

Epistemology W3960

Fall 2010

Brief description: Whether our goals are practical or theoretical, our pursuit of such goals ought to be informed by at least some of our beliefs about the environment in which such a pursuit takes place. Several questions present for consideration: *Which sorts of beliefs are relevant to such a context? Should such beliefs be certain? Should they qualify as knowledge?* These are among the sorts of questions that we will explore in this course.

Instructor information:

Jeff Helzner

jh2239@columbia.edu

721 Philosophy Hall

Office Hours: TBA

Time: R 2:10-4:00

Location: 522C Kent Hall

Grading:

4 Short Papers: 15% each. *Each of these short papers should be no more than 600 words in length.*

Final Paper 40%

Readings:

Epistemology: Contemporary Readings edited by Michael Huemer

Additional readings will be posted on CourseWorks.

Schedule:

9/9

"A Narrative Survey of Classical and Contemporary Positions in Epistemology" (Audi; p.1 in ECR)

Perception

9/16

Excerpt from *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke; p. 32 in ECR)

Excerpt from *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Berkeley; p.37 in ECR)

9/23

"Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy" (Hume; p.46 in ECR)

Excerpt from *The Problems of Philosophy* (Russell; p.64 in ECR)

Memory

9/30

"Memory" (Russell; p.88 in ECR)

"Reasoning and Memory" (Pollock and Cruz; p.104 in ECR)

"The Problem of Memory Knowledge" (Huemer; p.113 in ECR)

Reason and the a priori:

10/7

Excerpt from *Meno* (Plato; p.131 in ECR)

Excerpt from *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant; p.142 in ECR)

10/14 Short summary of “The Elimination of Metaphysics” is due by the end of class.

Excerpt from *The Problems of Philosophy* (Russell; p.152 in ECR)

“The Elimination of Metaphysics” (Ayer; p.166 in ECR)

10/21 Short summary of “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” is due by the end of class.

“Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (Quine; p. 176 in ECR)

“Physical Theory and Experiment” (Duhem, on CourseWorks)

Inductive inference

10/28

Excerpt from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hume; p.298 in ECR)

“The Problem of Induction” (Popper; on CourseWorks)

“The New Riddle of Induction” (Goodman; p.320 in ECR)

11/4 Short summary of “Why I’m not a Bayesian” is due by the end of class.

Excerpt from *Scientific Reasoning: The Bayesian Approach* (Howson and Urbach; p.344 in ECR)

“Why I’m not a Bayesian” (Glymour; on CourseWorks)

11/11 Short summary of “The Fixation of Belief” is due by the end of class.

“The Fixation of Belief” (Peirce; on CourseWorks)

“Information and Inference” (Levi; on CourseWorks)

The Analysis of Knowledge

11/18

“Knowledge as Having the Right to be Sure” (Ayer; p. 440 in ECR)

“Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (Gettier; p. 444 in ECR)

“Knowledge and Grounds: A Comment on Mr. Gettier’s Paper” (Clark; p.447 in ECR)

12/2

“A Causal Theory of Knowing” (Goldman; p. 450 in ECR)

“Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief” (Lehrer and Paxson; p. 464 in ECR)

Skepticism

12/9 Final paper is due by the end of class.

Excerpt from *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Descartes; p.523 in ECR)

“Brains in a Vat” (Putnam; p.524 in ECR)

Policy on late assignments:

Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one position on the following scale:

A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F.

For example, a paper that would have earned a B if submitted on time will, if handed in two days late, receive a C+.

Exceptions to this policy are restricted to those situations in which I have a written excuse from a physician or your academic adviser.

Policy on cheating: I will not tolerate any form of cheating. If I catch you cheating, then I will do everything that I can to make sure that you receive the most severe punishment that is allowed at this institution.