

PHL 402: Epistemology
Spring 2010

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www.uah.edu/colleges/liberal/philosophy/heikes/402/402.html

Course Texts:

Human Knowledge, Paul Moser and Arnold vander Nat, eds. (Oxford)

Course Description and Goals:

Epistemology is the area of philosophy that deals with knowledge: What is knowledge? How do we know? What do we know? Can we know anything? In this course, we will address each of these questions, both from an historical and contemporary perspective. The goal of this course is to provide you with a broad understanding of the main debates in contemporary epistemology as well as the historical background for those debates.

In the first part of this course, we will consider historical theories of knowledge beginning with Plato's notion of knowledge as justified true belief. We will then consider both the empiricist and rationalist versions of foundationalism, as well as Quine's reasons for rejecting foundationalism. In the second part of this course, we will more closely examine coherentism, the possibility of apriori knowledge, whether knowledge can be justified true belief, and what justifies a belief. We will conclude by examining skeptical arguments concerning the possibility of knowledge.

Requirements:

- Bi-weekly essays (70%):** Every other week, you will be required to write a 2-3 page critical essay on the reading assignment or on previous class discussion.
- Paper Proposal (5%):** a roughly 3 page proposal outlining the topic on which you intend to write, what questions you will address on that topic, and how you will approach answering those questions
- Paper (25%):** a 12-15 page critical paper related to some aspect of the course (following through on your paper proposal)

Course Outline: (The timetable below is approximate. The dates for specific reading assignments will be announced in class.)

History of Epistemology (Weeks 1-5)

- Plato (c. 427-c.347 B.C.): *Theaetetus* (pp. 48-61)
- Aristotle (384-322 B.C.): *Posterior Analytics* (pp. 62-73)
- David Hume (1711-1776): *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (pp. 167-182)
- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804): *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (pp.199-211)
- Bertrand Russell (1872-1970): *Appearance, Reality, and Knowledge By Acquaintance* (pp. 237-245)
- A.J. Ayer (1910-1989): *Verification and Philosophy* (pp. 246-256)
- W.V. Quine (1908-2000): *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* (pp. 280-292)

Naturalized Epistemology (Weeks 6-8)

- W.V. Quine: *Epistemology Naturalized* (pp. 502-511)
- Hilary Putnam: *Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized* (pp. 512-523)
- Louis M. Antony: *Quine as Feminist: The Radical Import of Naturalized Epistemology* (pp. 539-566)

Apriori Knowledge (Weeks 9-10)

Roderick M. Chisholm: The Truths of Reason (pp. 328-345)

Saul A. Kripke: A Priori Knowledge, Necessity, and Contingency (pp. 346-354)

Clarence Irving Lewis: A Pragmatic Conception of the A Priori (pp. 322-327)

Analysis of Knowledge (Weeks 11-12)

Edmund Gettier: Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? (pp. 306-307)

John Pollock: The Gettier Problem (pp. 309-320)

Richard Feldman: An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counter-Examples (p. 308)

Justified Belief (Weeks 13-15)

William P. Alston: Concepts of Epistemic Justification (pp. 359-379)

Ernest Sosa: The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge (pp. 380-396)

David B. Annis: A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification (pp. 397-403)

Richard Feldman and Earl Conee: Evidentialism (pp. 404-415)

Stephen Stich: Reflective Equilibrium, Analytic Epistemology, and the Problem of Cognitive Diversity (pp. 416-427)

Miscellaneous Information:

- Academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) will result in no credit for the assignment in question and may result in further judicial action.. If you have any question concerning what constitutes academic misconduct, please ask me or consult the UAH Student Handbook.
- UAH is committed to the fundamental values of preserving academic honesty as defined in the Student Handbook (7.III.A). The instructor reserves the right to utilize electronic means to help prevent plagiarism. Students agree that by taking this course all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service, as well as additional information about the company, are described at www.uah.edu/library/turnitin.
- Any student who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of abilities should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss class requirements.
- Turn off all beepers, cellular phones, etc. before class.
- I reserve the right to alter any or all of the portions of this syllabus, at my sole discretion, at any time. Any changes will be announced in class.