PHIL 4 - Knowledge and Its Limits

Professor Wesley Holliday
UC Berkeley, Spring 2018

TuTh 2-3:30
Evans 60

Syllabus

Description
In this course, we will investigate questions about the nature and limits of knowledge: Is knowledge compatible with the possibility of human error? Is the structure of our knowledge like a building that rests on a foundation or like a web held together by its connections? What are the requirements for knowledge? Can one know by accident? How can we acquire knowledge and avoid misinformation from others? Whom can we trust?

Prerequisites
There are no official prerequisites for this course. Success in the course will require the patience to carefully read, re-read, and think about difficult philosophical texts, as well as the willingness to work on developing your skills for clear and rigorous analytical writing.

Readings
There is a reader for the course sold by Copy Central. Versions of many readings are hyperlinked from this syllabus or bCourses, but the official versions are in the reader.

Requirements
- Discussion section participation (including Piazza) and quizzes (10% of grade)
- In-class exam on February 8 (15% of grade)
- 3-5 page paper due on bCourses by March 5, 5pm (20% of grade)
- 3-5 page paper due on bCourses by April 2, 5pm (25% of grade)
- Final exam on May 7, 11:30-2:30pm, location TBA (30% of grade)

In-class participation will be taken into account in cases of borderline grades.
(CDC recommendation: if you are sick, stay home until 24 hours after symptoms stop.)

Sections
All enrolled students must attend a weekly discussion section. Sections will be led by GSIs Ravit Dotan and Pia Schneider, PhD students in the Department of Philosophy.

Contact

Prof. Holliday | wesholliday@berkeley.edu | philosophy.berkeley.edu/holliday
Office Hours: TuTh 1-2pm, 246 Moses

Ravit Dotan | ravit.dotan@berkeley.edu | philosophy.berkeley.edu/people/detail/406
Office Hours: W 1-2pm and by appointment, 301 Moses

Pia Schneider | pia_schneider@berkeley.edu | philosophy.berkeley.edu/people/detail/477
Office Hours: 3:30-4:30pm, 301 Moses
### Schedule

**Part I: The Limits of Knowledge, The Skeptical Problem**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 16</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>Course Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Reading: none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 18</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>External World Skepticism I</strong></td>
<td>&quot;First Meditation&quot; and selections from the Objections and Replies by René Descartes and &quot;Guidelines on Reading Philosophy&quot; by Jim Pryor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 23</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>External World Skepticism II</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Proof of an External World&quot; and excerpt from &quot;Certainty&quot; by G. E. Moore (For online version of &quot;Certainty,&quot; read from “Suppose I say ...” on page 268 to the end.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>Certainties</strong></td>
<td>Reading: selections from <em>On Certainty</em> by Ludwig Wittgenstein Sections: §§ 84-192, §§ 204-209, §§ 230-8, §§ 243-50, §§ 341-3, §§ 410-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 30</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>Epistemic Closure</strong></td>
<td>Reading: &quot;Epistemic Operators&quot; by Fred Dretske</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>Epistemic Closure and Relevant Alternatives</strong></td>
<td>Reading: &quot;Epistemic Operators&quot; and &quot;The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge&quot; by Fred Dretske</td>
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<td>Feb. 6</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>Relevant Alternatives</strong></td>
<td>Reading: &quot;The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge&quot; by Fred Dretske</td>
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<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>In-class Exam on Part I</strong></td>
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**Part II: The Structure of Knowledge, The Regress Problem**

