b>	
Wed, Sep 4	Knowledge about the external world	Stroud, “The Problem of the External World”
Fri, Sep 6	Knowledge about the external world - For	Moore, “Proof of an External World” and “Four Forms of Skepticism”
Mon, Sep 9	Discussion	–
Wed, Sep 11	Other positions – Internal world skepticism	Byrne, “Skepticism about the Internal World”
Fri, Sep 13	Other positions – Radical skepticism	Unger, “An Argument for Skepticism”
Mon, Sep 16	Other skeptical problems – Old	Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion”
Wed, Sep 18	Other skeptical problems – Induction	Hume, Selections from <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>  Goodman, “The New Riddle of Induction”

Fri, Sep 20	Gettier	Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
Mon, Sep 23	Responses to Gettier	Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing"
Wed, Sep 25		Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"
Fri, Sep 27	Discussion	–
	<b><i>First Small Paper due – Sep 29<sup>th</sup> 5PM</i></b>	
Mon, Sep 30	The nature of justification	Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"
Wed, Oct 2		Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"
Fri, Oct 4		Bonjour, "Externalist Theories of Justification"
Mon, Oct 7	Naturalized epistemology	Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized"
Wed, Oct 9		Kim, "What is 'Naturalized Epistemology'?"
Fri, Oct 11	<b>No class – Fall Break</b>	
Mon, Oct 14	Other contenders – Virtue epistemology and pragmatism	Lecture
Wed, Oct 16	The nature of truth	Lecture
Fri, Oct 18		Lecture
Mon, Oct 21	Another view on truth	Foucault, "Truth and Power"

Wed, Oct 23	Confirmation holism – Quine	Quine, “Two dogmas of empiricism”
Fri, Oct 25	<b>No class</b>	
Mon, Oct 28	Discussion	–
	<b><i>Midterm Assignment due – Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 5PM</i></b>	
Wed, Oct 30	Using intuition	Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich, “Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions” Sections I-III
Fri, Nov 1		Nagel, “Intuitions and Experiments” Sections 1 & 3
Mon, Nov 4	Epistemology and the sciences	Chakravartty, “Truth and the Sciences”
Wed, Nov 6		Elgin, “True Enough”
Fri, Nov 8		Strevens, “No Understanding Without Explanation”
Mon, Nov 11	<b>No class – Veterans Day</b>	
Wed, Nov 13	Return to the ethics of belief	Haack, “‘The Ethics of Belief’ Reconsidered”
Fri, Nov 15		
Mon, Nov 18		Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism”
Wed, Nov 20	Discussion	–
Fri, Nov 22	On conspiracy theories	Lecture
	<b><i>Second Small Paper due – Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 5PM</i></b>	

Wed, Nov 27	On the verge of a new epistemic crisis	Lecture
Fri, Nov 29	<b>No class – Thanksgiving Break</b>	
Mon, Dec 2	Other philosophical questions	–
Wed, Dec 4		–
Fri, Dec 6		–
	<b><i>Final Paper due – Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 5PM</i></b>	

