15 Theory of Knowledge

Christian Wüthrich Spring 2010

Class schedule:	TuTh 9:30am-10:50am, CSB 001
Sections:	A01: M 3-3:50pm, PCYNH 120 (TA tba)
	A02: W 4-4:50pm, PCYNH 120 (TA tba)
	A03: W 5-5:50pm, PCYNH 120 (TA tba)
	A04: F 2-2:50pm, CENTR 201 (TA tba)
Website:	`http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/wuthrich/`
Contact:	Office hours are Th 3:00-5:00pm and by appointment
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	✉ ghert@ucsd.edu

This course is an introductory survey of the major issues in epistemology, the theory of knowledge. It is topic-oriented rather than history-oriented. This emphasis means we will often consider problems independently of their historical context. Hopefully, what is lost by way of historical grounding will be balanced by a gain in interest in the issues themselves. In this class, we will address what are arguably the really deep problems of epistemology: How do humans come to know? What is knowledge, anyway? How can we ever be sure to know anything? For instance, how can we be sure that we are not brains in vats, or that we don't live in the Matrix? What could possibly justify our confidence in what we take ourselves to know? What are the rules for making inferences that generate new knowledge? How do humans learn? Can machines learn, too? What do cognitive science and neuroscience teach us about human knowledge? And finally, does gender influence our conceptions of knowledge, and if so, how?

Along with serving as an introduction to some philosophical puzzles, the course also hopes to develop and foster good argumentative skills and critical thinking on the part of the student. Combined with the fact that philosophical texts are frequently difficult for beginning students, this makes the course relatively challenging for an introductory course. But for those with a speculative turn of mind, it should be fun.

Prerequisites: None.

Course materials

The lecture is primarily intended to set the scene and provide the stimulus for your own studies. You should do at least the required reading for every topic as preparation for the class in which you will discuss the material in depth. I hope that you will be interested enough to follow up some of the recommended reading on at least some of the topics—this will more than repay the effort. I have also posted some relevant podcasts on the course website and hope that you will find them stimulating food for thought.

Some of the mandatory reading material is electronic, accessible through reserves.ucsd.edu. You will find a direct link to this course's readings from the course website. All the other readings are collected in Michael Huemer (ed.), *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings*, Routledge, 2002. This book costs about $35 and is available at the Price Center bookstore.

Apart from the small textbook, you will also need to purchase a transmitter for the **InterWrite PRS RF System**, the student response system used in this class. These transmitters, informally called "clickers," are available at the Price Center bookstore and cost $52 (new) or $39 (used). You may be able to use the same clicker in other classes, particularly in science classes. Make sure to get a new clicker operating at radio frequency and not an old infrared one or an "iClicker". For more information, visit http://clickers.ucsd.edu/.

Course requirements and evaluation

Attendance in class and sections is required. Since every class will contain some material not found in the readings, it is nearly impossible to do well in this course if one's attendance is anything short of regular. The final grade for this course will be determined by the total points a student earns from the five types of evaluation indicated below. I grade to the curve. That means that the top 25-30% of the students in this class (including all who take it for a letter grade or a P/NP, but not including the withdrawals W) will get a grade in the A range (A+, A, A-), the next 25-35% a grade in the B range (B+, B, B-), the next 25-30% a grade in the C range (C+, C, C-), and the remaining 5-25% a D or an F. This is the minimum I guarantee; if the class has worked very well and no one deserves a D or an F, I will adjust the curve upwards, accordingly. Thus, what matters is not the absolute number of your scores, but your performance relative to everybody else in the class.

1. *Attendance* (for rounding): Attendance in class sections will be taken and used as a way of deciding borderline cases.

2. *Participation* (20 points): Your "clicker" score will be based on in-class questions scored using the InterWrite PRS RF student response system. During each class (except the first), I will ask you to "buzz in" and the system will automatically record your responses, and then transmit it to me. Perhaps twice or so during classes, I will put up a short quiz or poll for you to answer. Your clicker score will be the percentage of points earned divided by the maximum possible. **Important: you must have your clicker every class period to get these points—no exceptions**.

3. *Short paper* (20 points) [`turnitin.com`]: You are expected to write one short essay of roughly 5 pages due on **27 April 2010** at the end of class. I shall hand out a list of paper topics fairly early in the course. For each day your paper is late, five points will be deducted from your point total, although no negative point totals will be given for the midterm papers.

4. *Midterm exam* (25 points): There will be a midterm exam in class on **11 May 2010**. You are not allowed to use any books or notes or the like, i.e. the exam is "closed-books".

5. *Final exam* (35 points): There will be a final exam on TBA. You are not allowed to use any books or notes or the like, i.e. the exam is "closed-books". The final exam is cumulative, i.e. it covers all the material of the entire course.

