

**Epistemology**  
**Philosophy 3413**  
**Spring 2014**

**Instructor:** David Spewak

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Web Page: MyCourses/Blackboard  
Office Hours: TR 11:00AM–12:00PM and 2:00–3:00 PM, and by appointment  
Lecture: MW 12:30–1:45, Etheredge 223A

**Texts:**

**Required:** Sosa, E., J. Kim, J. Fantl, and M. McGrath (eds.). (2008) *Epistemology: An Anthology*. Blackwell 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

The following are epistemology textbooks that you may find helpful:

**Optional:** Dancy, J. (1985) *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Blackwell.

**Optional:** Pollock, J. (1986) *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*. Hutcheson.

**Optional:** Everitt, N., and Fisher, A. (1995) *Modern Epistemology: A New Introduction*. McGraw Hill.

**Course Description:** Epistemology is the study of knowledge. Typically, this includes the study of justified belief and how its related to knowledge. In this course we will attempt to understand the nature of knowledge and whether we can actually know anything. Our central aim will be to investigate the scope and limits of human knowledge. To this end this course will be divided into four sections. In the first section we will attempt to define knowledge. Historically knowledge was analyzed as justified true belief. However, Edmund Gettier has shown that this analysis is insufficient. We will look at modifications to the justified true belief analysis of knowledge in an attempt to account for knowledge. In the second section we will consider the significance and problems that arise from philosophical skepticism. In the third section we will turn to the nature of justification. In the fourth section we will look a recent development with in epistemology, contextualism. Contextualists attempt to avoid skepticism and other epistemological problems by claiming that ‘knows’ is context sensitive, i.e. its semantic content varies from context to context. We will evaluate this approach, responses, and theories that attempt to account for this contextual

variability in knowledge attributions without committing to the meaning of 'knows' being context sensitive. In our final section we will consider different sources of knowledge including a priori knowledge, testimony, and memory.

### **Grading:**

Class Presentation	10%
Paper 1 (3-4 pgs.)	15%
Paper 2 (7-8 pgs.)	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam (5/2)	25%

**Class presentation:** Starting the third week, someone will be giving a brief (10 min.) presentation on the material that is being covered each day. If more than one reading is assigned for the day that you give your presentation, we will decide which reading is best suited for a presentation. You will meet with me prior to giving your presentation to discuss the material that you will be presenting. To prepare for this meeting you will need to bring to our meeting at least an outline of what you will be presenting.

**Papers:** You will be writing two essays of differing lengths. The first, and shorter paper, will be based on a prompt of my choosing. The second is longer and is more open-ended with respect to what you are writing. For the second paper you will be given a list of ten prompts to choose from, but you are also free to choose a topic other than one on the list. If you choose to write on something that is not on the list of prompts, you must have your topic approved by me.

**Reading and Attendance:** You are expected to attend lectures prepared, i.e. having done the reading and ready to discuss the material. It will not be enough to skim the readings prior to lecture. Philosophical texts require careful and critical reading. When reading you should be asking yourself *what* the author is claiming, *why* he or she is making that claim, and you should be attempting to determine *whether that claim is justified*. Bring your book to class because many days we will be closely looking at the text.

**Final Exam:** The final exam is scheduled for **Friday May 2, 2014** from **12-3PM**.

### **Tentative Schedule:**

This is subject to change at any time at the discretion of the instructor. Additional readings may be assigned.

### **Topic 1: Defining Knowledge**

- Traditional Accounts
  - A.J. Ayer “Knowing as Having the Right to Be Sure” (Blackboard)
- Gettier Cases
  - Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge” **(SK)**
- Defeasibility
  - Lehrer and Paxson “Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief” (Blackboard)
- Causality
  - Alvin Goldman “A Causal Theory of Knowing” (Blackboard)
- Reliabilism
  - Jonathan Vogel “Reliabilism Leveled” **(SK)**
- Truth Tracking
  - Robert Nozick “Knowledge and Skepticism” **(SK)**
  - Ernest Sosa “How to Defeat Opposition to Moore” **(SK)**
- Rejecting JTB?
  - Linda Zagzebski “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” **(SK)**
  - Timothy Williamson “A State of Mind” **(SK)**

## **Topic 2: Skepticism**

- Barry Stroud, “The Problem of the External World” **(SK)**
- G.E. Moore, Selections. (Please read all the writings excerpted from Moore) **(SK)**
- Michael Williams “Epistemological Realism” **(SK)**

## **Topic 3: Justification**

- Internalism and Externalism
  - Alvin Goldman “What is Justified Belief?” and “Internalism Exposed” **(SK)**
  - E. Conee and R. Feldman “Evidentialism” and “Internalism Defended” **(SK)**
- Foundationalism and Coherentism
  - Ernest Sosa “The Raft and the Pyramid” **(SK)**

## **Topic 4: Knowledge and Context**

- In Defense of Contextualism
  - Keith DeRose “Solving the Skeptical Problem” **(SK)**
  - David Lewis “Elusive Knowledge” **(SK)**

- Stewart Cohen “Contextualist Solutions to Epistemological Problems: Scepticism, Gettier, and the Lottery” **(SK)**
- Responses to Contextualism
  - Jason Stanley “Knowledge and Practical Interests” **(SK)**
  - John Hawthorne “Sensitive Moderate Invariantism” **(SK)**
- Relativism
  - John MacFarlane “The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions” **(SK)**

### **Topic 5: Sources of Knowledge**

- Intuitions and the a priori
  - Albert Casullo “Revisability, Reliabilism, and A Priori Knowledge” **(SK)**
  - George Bealer “*A Priori* Knowledge and the Scope of Philosophy” **(SK)**
  - Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich “Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions” **(SK)**
- Testimony
  - Judith Baker “Trust and Rationality” **(SK)**
  - Elizabeth Fricker “Against Gullibility” **(SK)**
  - Tyler Burge “Content Preservation” **(SK)**
  - Jennifer Lackey “Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission” **(SK)**
- Memory
  - Michael Huemer “The Problem of Memory Knowledge” **(SK)**