

PHIL 20635: THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Instructor: Ellen Lehet

Email: elehet@nd.edu

Office: Malloy 300

Office hours: Wed 11:30-12:30; Fri 1:00-2:00 in Malloy 117.

Course Overview

This course will survey topics in epistemology — e.g., knowledge, justification, understanding, and testimony. We will consider questions relating to what we can know, how we know things, and why knowledge is valuable. At the end of this course you should:

- have knowledge of some of the major topics in epistemology.
- have the ability to read philosophy, recreate arguments, and meaningfully engage with those arguments.
- have experience contributing to and participating in philosophical discussions.

Texts: The readings for course will consist of chapters from the following texts, but I will provide access to all reading materials online.

- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Cottingham ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy.
- E. Sosa, J. Kim, J. Fantl, & M. McGrath (eds.), (2008), *Epistemology: An Anthology*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Assignments

Summary Papers. Each student is required to turn in 6 summary papers — one for each section of the course — throughout the semester. These papers should be 1 – 3 pages long, consisting of a summary of an assigned reading and the student’s thoughts/response to that reading. These will be graded on a scale of 0 – 3. Students will receive a **0** if they fail to turn in a summary paper, a **1** if they have failed to engage with the assigned reading, a **2** if they have only minimally engaged with the assigned reading, and a **3** if they have successfully and thoughtfully engaged with the assigned reading. These papers should be turned in before the class discussion of the assigned reading.

Quizzes. There will be 7 quizzes throughout the semester. One for each section and one on argument forms. These quizzes will be straightforward and short, consisting of 5-10 questions. If a student misses class on a quiz day then they will have to make up the quiz either in office hours or during the next class.

Term Paper. The major assignment for this course is the final paper, which will be due during finals week. This will be a 5-8 page paper that engages with and develops new ideas about one of the topics covered during the semester. A paper proposal will be due half way through the semester and a draft will be due two weeks before the end of the semester. I will provide a detailed rubric for the final after the proposals have been turned in. The assignment will be graded in the following way:

- Proposal — 10 points
- First draft — 15 points
- Final draft — 75 points

Presentation. The last class and the exam period will be used for student presentations, where students will be asked to give a 5-10 minute presentation of their term paper.

Grading. Overall grades for the course will be determined in the following way:

Final Paper	50%	A	94+
Summary Papers	15%	A-	90-93
Quizzes	15%	B+	87-89
Presentations	10%	B	83-86
Participation	10%	B-	80-82
		C+	77-79
		C	73-76
		C-	70-72
		D	60-69
		F	0-59

Attendance and Classroom Policies. Attendance is mandatory and will factor into the participation grade. A large portion of each class will be discussion and so to better the environment for discussion I ask that you do not bring any laptops or technology to class. Each student is expected to be an active participant in discussion.

Academic Integrity. Each student is expected to complete their own work for each of the assignments listed above. Any instances of plagiarism will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the academic honor code. More information about this honor code can be found at the following website: <https://honorcode.nd.edu/>
If you have any questions or concerns about the honor code, you should talk to me.

Tentative Schedule of Readings**Skepticism:**

Jan 23	Descartes — <i>Meditations I</i> Stroud — “The Problem of the External World”	Argument Forms Quiz
Jan 28	Moore — “Proof of an External World” & “Certainty”	
Feb 4	Foley — “Skepticism and Rationality”	Quiz

Knowledge and Justification:

Feb 6	Goldman — “What is Justified Belief?”	
Feb 11	Gettier — “Is justified true belief knowledge?”	
Feb 13	Zagzebski — “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems”	
Feb 18	Nozick — “Knowledge and Skepticism”	
Feb 20	Lewis — “Elusive Knowledge”	Quiz

Knowledge and Understanding:

Feb 25	Kvanvig — “Understanding”	
Feb 27	Zagzebski — “Recovering Understanding”	
Mar 4	Grimm — “Is Understanding a Species of Knowledge?”	
Mar 6	Elgin — “True Enough”	Quiz

Naturalized Epistemology:

Mar 18	Quine — “Epistemology Naturalized”	
Mar 20	Putnam — “There is at least one A Priori Truth”	
Mar 25	Bueno — “Epistemology and Philosophy of Science”	Paper Proposal Due
March 27	Ferreirós — “On Knowledge and Practices”	Quiz

Virtue Epistemology:

Apr 1	Zagzebski — selections from <i>Virtues of the Mind</i>	
Apr 3	Greco — “Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology”	
Apr 8	Sosa — “The Place of Truth in Epistemology”	
Apr 10	Pritchard — “Virtue Epistemology and Epistemic Luck”	Quiz

Testimony:

Apr 15	Baker — “Trust and Rationality”	Paper First Draft Due
Apr 17	Lackey — “Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission”	
Apr 24	Fricke — “Against Gullibility”	
Apr 29	Huemer — “The Problem of Memory Knowledge”	Quiz
May 1	No Assigned Reading	Student Presentations

Final Exam:

May 7	Final Exam — Student Presentations	Final Papers Due
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