

## Epistemology – 730:412

Spring 2014

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**The Goals of the Course:** During the course we will explore nine issues in epistemology – each in recently published essays. The primary goals of the course are for you to (1) gain a good understanding of the nine issues including alternative ways of responding to each issue and (2) develop your own position on each issue. I encourage you to work together in study groups; to that end, I will circulate an email sign-up sheet and distribute it to those people who sign up.

**Prerequisites:** The prerequisites are (1) you must be a junior or senior, (2) and have taken *Intro. to Logic* (730:201 or a higher level logic course) and two other courses in philosophy. If you have not satisfied those prerequisites and have not already received special permission to take the course, please see me after the first class meeting.

**Requirements:** In accordance with the University policy that states that students are expected to attend all classes, **class attendance is required**. If you *expect* to miss any classes for any reason whatsoever, please use the University absence reporting website: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> An email is automatically sent to me, so you need not inform me directly of your expectation that you will miss a class.

Nevertheless, if you miss a class (or classes), you should discuss the absence(s) with me immediately *after* the *first* class meeting that you return. ***If you don't, the absence will not be excused.*** (That's important! See next paragraph.)

There will be two papers plus a final take-home exam. Each is worth 200 points. In addition, there will be at least six surprise quizzes. Each is worth 25 points and the best four (4) will count towards your final point total. Thus, there is a total of 700 possible points. A bonus of up to 25 points can be added for class participation; also, you will lose 25 points for each unexcused class absence beyond the first one. That is, you have one “free” absence.

**Grade equivalents:** Using a 200 point scale, the grade equivalences are:

A ≥ 180  
B+ = 170 - 179  
B = 160 - 169  
C+ = 150 - 159  
C = 140 - 149  
D = 120 - 139  
F ≤ 119

The final grade will be based on your total points as follows:

A  $\geq$  624  
B+ = 589 - 623  
B = 554 - 588  
C+ = 519 - 553  
C = 484 - 518  
D = 414 - 483  
F  $\leq$  413

**Surprise Quizzes:** There will be at least six surprise quizzes. The four best quizzes will be used to calculate your final grade. The quizzes will be on the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. **There are no make-up surprise quizzes**, but none will be given on religious holidays. Typically, they will consist of all or some of the following types of questions: (1) State as carefully as you can X's argument that y, and (2) State what you take to be the best objection to X's view (regardless of whether you endorse the objection), and (3) State your view on the matter. During the quiz you may consult any notes you have taken on the reading(s) but you may not consult the reading itself and you may not use a computer. The quiz will be given at the beginning of the class and will last ONLY 20 minutes. Thus, if you are 5 minutes late to class, you will have only 15 minutes to complete the quiz. If you have scored 25 points on four surprise quizzes, you need not take any more of them.

**Papers:** No late papers will be accepted unless something you **could** not have anticipated prevented you from getting it to me. "The printer didn't work" and "my hard drive crashed" are not a legitimate reasons for papers being late because those things happen often enough to require some backup plan. If you miss a class on the day that the paper is due because of a religious holiday or Rutgers University sponsored event, please make sure that either someone else hands in the paper for you or it is put in my mailbox (on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Gateway building, 106 Somerset St.) **before** the class session that it was due. All papers must be typed, double-spaced (with a 12 point font, and inch margins), and free of grammatical/spelling errors. On any page on which there are two or more such errors, the paper will automatically lose ten (10) points. I urge you to get some help in proof reading your papers.

The word "argument" has just one "e." It is a sacred word! The word to portray the etiology of an event is "causal" not "casual." So please don't write about the "casual" theory of justification! Also, this is not an acceptable expression in formal philosophy papers: "based off of." Use "based on." See this URL for an interesting discussion of the difference: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2013/10/23/based-off-of-what?>

All papers (including the take home final) must employ some standard reference form for footnotes and bibliography. Here's a good website:

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

**Every** paper must have a thesis. The first sentence of the paper **MUST** state the thesis and begin **exactly** as follows: “The purpose of this paper (answer) is to . . . First, I will . . . Second, I will . . . etc. . . Finally, I will . . .” No paper should have more than five main steps. Papers that do not begin that exact way will lose twenty (20) points.

A **thesis** is a claim that some statement is true. These are forms of statements of a thesis: “The purpose of this paper is to show that X,” “The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that X,” “The purpose of this paper is to prove that X,” where “X” stands for a statement that you believe to be true.

These are not forms of statements of a thesis: “The purpose of this paper is to (explore) (examine) (ruminate about) (gaze at) (consider) (reflect about) X.”

Please **do not use** the expression “I feel that . . .” to express what you believe to be true; use “I believe that . . .” Of course, “I feel warm” is fine but “I feel that Descartes is right” or “I feel that we have knowledge of the past” are not acceptable in philosophy papers because using those expressions tends to provide a license for not giving reasons. Feelings might be apt or inapt, but they are neither true nor false. Beliefs are true or false. Philosophy papers should be designed to present the reasons you have for what you believe to be true.

A **title** for your paper that encapsulates your thesis is required.

The paper may be on any essay that we have read up to the point that the paper is due as long as it is not a second paper on the same essay that was discussed in your first paper.

