

**Philosophy 159: Epistemology [syllabus revised on 4/3/09]
Harvard University, Spring 2009**

Instructor: Prof. Selim Berker

Email: sberker@fas.harvard.edu

Office phone: (617) 495-1428

Office location: Emerson 208

Office hours: Mon., 2pm-3pm; Wed., 3pm-4pm; and by appointment

Teaching Fellow: Sharon Berry

Email: seaberry@fas.harvard.edu

Office phone: (617) 495-1835

Office location: Emerson 103

Office hours: Mon., 11am-12noon

Course Description:

An introduction to the field of epistemology. Topics include the analysis of knowledge, *a priori* knowledge, immediate perceptual justification, foundational vs. coherence views, internalism vs. externalism, naturalized epistemology, and skepticism.

Time and Place:

Lectures: Mon., Wed. (and sometimes Fri.), 1pm-2pm, Emerson 104

Undergraduate sections: Fri., 11am-12noon, Emerson 107; and Fri., 2pm-3pm, Emerson 106

Graduate section: Wed., 4pm-5pm, Emerson 208

Course URL: <http://my.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k53791>

All handouts and announcements, as well as several readings not included in the course's textbook, will be available through the course web site. You must login using your Harvard PIN to see all of the content on the site. Auditors without a Harvard PIN should contact the instructor about receiving an XID so that they can access everything on the site.

Prerequisites:

None. For those who have not taken many (or any) philosophy courses before, a dictionary of philosophy might help you navigate the thicket of philosophical terminology found in some of the more difficult readings. I recommend any one of the following:

Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Blackburn, Simon. *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Honderich, Ted, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Required Text:

The following book is available for purchase in the textbook section of the Coop:

Sosa, Ernest, Jaegwon Kim, Jeremy Fantl, and Matthew McGrath, eds. *Epistemology: An Anthology*, 2nd edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2008.

A number of additional readings will be available for copying in Robbins Library (second floor, Emerson Hall) and for downloading on the course web site.

Requirements:

Reading, discussing, and writing about the assigned readings will be the central activities of the course. There is a reading assignment for each lecture. The readings are often fairly short, but tend to require close study. It is essential that you complete the assigned readings *before* each lecture, as many lectures will presuppose familiarity with the material in the texts. Also, lectures will introduce material not in the readings, so attendance at each and every lecture is crucial if you want to do well in the course.

The breakdown of grades will be as follows:

20% *Attendance and participation in section and lecture.*

Evaluation will be based on attendance, preparation, and contributions to discussion. For those who do not feel comfortable talking during section or lecture, coming in to talk about course material during either the instructor's or the teaching fellow's office hours may count toward one's contributions to discussion.

60% *Three 5-page papers.*

Paper topics will be distributed in advance and will ask students to analyze and discuss material covered in class. *The first paper must be rewritten in light of your teaching fellow's comments and resubmitted.* Your grade for the revised paper will be the average of the grades for the two versions. (Note that revised papers are held to a higher standard.)

20% *Final exam.*

You will be required to take a 3-hour final exam on the material covered throughout the term. The final exam will be approximately two-thirds essay format, and the essay questions will be selected from a list distributed at the beginning of reading period. The exam will be closed-notes and closed-books. (Graduate students taking the course for credit will be given a take-home version of the final exam.)

Late work will be penalized 1/3rd of a letter grade per day (e.g. from a B+ to a B). Extensions will be granted only under exceptional circumstances, and only if an extension is requested *before* the due date of the assignment.

A note on plagiarism: Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. If you have any doubts about what counts as plagiarism, or about how to properly reference a source, consult the course instructor or your teaching fellow.

Important Dates:

The paper assignments will be due on the following dates:

- Mon., Feb. 23: first paper due
- Mon., Mar. 9: rewrite of first paper due
- Fri., Apr. 3: second paper due
- Fri., May 1: third paper due

The date of the final exam will be announced once it has been set by the FAS Registrar.

Assignment and Lecture Schedule

NOTE: Reading followed by “(*)” are available in Robbins Library and on the course web site. Readings followed by “(E:A)” can be found in Sosa, Kim, Fantl, & McGrath (eds.), *Epistemology: An Anthology* (available at the Coop).

