

Philosophy 310, Rationality and Justification
Thurs. 7pm-10pm
Rockefeller Hall 212
Spring 2008 Syllabus and Reading Schedule

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This course will be an ambitious attempt on our part to “uncover” the nature and principles of rationality and justification. In other words, what are the conditions under which a belief, or change of belief, is rational or justified? Our starting point will be to uncover certain principles of rationality from arguments *critiquing* human rationality. When people argue that humans are almost always and everywhere irrational, what underlying conception of rationality do they presuppose that allow them to establish this verdict? Once we have uncovered these presumptions, we will challenge each of them systematically. Is rationality simply a matter of thinking in such a way as to be an internally coherent agent? A reliable agent? A mathematically and logically perfect agent? One recurring theme of the course is whether and how we can have justification for the ways in which we make ordinary inferences, and how our beliefs must fit together in order to be rational.

Texts: *Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism*, ed. Hilary Kornblith, Blackwell (2001).
In Defense of Pure Reason, by Lawrence Bonjour, Cambridge UP (1999).
Warrant: The Current Debate, by Alvin Plantinga, Oxford UP (1993)
Additional Articles on Blackboard

Requirements: You will have the option of writing three 8-10 page papers or writing two 10-12 page papers and giving a class presentation in which you (1) present a critical discussion of an article assigned for that week, or (2) present your own argument for a position, or in response to a position we cover in class. Option (2) can be a paper on which you are already

working. Presentation must be 45 minutes, and must include discussion notes and questions you will turn in. All assignments will be worth 30% of your final grade. Attendance and participation will count for 10% of your final grade.

Reading Schedule

(Any changes will be announced in class.)

Week 1: January 24th. The Justification of Reasoning

Plantinga Chapter One. See Russell's "On Induction" on Blackboard for background.

Week 2: Jan. 31st. Biases of Human Reasoning; Are we Irrational?

Nisbett and Ross's *Human Inference* Chapters 4 and 8. Kahneman and Tversky's "Judgments under Uncertainty; Heuristics and Biases". Both on Blackboard.

Week 3: Feb. 7th. Foley's Internalism

Foley's *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality* Chapters 1 and 3, on Blackboard. Kelly's "Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality; A Critique." on Blackboard. "The Rationality of Belief and Other Propositional Attitudes" on Blackboard.

Week 4: Feb. 14th. Externalism

Goldman's "What is Justified Belief?" on Blackboard, Goldman's "Internalism about Justification" in Kornblith, Plantinga Chapter 9 pp. 182-184, 197-210.

Week 5: Feb. 21st. Coherentism

Bonjour's "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge" in Kornblith, Connee and Feldman's "Internalism Defended" in Kornblith. Plantinga, Chapters Four and Five pp. 66-113.

Week 6: Feb. 28th. Circularity Defended

Papineau's "The Problem of Induction? What Problem?" Bergmann's "Circularity" on Blackboard. Boghossian's "Knowledge of Logic" on Blackboard.

Week 7: March. 6th. Rationality and the A Priori

Bonjour, Chapter 1 and 2.

Spring Break

Week 8: Mar. 27th. The Defense of Rationalism
Bonjour, Chapter 4 and 5.

Week 9: Apr. 3rd. The A Priori Justification of Induction
Bonjour Chapter 7. Field's "A Priority as an Evaluative Notion" on Blackboard.

Week 10: Apr. 10th. Bayesian Rationality and Conditionalization
Plantinga, Chapter Six, pp. 114-126. Selections from Howson and Urbach; Hayek's "Dutch Book Arguments" pp. 1-8, 19-20) on Blackboard.

Week 11: Apr. 17th. The Reflection Principle
van Fraassen's "Belief and the Will" on Blackboard, van Fraassen's "Belief and the Problem of Ulysses and the Sirens" on Blackboard.

Week 12: Apr 24th. Reflection, and the Critics of Bayesianism
Plantinga, rest of Chapter Six and Chapter Seven. Christensen's "Clever Bookies and Coherent Beliefs", Maher's "Diachronic Rationality" all on Blackboard. Hayek's "Dutch Book Arguments" pp. 8-13, 15-19.

Week 13: May 1st. Rationality and Imperfection
Elga's "The Sleeping Beauty Problem" and "Defeating Doctor Evil with Self-Locating Belief," Arntzenius' "Some Problems with Conditionalization and Reflection" all on Blackboard.

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.