The short paper must be submitted *both as a hard copy as well as through* `turnitin.com` *by the due date* in order to earn credit. You must enroll at `turnitin.com` by creating a new profile. You will need the following course information:

Class ID: 3122233
Enrollment Password: phil15sp10

If you have any problems with using `turnitin.com`, you can contact the Instructional Web Development Center of Academic Computing Services at 858-822-3315 or iwdc@ucsd.edu.

The fine print

In your short paper, all sources, including discussions with classmates, must be appropriately acknowledged. *All answers given must be in your own wording.* Closely paraphrasing or simply copying the work of others (such as authors of books or articles, or classmates) is not allowed and will be severely penalized. You must ask me in case you are uncertain whether something constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism, the stealing of an idea or actual text, and other forms of academic dishonesty will be immediately reported to the Academic Integrity Office. I will distribute a leaflet concerning plagiarism closer to the paper deadline. This leaflet is **mandatory reading**.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

You must observe the University's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, which can be found at `http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm`.

Make-up exams (for midterm and final) or extended deadlines (for the paper) will only be given under the most severe circumstances. The student who wishes to write a make-up exam or needs an extension must inform me (by phone or email) ahead of the time of when the paper is due or the exam takes place. In order to qualify for a make-up exam or an extension, appropriate evidence of the most severe circumstances must be produced by the student. I will determine, in consultation with the student, what qualifies as appropriate evidence.

Tentative schedule of classes

You should complete all the assigned readings before the corresponding class meeting. Readings marked with an asterisk ($*$) are background reading and will not be tested in exams. My presentations slides are available online as PDF files. Additional background material on all topics will also be available on the course website.

The **final exam** is not scheduled yet, but time and location will be announced in time.

Date	Topic and Readings	Assignments
30 Mar	**Introduction: Perception and a priori knowledge** Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Ch. 15 (e-reserves)	
1 Apr	Huemer, "Perception" (Huemer, 27-31) Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chs. 1 and 2 (Huemer, 64-73) ∗Locke, ∗Berkeley, ∗Hume (Huemer, 32-50)	
6 Apr	Huemer, "Reason and the a priori" (Huemer, 125-130) Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chs. 8-10 (Huemer, 152-165) ∗Plato, ∗Kant, ∗Ayer (Huemer, 131-151, 166-175)	
8 Apr	**The conceptual analysis of knowledge** Huemer, "The analysis of 'knowledge' " (Huemer, 435-439) Gettier, "Is justified true belief knowledge?" (Huemer, 444-446) ∗Steup, "Knowledge" (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/)	
13 Apr	**Scepticism, brains in vats, and the Matrix** Huemer, "Skepticism" (Huemer, 507-512) Descartes, *Meditations on first philosophy* (Huemer, 513-523)	
15 Apr	Grau, "Bad dreams, evil demons, and the experience machine" (e-reserves) Chalmers, "The matrix as metaphysics" (e-reserves)	
20 Apr	∗Putnam, "Brains in a vat" (Huemer, 524-538)	
22 Apr	Moore, "Proof of an external world" (Huemer, 602-605) Moore, "Hume's theory examined" (Huemer, 606-611)	
27 Apr	**Justification** Huemer, "The architecture of knowledge" (Huemer, 369-371) Sextus Empiricus, "The five modes" (Huemer, 372-374) ∗BonJour, ∗Alston (Huemer, 387-416)	**Short paper due**
29 Apr	Goldmann, "What is justified true belief?" (e-reserves) Stalnaker, "Starting in the middle" (e-reserves)	
4 May	**Induction and confirmation** Huemer, "Inductive inference" (Huemer, 293-297) Earman and Salmon, pp. 55-66 (e-reserves) ∗Hume, *Enquiry* (Huemer 298-310)	
6 May	Earman and Salmon, pp. 43-49 (only Sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) ∗Earman and Salmon, pp. 42 and 49-55 (e-reserves)	
11 May	**Midterm exam** in class (bring blue books)	**Midterm**
13 May	Goodman, "The new riddle of induction" (Huemer, 320-332)	
18 May	Talbott, "Bayesian epistemology" (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-bayesian/)	
20 May	**Epistemology naturalized** Quine, "Epistemology naturalized" (e-reserves) ∗Putnam, "Why reason can't be naturalized" (e-reserves)	
25 May	**A neurocomputational perspective** Paul Churchland, Ch. 9 (e-reserves) ∗Patricia Churchland, "How do neurons know?" (e-reserves)	
27 May	Paul Churchland, Ch. 11 (e-reserves)	
1 Jun	**Feminist epistemology** Anderson, "Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science" (§§1-5) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-epistemology/	
3 Jun	**Overview and conclusion**	