No BS is allowed. What you would not say to a philosophy major you should not write in a philosophy paper. Don’t make claims that you cannot substantiate with good, **generally available, and acknowledged evidence that you have examined carefully**. For most of us that means we should not make claims about Einstein’s relativity theory, the Higgs boson, Darwin’s account of the transmission of traits, or properties of infinitely large sets.

Always give examples of universal or partial generalizations (e.g., all, some, many). So, if you claim that all/many people act only out of self-interest, give some examples to illustrate it is a universal or widely distributed property, and then an argument to show that it is true (if you cannot count on your reader accepting it as true). **Never, ever, ever** use “therefore” (or some synonymous expression) unless the reasons that you presented entitle you to make such a claim.

Worthwhile philosophical theses are controversial. So, there will be thoughtful, intelligent, knowledgeable people who will hold views incompatible with your view. Every good philosophical paper (read that as a necessary condition for getting an “A” on a paper!) explains the best objections to the view being defended and offers reasons for thinking that the objections are not cogent or not cogent enough to defeat the view being defended

Finally, writing a philosophy paper is a way of discovering what you ought to think, not a way of describing what you thought before you began writing the paper. *Have fun with the ideas!* The truth is not always (indeed, hardly ever) the first or second or third thing that pops into your head. Unexamined thoughts aren’t worth having – to (mis)appropriate what Socrates said in the Apology [38a].

**Plagiarism:** Academic communities depend upon academic integrity, and a necessary condition of your having academic integrity is that the work you represent as yours is, in fact, yours. You **MUST** indicate *when and to what extent* you have relied upon anyone else’s *texts* or *ideas*. That being said, we all profit from discussing important issues with others. Your study groups will certainly provide useful insights into the material. But when an idea was not yours, you should indicate that it was not. (In a footnote, you can say “I am indebted to . . .”)

**Disabilities:** If you have a learning disability (I have dyslexia, so I know what that’s like), please see me and we can make some appropriate arrangements. You should also make use of the Offices of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/> They are helpful.

**Office and Office Hours:** I strongly encourage you to come to my office to discuss the readings, your papers, the class lectures/discussions with me. I will have regularly scheduled office hours on Thursday from 2:00-4:00 in the Gateway Building, Rm 516, but I could meet you at other times as well if you have a class during that time. To set up an appointment, *even during the regularly scheduled time*, please email me at: [pdklein@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:pdklein@rci.rutgers.edu). I ask that you set up an appointment in order to minimize your waiting.

**Materials for the Course:** There are two books to buy: Epistemology: New Essays, ed. Quentin Smith, (Oxford University Press, 2008); Contemporary Debates in Epistemology, ed. Matthais Steup and Ernest Sosa, (Blackwell Publishing, 2014). **BOTH are in paperback.** Be careful because there is an older edition (2005) of the Steup/Sosa book. We will be using the new (2014) edition.

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

E = Epistemology, New Essays; C = Contemporary Debates in Epistemology

1/22: Introduction to the Course, Gettier Problem (handout)  
1/27: E, Kornblith, 5-23  
1/29: 2nd meeting on Kornblith  
2/3: 3rd meeting on Kornblith  
2/5: E, Klein, 25-61  
2/10: 2nd meeting on Klein (Group 1 papers due)  
1/12: 3rd meeting on Klein  
2/17: E, Goldman, 63-82  
2/19: 2nd meeting on Goldman (Group 2 papers due)  
2/24: 3rd meeting on Goldman  
2/26: E, Conee and Feldman, 83-104  
3/3: 2nd meeting on Conee and Feldman (Group 3 papers due)  
3/5: 3rd meeting on Conee and Feldman  
3/10: C, Klein/Ginet, 274-297  
3/12: 2nd meeting on Klein/Ginet (Group 4 papers due)

Break

3/24: 3rd meeting on Klein/Ginet  
3/26: E, Sosa, 121-136  
3/31: 2nd meeting on Sosa (Group 2 papers due)  
4/2: 3rd meeting on Sosa  
4/7: C, Dretske/Hawthorne, 127-59  
4/10: 2nd meeting on Dretske/Hawthorne (Group 3 papers due)  
4/14: 3rd meeting on Dretske/Hawthorne  
4/16: C, Zagzebski/Baehr, 133-151 72-97  
4/21: 2nd meeting on Zagzebski/Baehr (Group 4 papers due)  
4/23: 3rd meeting on Zagzebski/Baehr  
4/28: C, Conee/Cohen, 47-71  
4/30: 2nd meeting on Conee/Cohen (final exam distributed) (Group 1 papers due)  
5/5: 3rd meeting on Conee/Cohen

5/12: *Final Exam* The final exam is a take-home exam, due in the Undergraduate Philosophy Department Office in Rm 518, Gateway Bldg., 106 Somerset St. by 11:00 am (SHARP!) The exam will be distributed on 4/30. You may not talk with *anyone* about it until after 11:00 am on 5/12. You may consult any written material you wish in preparing your answer(s), but be sure to make clear the extent to which you have relied upon the work of others. (Please re-read the section on plagiarism in the syllabus.) **Note:** If you have 450 points (not including class participation, but including absences) prior to the final exam, you do not have to take it. You will be assigned an "A" for the course. (If you do take it and your total points are less than 624, you will not be assigned an "A.")