

PHIL 4 - Knowledge and Its Limits

Professor Wesley Holliday

MWF 10-11

UC Berkeley, Spring 2013

101 Barker

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 most readings are hyperlinked from this syllabus or [bSpace](#), but the official versions are in the reader.

Requirements

- Section participation (including [Piazza](#)) and quizzes (10% of grade)
- In-class exam on February 22 (15% of grade)
- 3-5 page paper due on bSpace by March 17, 5pm (20% of grade)
- 3-5 page paper due on bSpace by April 14, 5pm (25% of grade)
- In-class final exam on May 14, 3-6pm (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 Ethan Jerzak and Michael Rieppel, PhD candidates in the Department of Philosophy.

Contact

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Ethan Jerzak | jerzak@berkeley.edu | philosophy.berkeley.edu/people/detail/295

Office Hours: F 1-3, 301 Moses Section: T 10, 201 Giannini; T 3 & 4, 14 Haviland

Michael Rieppel | rieppel.teach@gmail.com | philosophy.berkeley.edu/people/detail/95

Office Hours: W 4-6, 301 Moses Section: W 1, 332 Giannini; W 2 & 3, 210 Dwinelle

Schedule

Part I: The Limits of Knowledge, The Skeptical Problem

- Jan. 23 (W) **Course Introduction**
Reading: none
- Jan. 25 (F) **Cartesian Skepticism I**
Reading: "[First Meditation](#)" and selections from the Objections and Replies by René Descartes and "[Guidelines on Reading Philosophy](#)" by Jim Pryor
- Jan. 28 (M) **Cartesian Skepticism II**
Reading: "[First Meditation](#)" and selections from the Objections and Replies by René Descartes and "[Proof of an External World](#)" by G. E. Moore
- Jan. 30 (W) **Cartesian Skepticism III**
Reading: "[Proof of an External World](#)" and excerpt from "[Certainty](#)" by G. E. Moore (For online version of "Certainty," read from "Suppose I say . . ." on page 268 to the end.)
- Feb. 1 (F) **Certainties I**
Reading: selections from [On Certainty](#) by Ludwig Wittgenstein
Sections: §84-192, §204-209, §230-8, §243-50, §341-3, §410-1
- Feb. 4 (M) **Certainties II**
Reading: selections from [On Certainty](#) by Ludwig Wittgenstein
Sections: §84-192, §204-209, §230-8, §243-50, §341-3, §410-1
- Feb. 6 (W) **Analyzing Arguments** (GSI Lecture)
- Feb. 8 (F) **TBA**
- Feb. 11 (M) **Relevant Alternatives I**
Reading: "[The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge](#)" by Fred Dretske
- Feb. 13 (W) **Relevant Alternatives II**
Reading: "[The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge](#)" by Fred Dretske
- Feb. 15 (F) **Knowledge and Assumptions I**
Reading: "[Knowledge and Assumptions](#)" by Brett Sherman and Gilbert Harman
- Feb. 18 (M) **No Class**
- Feb. 20 (W) **Knowledge and Assumptions II**
Reading: "[Knowledge and Assumptions](#)" by Brett Sherman and Gilbert Harman
- Feb. 22 (F) **Exam on Part I**

Part II: The Structure of Knowledge, The Regress Problem

- Feb. 25 (M) **Pyrrhonian Skepticism I**
Reading: selections from [Outlines of Pyrrhonism](#) by Sextus Empiricus
Sections: §1-117, §145-177
- Feb. 27 (W) **Pyrrhonian Skepticism II**
Reading: selections from [Outlines of Pyrrhonism](#) by Sextus Empiricus
Sections: §1-117, §145-177
- Mar. 1 (F) **Foundationalism I**
Reading: "[Foundationalism](#)" by Michael DePaul
- Mar. 4 (M) **Foundationalism II**
Reading: "[Foundationalism](#)" by Michael DePaul

Mar. 6 (W) **Coherentism I**

Reading: "[Non-Foundationalist Epistemology](#)" by Catherine Z. Elgin

Mar. 8 (F) **Coherentism II**

Reading: "[Non-Foundationalist Epistemology](#)" by Catherine Z. Elgin

Mar. 11 (M) **Infinitism I**

Reading: "[Infinitism is the Solution to the Regress Problem](#)" by Peter Klein (pp. 131-8)

Mar. 13 (W) **Infinitism II**

Reading: "[Infinitism is the Solution to the Regress Problem](#)" by Peter Klein (pp. 131-8)

Mar. 15 (F) **Working Session on Papers**

- Paper on Part II due on bSpace by March 17 (Sun), 5pm

[Part III: The Analysis of Knowledge, The Gettier Problem](#)

Mar. 18 (M) **The "Classical" Analysis**

Reading: [Theaetetus](#) (200d to end) and [Meno](#) (97a-98a) by Plato

Mar. 20 (W) **The Gettier Problem I**

Reading: "[Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?](#)" by Edmund Gettier

Mar. 22 (F) **The Gettier Problem II**

Reading: "[Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?](#)" by Edmund Gettier

Mar. 25-29 **Spring Break**

Apr. 1 (M) **Knowledge and Causes I**

Reading: "[A Causal Theory of Knowledge](#)" by Alvin Goldman

Apr. 3 (W) **Knowledge and Causes II**

Reading: "[A Causal Theory of Knowledge](#)" by Alvin Goldman

Apr. 5 (F) **Knowledge and Accidents I**

Reading: "[An Analysis of Factual Knowledge](#)" by Peter Unger

Apr. 8 (M) **Knowledge and Accidents II**

Reading: "[An Analysis of Factual Knowledge](#)" by Peter Unger

Apr. 10 (W) **Interim Overview**

Reading: none

- Extra credit: summary of "[Elusive Knowledge](#)" by David Lewis due on bSpace April 18

Apr. 12 (F) **Working Session on Papers**

- Paper on Part III due on bSpace by April 14 (Sun), 5pm

[Part IV: Social Aspects of Knowledge](#)

Apr. 15 (M) **Ethics of Belief I**

Reading: "[The Ethics of Belief](#)" by William K. Clifford

Apr. 17 (W) **Ethics of Belief II**

Reading: "[The Ethics of Belief](#)" by William K. Clifford

Apr. 19 (F) **Testimony I**

Reading: "[Of Miracles](#)" by David Hume

- Apr. 22 (M) **Testimony II**
Reading: "[Of Miracles](#)" by David Hume
- Apr. 24 (W) **Conspiracies I**
Reading: "[Of Conspiracy Theories](#)" by Brian Keeley
- Apr. 26 (F) **Conspiracies II**
Reading: "[Of Conspiracy Theories](#)" by Brian Keeley
- Apr. 29 (M) **Trust I**
Reading: "[Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?](#)" by Alvin Goldman
- May 1 (W) **Trust II**
Reading: "[Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?](#)" by Alvin Goldman
- May 3 (F) **Course Overview**
Reading: none
- May 14 (Tu) **Final Exam**, 3-6pm, 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.