Wed., Jan. 28: Introduction

I. Skepticism about the External World

Fri., Jan. 30: Descartes, *First and Second Meditations* (*)
Stroud, “The Problem of the External World,” pp. 7-12 (E:A) (*)

Mon., Feb. 2: Blumenfeld & Blumenfeld, “Can I Know that I Am Not Dreaming?” (*)

Wed., Feb. 4: Stroud, “The Problem of the External World,” pp. 13-25 (E:A) (*)

Mon., Feb. 9: Moore, “Proof of an External World” (E:A)
Moore, “Four Forms of Skepticism” (E:A) (focus on final paragraph)
Moore, “Certainty” (E:A)

Wed., Feb. 11: Soames, “Moore on Skepticism, Perception, and Knowledge” (*)

Wed., Feb. 18: Putnam, “Brains in a Vat” (*)

II. The Nature of Knowledge

Fri., Feb. 20: Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (E:A)
Feldman, “The Traditional Analysis of Knowledge” (*)
Feldman, “Modifying the Traditional Analysis of Knowledge” (*)

Mon., Feb. 23: Zagzebski, “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” (E:A)
FIRST PAPER DUE (at beginning of class)

Wed., Feb. 25: Goldman, “A Causal Theory of Knowing” (*)

Mon., Mar. 2: Nozick, “Knowledge and Skepticism” (E:A) (skip or skim the footnotes)

Wed., Mar. 4: Sosa, “How to Defeat Opposition to Moore” (E:A)

Mon., Mar. 9: Craig, “Nozick and the Skeptic: the Thumbnail Version” (*)
REWRITE OF FIRST PAPER DUE (at beginning of class)

Wed., Mar. 11: Lycan, “On the Gettier Problem Problem” (*)
Weinberg et al., “Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions” (E:A) (optional)
Williamson, “A State of Mind” (E:A) (optional)

III. The Structure of Knowledge and Justification

Mon., Mar. 16: Feldman, “The Infinite Regress Argument” (*)
Sosa, “The Raft and the Pyramid,” §§1-3 (E:A)

- Wed., Mar. 18:* Feldman, “Cartesian Foundationalism” (*)
 Jackson, “Is There a Good Argument against the Incorrigibility Thesis?” (*)
 Chisholm, “The Myth of the Given” (E:A) (optional)
- Mon., Mar. 23:* NO CLASS (Spring Break)
- Wed., Mar. 25:* NO CLASS (Spring Break)
- Mon., Mar. 30:* Bonjour, “Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?” (E:A)
 Sosa, “The Raft and the Pyramid,” §4 (E:A)
 Davidson, “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge” (E:A) (optional)
- Wed., Apr. 1:* Bonjour, “In Search of Coherentism,” pp. 42-51 (*)
- Fri., Apr. 3:* Bonjour, “In Search of Coherentism,” pp. 51-59 (*)
SECOND PAPER DUE (at beginning of class)
- Mon., Apr. 6:* Klein, “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons” (E:A)
 Sosa, “The Raft and the Pyramid,” §§5-6 (E:A)
- Wed., Apr. 8:* Feldman, “Modest Foundationalism” (*)
 Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist” (*) (skip §II)
 Sosa, “The Raft and the Pyramid,” §§7-11 (E:A) (skip the appendix)

IV. Internalism vs. Externalism

- Mon., Apr. 13:* Goldman, “What Is Justified Belief?” (E:A)
- Wed., Apr. 15:* Bonjour, “Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge” (E:A)
 Cohen, “Justification and Truth” (*)
 Feldman, “Reliability and Justification” (*)
- Mon., Apr. 20:* Feldman & Conee, “Evidentialism” (E:A)
- Wed., Apr. 22:* Goldman, “Internalism Exposed” (E:A)
 Conee & Feldman, “Internalism Defended” (E:A)
- Mon., Apr. 27:* Fumerton, “Externalism and Skepticism” (E:A)
 Vogel, “Reliabilism Leveled” (E:A) (optional)
- Wed., Apr. 29:* Cohen, “Basic Knowledge and the Problem of Easy Knowledge” (*)

V. Naturalized Epistemology

- Fri., May 1:* Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized” (E:A)
 Kim, “What Is ‘Naturalized Epistemology?’” (E:A)
THIRD PAPER DUE (at beginning of class)