

PHIL 230: Experience and Reality

Fall 2017

MWF 10:10-11:00 AM

Phillips Hall 385

Instructor:

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Caldwell 210B

Office Hours: M 11:30 AM-12:30 PM, R 2:30-3:30 PM (or by appointment)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to epistemological issues surrounding knowledge, belief and justification. Traditional epistemological questions that will be discussed in this course include the following: What is knowledge, and what does it take to have it? What is justified belief, and what makes a belief justified? We will also discuss questions related to knowledge, belief and justification that arise at the intersection of epistemology and other areas such as ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of mind and philosophy of action. Such questions include the following: What kinds of norms are beliefs subject to? Can we choose what to believe like we choose how to act? What is the relationship between knowledge, belief, justification and the social nature of our lives?

Course Requirements

Five short papers (600-800 words each): 50%

In-class midterm exam: 10%

In-class final exam: 20%

Participation: 15%

In-class reflections: 5%

1. Five short papers

Each course at UNC must include at least 10 pages of written work. The written work in this course will take the form of five short paper assignments. These five papers (600-800 words each) are to be submitted to the instructor via Sakai Drop Box, by **11:59 PM** on the following dates:

Paper 1: Monday, 9/18

Paper 2: Monday, 10/9

Paper 3: Wednesday, 11/1

Paper 4: Monday, 11/13

Paper 5: Friday, 11/27

Prompts and further instructions for each paper will be handed out in class at least one week prior to the due date, as specified on the course schedule. Each paper is worth 10% of the course grade.

Late papers: Each student will be given one “free late day,” to be used once in the course, whenever the student requests it. Otherwise, unless special permission is obtained from the instructor **at least 24 hours before the due date**, late papers will not be accepted without a penalty. Permission will only be given in the event of unforeseen circumstances that prevent the student from completing the paper on time. In the event of such circumstances, the student is responsible for providing suitable documentation to the instructor. When a paper is turned in late without prior permission from the instructor, $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade will be deducted from that paper’s grade for each calendar day that the paper is late.

Plagiarism: The UNC Instrument of Student Governance defines plagiarism as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” All students are expected to adhere to the UNC Honor Code, and plagiarism will be punished as severely as the university allows.

In general, using anyone else’s words in papers is discouraged in this course. If quoting from assigned readings is necessary in a paper, all quotations must appear in quotation marks, and an internal citation (such as a footnote or endnote) indicating their source must be provided in a standard format. It is also a form of plagiarism to closely paraphrase text from an external source, changing a few of the words but imitating the sentence/paragraph structure of the external source. Text that appears outside of quotation marks in a paper must be the student’s own words, and those words must be presented within the student’s own organizational and sentential structure.

In addition, plagiarism can be committed non-deliberately; if one is reckless in one’s use of other people’s words or ideas, then one has committed plagiarism even if one did not intend to do so. In borderline cases, students should err on the side of consulting the instructor, instead of hoping that they are not committing plagiarism. Students should also contact the instructor with any other questions or concerns about plagiarism-related issues.

2. Midterm exam

A midterm exam, worth 10% of the course grade, will be administered on **Wednesday, October 25th** during regular class time. The exam will cover material from the first half of the course. Detailed information about the format of the midterm exam will be provided at least one week before the exam date.

3. Final exam

A final exam, worth 20% of the course grade, will be administered on **Friday, December 15th, from 8:00 AM until 11:00 AM**. The final exam will be cumulative, covering material from throughout the course, but will contain more material from the second half of the course. Detailed information about the format of the final exam will be provided on or before the last day of classes.

4. Participation

Because philosophical discussion is essential to understanding course material, participation will be a significant component of the course (15% of the course grade). Students are expected to carefully read the material assigned for each class in advance and arrive prepared to participate in discussions of that material. Although attendance is required, even perfect attendance is not sufficient for a grade of A in participation. Students must not only attend class but regularly make valuable contributions to class discussions in order to earn an A in participation. Contributions to class discussions will be evaluated on the basis of frequency, constructiveness and respectfulness. Other forms of participation, such as attending office hours, will also be taken into consideration.

Students who feel that regular participation in group discussions will not be possible for them should contact the instructor with their concerns. Alternative methods of participation will be accommodated for such students to the best of the instructor's ability.