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<tr>
<td>Feb. 13</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>Pyrhonian Skepticism</strong></td>
<td>Reading: selections from <em>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</em> by Sextus Empiricus Sections: §§ 1-35, §§ 91-123, §§ 164-177</td>
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<td>Feb. 15</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>Foundationalism</strong></td>
<td>Reading: “Foundationalism” by Michael DePaul</td>
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<td>Feb. 20</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>Coherentism</strong></td>
<td>Reading: “Non-Foundationalist Epistemology” by Catherine Z. Elgin</td>
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<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>Infinitism</strong></td>
<td>Reading: &quot;Infinitism is the Solution to the Regress Problem&quot; by Peter Klein (pp. 131-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 27</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>Foundherentism</strong></td>
<td>Reading: &quot;A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification&quot; by Susan Haack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 1</td>
<td>(Th)</td>
<td><strong>Writing a Philosophy Paper</strong></td>
<td>Reading: “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper” by Jim Pryor and “A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper” by Harvard College Writing Center</td>
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<td>Paper on Part II due on bCourses by Monday, March 5, 5pm</td>
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**Part III: The Analysis of Knowledge, The Gettier Problem**

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 6</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td><strong>The Gettier Problem</strong></td>
<td>Reading: “Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?” by Edmund Gettier</td>
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Mar. 8 (Th)  **Knowledge and Causes I**  
Reading: “A Causal Theory of Knowledge” by Alvin Goldman

Mar. 13 (Tu)  **Knowledge and Causes II**  
Reading: “A Causal Theory of Knowledge” by Alvin Goldman

Mar. 15 (Th)  **Knowledge and Accidents**  
Reading: “An Analysis of Factual Knowledge” by Peter Unger

Mar. 20 (Tu)  **Knowledge and Information**  
Reading: *When is True Belief Knowledge?*, Part I: The Basic Idea, by Richard Foley

Mar. 22 (Th)  **Working Session on Papers**

- Paper on Part III due on bCourses by Monday, April 2, 5pm

Mar. 27 (Tu)  **No Class - Spring Break**
Mar. 29 (Th)  **No Class - Spring Break**

**Part IV: Social Aspects of Knowledge**

Apr. 3 (Tu)  **Ethics of Belief**  
Reading: “The Ethics of Belief” by William K. Clifford

Apr. 5 (Th)  **Testimony I**  
Reading: “Of Miracles” by David Hume

Apr. 10 (Tu)  **Testimony II**  
Reading: “Of Miracles” by David Hume

Apr. 12 (Th)  **Conspiracies**  
Reading: “Of Conspiracy Theories” by Brian Keeley

Apr. 17 (Tu)  **Epistemic Dependence**  
Reading: “Epistemic Dependence” by John Hardwig

Apr. 19 (Th)  **Experts I**  
Reading: “Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?” by Alvin Goldman

Apr. 24 (Tu)  **Experts II**  
Reading: “Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?” by Alvin Goldman

Apr. 26 (Th)  **Course Review**  
Reading: none

May 7 (M)  **Final Exam, 11:30-2:30pm, location TBA**

**Resources**

- For advice on writing, see Jim Pryor’s “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper.”
- For advice on analyzing arguments, see Jim Pryor’s “Philosophical Terms and Methods.”
- UCB Library maintains a page on Citation Styles, Styles Guides, and Avoiding Plagiarism.
Course Policies

Academic Integrity

“Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor.

In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. “Proper attribution” means that you have fully identified the original source and extent of your use of the words or ideas of others that you reproduce in your work for this course, usually in the form of a footnote or parenthesis.”

—Report of the UCB Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Subcommittee, June 18, 2004

- Students who are found to have plagiarized or cheated in the course will receive an F.

Extensions and Late Work

- Extensions will be granted only in case of medical and family emergencies.
- Late work without prior notification of an emergency will not be accepted.
- Your lowest score on a quiz in section during the semester will be dropped.
- Term papers submitted after the deadline will immediately lose one grade step (e.g., from B+ to B) and an additional step every 24 hours thereafter.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a letter of accommodation from the Disabled Students Program, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can do whatever we can to help you in the course.

Our Policy on Sexual Violence and Harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment have no place in a learning environment. Therefore, in alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is the policy of the University of California (Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy) to prohibit sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. The UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy requires that the University immediately implement interim remedies and permanent support measures, when necessary, for victims/survivors. If you or someone you know experiences sexual violence or harassment, there are options, rights, and resources, including assistance with academics, reporting, and medical care. Visit survivorsupport.berkeley.edu or call the 24/7 Care Line at 510-643-2005.