

Philosophy 228, Epistemology
Mon, Wed 1:30pm-2:50pm
Rockefeller Hall 210
Spring 2009 Syllabus and Reading Schedule

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and by appointment.
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Presumably the primary reason you are at Vassar is to acquire knowledge. It would be an incredible shame, and a sham, if you left Vassar knowing absolutely nothing. It would be even worse if you left having absolutely no reasonable beliefs about anything. Imagine the lawsuits from your parents if you came out of four years of college with no knowledge and nothing but unjustified, unreasonable beliefs. Epistemology is the study of whether or not this will end up happening, and if not, how it is possible that it will not happen. As epistemologists, our job is to construct and evaluate theories of knowledge and justification that make it possible for us to acquire knowledge of ourselves and of the external world. In this course, we will study theories of knowledge and justification as responses to radical forms of skepticism, arguments that purport to show that you will leave Vassar with no knowledge and no justified beliefs. Of particular interest will be knowledge from our sense-perceptions, knowledge about the future on the basis of the past, and knowledge of generalizations on the basis of particular facts.

Texts: *Epistemology: An Anthology*, ed. Sosa, Kim, Fantl, and McGrath, (SKFM) Blackwell (2008).

Epistemology, by Richard Feldman, Prentice Hall (2003).

Additional Articles on Blackboard.

Requirements: There will be one 1000-word paper, two 2000-word papers, and a brief take-home final exam. Study questions will be handed out in advance of the final exam. The shorter paper will be worth 15% of your final grade, the two longer papers will each be worth 30% of your final grade, and the final exam will be worth 25% of your final grade.

Reading Schedule

(Any changes will be announced in class.)

Jan. 21st, The Problems of Epistemology

Jan. 21st: Feldman, Chapter Two.

Week 1: Jan. 26th, 28th. Humean Skepticism

Jan. 26th: Feldman, Chapter Seven up to page 141, Russell's "On Induction" on Blackboard.

Jan. 28th: P.F. Strawson's "The 'Justification' of Induction" on Blackboard.

Week 2: Feb. 2nd, 4th. Gruesome Skepticism

Feb. 2nd: Goodman's "The New Riddle of Induction and Prospects for a Theory of Projection" on Blackboard.

Week 3: Feb. 9th, 11th. Cartesian and Pyrhonnan Skepticism

Feb. 9th: Feldman, Chapter Six. Stroud's "The Problem of the External World" SKFM, pp. 7-25 and Unger's "An Argument for Skepticism" on Blackboard.

Feb. 11th: Klein's "Skepticism" on Blackboard.

Week 4: Feb. 16th, 18th. Skepticism and Gettierology

Feb. 16th: Feldman, Chapter Three. Gettier's "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", Harman's "Selections from *Thought*" in SKFM, pp. 192-206.

Feb. 18th: Zagzebski's "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems" in SKFM, pp. 207-212.

Week 5: Feb. 23rd, 25th. Externalism about Knowledge

Feb. 23rd: Goldman's "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge" on Blackboard.

Feb. 25th: Nozick's "Knowledge and Skepticism" in SKFM, pp. 255-279.

Week 6: Mar. 2nd, 4th. Externalism about Justification

Mar. 2nd: Feldman, Chapter Five. Goldman's "What is Justified Belief?" in SKFM, pp. 333-347.

Mar. 4th: (Optional: Alston's "How to Think about Reliability" on Blackboard.) Vogel's "Reliabilism Leveled" in SKFM, pp. 348-362

Week 7: Mar. 23rd, 25th. Critiques of Externalism

Mar. 23rd: Bonjour's "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge" in SKFM, pp. 363-378.

Mar. 25th: Connee and Feldman's "Internalism Defended" in SKFM, pp. 407-421.

Week 8: Mar. 30th, Apr. 1st. Bonjour's Coherentism

Mar. 30th: Feldman, Chapter Four. Bonjour's "Can Empirical Knowledge have a Foundation?" in SKFM pp. 109-123.

Apr. 1st: Bonjour's "The Elements of Coherentism" and "Coherence and Observation" on Blackboard.

Week 9: Apr. 6th, 8th. Moderate Foundationalism

Apr. 6th: Haack's "A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification" SKFM, pp. 134-144

Apr. 8th: Audi's "The Old Skepticism, The New Foundationalism" on Blackboard.

Week 10: Apr. 13th, 15th. Closure Principles Revisited

Apr. 13th: Dretske's "Epistemic Operators" SKFM, pp. 237-246.

Apr. 15th: Vogel's "Are there Counterexamples to the Closure Principle?" SKFM, pp. 290-301.

Week 11: Apr. 20th, 22nd. Contextualism

Apr. 20th: Lewis' "Elusive Knowledge" in SKFM, pp.691-705.

Apr. 22nd: Cohen's "Contextualist Solutions to Epistemological Problems." in SKFM, pp. 706-720.

Week 12: Apr. 27th, 29th. Skepticism about Epistemology?

Apr. 27th: Final Remarks on Contextualism *Apr. 29th*: Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich's "Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions" in SKFM, pp. 625-646.

Week 13: May 4th. Why is Epistemology so Hard?

May 4th: Final Exam Study Guide distributed.

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability and Support Services. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course which have been approved by the Office of Disability and Support Services, as indicated in your DSS accommodation letter.