5. In-class written responses

At the start of each non-discussion class period, students will be asked to complete brief written responses to the assigned reading(s) for that day. These written responses will be worth 5% of the course grade. Each student's three lowest grades on these assignments will be dropped, including grades of "0." Students who miss in-class written responses due to lateness or absence will not be permitted to make them up. The purpose of the course policy of dropping the three lowest grades on the responses is to provide leeway for a reasonable number of absences while also incentivizing attendance.

Other Course Policies

1. Non-discrimination policy

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to equality of educational opportunity. The University does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of race, color, gender, age, national origin, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

In addition, the instructor is committed to making the classroom a safe space for all students. Personal attacks or discriminatory treatment of others will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

2. Accommodations

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing

learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. If you have need of these services, please visit <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, call 919-962-8300 or email accessibility@unc.edu. Please contact ARS as early in the term as possible.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to revision. Readings may be added, removed and/or adjusted at the instructor's discretion. Any such changes will be announced both in class and via e-mail. Otherwise, students should come to class each day having read the reading assigned for that day.

There is no assigned textbook. All course readings will be posted on Sakai.

Date	Agenda	Assignments
Wednesday, 8/23	James Pryor, "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" Pryor, "What is an Argument?"	
Friday, 8/25	Jennifer Nagel, Chapter 1 of "Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction"	
Unit I: Skepticism		
Monday, 8/28	Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Section 1 of "Skepticism" Rene Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy" (selections)	
Wednesday, 8/30	G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World"	
Friday, 9/1	Discussion day [no new reading]	
Monday, 9/4	Labor Day holiday [no class/reading]	
Wednesday, 9/6	Gail Stine, "Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Deductive Closure" Pryor, "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper"	
Friday, 9/8	Discussion day [no new reading]	Paper 1 assigned
Unit II: Knowledge and Justification		
Monday, 9/11	Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"	
Wednesday, 9/13	David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge"	
Friday, 9/15	Discussion day [no new reading]	
Monday, 9/18	Laurence Bonjour "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"	Paper 1 due

Wednesday, 9/20	Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge"	
Friday, 9/22	Discussion day [no new reading]	
Monday, 9/25	Laurence Bonjour "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge"	
Wednesday, 9/27	Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, "Internalism Defended"	
Friday, 9/29	Discussion day [no new reading]	Paper 2 assigned
Unit III: Belief		
Monday, 10/2	Bernard Williams, "Deciding to Believe"	
Wednesday, 10/4	Nishi Shah, "Clearing Space for Doxastic Voluntarism"	
Friday, 10/6	Discussion day [no new reading]	
Monday, 10/9	William Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"	Paper 2 due
Wednesday, 10/11	Blaise Pascal, "Pensées" (selections) William James, "The Will to Believe"	
Friday, 10/13	Discussion day [no new reading]	
Monday, 10/16	Richard Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief"	
Wednesday, 10/18	Keith DeRose, "Ought We to Follow Our Evidence?"	
Friday, 10/20	Fall Break holiday [no class/reading]	
Monday, 10/23	Discussion day [no new reading]	Paper 3 assigned
Wednesday, 10/25	Midterm exam [no new reading]	
Unit IV: Perception		
Friday, 10/25	Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Section 2 of "The Problem of Perception" A.J. Ayer, "The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge" (selections)	
Monday, 10/30	Susanna Siegel, Chapter 1 of "The Rationality of Perception"	
Wednesday, 11/1	Siegel, Chapter 2 of "The Rationality of Perception"	Paper 3 due
Friday, 11/3	Discussion day [no new reading]	Paper 4 assigned
Unit V: Social and Applied Epistemology		
Monday, 11/6	Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement"	
Wednesday, 11/8	Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement" (cont.)	
Friday, 11/10	David Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News"	
Monday, 11/13	Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News" (cont.)	Paper 4 due
Wednesday, 11/15	Discussion day [no new reading]	Paper 5 assigned

Friday, 11/17	Katia Vavova, "Irrelevant Influences"	
Monday, 11/20	Thi Nguyen "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles"	
Wednesday, 11/22	Thanksgiving holiday [no class/reading]	
Friday, 11/24	Thanksgiving holiday [no class/reading]	
Monday, 11/27	Discussion day [no new reading]	Paper 5 due
Wednesday, 11/29	Regina Rini, "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology"	
Friday, 12/1	Alex Worsnip, "The Obligation to Diversify One's Sources"	
Monday, 12/4	Discussion day [no new reading]	
Wednesday, 12/6	Review day [no new reading]	
Friday, 12/15	Final Exam from 8:00-11:00 AM	