

Philosophy 419: Epistemology

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Course Location and Time: BIRKS 203, M & W 13:05-14:25
Term and Year: Fall 2019

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of central issues in epistemology and offers an overview of both classical and present-day topics in analytic epistemology. It is divided into five substantive units (not including the introductory material covered in the first week):

- Unit 1. The Analysis of Knowledge
- Unit 2. Scepticism, Closure, and Transmission
- Unit 3. The Semantics of 'Knowledge'-Attributions
- Unit 4. Evidence and Justification

Typically, we will spend 2-3 weeks on any given unit. Individual topics include the following:

- 1) *Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?*
- 2) *Causal and Reliabilist Theories of Knowledge*
- 3) *Counterfactual Theories of Knowledge*
- 4) *Arguments for Scepticism*
- 5) *Closure and Transmission Failure*
- 6) *Epistemic Contextualism*
- 7) *Subject-Sensitive Invariantism*
- 8) *Testimonial Injustice*
- 9) *Coherentism and Foundationalism*
- 10) *Induction*
- 11) *Evidentialism*
- 12) *E=K*

N.B. Students are expected to have completed ***all*** weekly readings before the Monday class. This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

REQUIREMENTS

Students who take this course must ***complete readings on time*** and must ***participate in class***. Students are expected to have their texts with them at each class, and students may be called upon at random to discuss or explain parts of the week's readings. The course presupposes knowledge of propositional and first order predicate ***logic*** (Prerequisite: Introduction to Deductive Logic 1). Knowledge of ***probability theory*** is desirable but not necessary.

FORMAT

There will be two lectures per week, although as much time as possible will be devoted to discussion. Normally, the first class of each week will involve a presentation of the relevant litera-

ture and the second will consist of a mixture of lecturing and discussions. Students are required to *prepare short presentations* for their tutorial groups (see below).

ASSESSMENT

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Essay: 60%.

Additionally, each student must prepare a short presentation together with a group of fellow students. Failure to participate in a group presentation will result in the deduction of 6% from the final course grade.

Students are asked to read Jim Pryor's excellent guidelines on how to read and write philosophy: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html> and <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

EXTENSIONS

Late papers will be downgraded at a rate of 1/3 of a grade per day (e.g. from A- to B+, C to C-), including weekend days/holidays. Evidence of a consistent lack of preparation (including non-attendance without a medical excuse) results in a deduction of up to 5% from the final course grade. Requests for extensions will be considered (but not automatically granted) only when requested at least 24 hours before the paper is due and substantiated at the time of request by a doctor's note documenting illness. Extensions will not be more than seven days.

MYCOURSES

The webpage for this course is located at <https://www.mcgill.ca/mycourses/>. It will be used to post the syllabus, readings, and periodic announcements. You must check the course webpage regularly. If you have technical problems with MyCourses, contact ICT customer support at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/mycourses/students/help/>.

IMPORTANT: *papers must be submitted on MyCourses as MS Word documents*. Submissions by email or in hard copy will not be considered.

TEXTBOOKS

This course does not use a textbook, but many of the articles we shall read can be found in the following anthology (henceforth 'Bernecker and Dretske (2000)'):

- Bernecker, S. and Dretske, F. (eds.), *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (OUP, 2000).

For useful introductory reading see:

- Nagel, Jennifer, *Knowledge – A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: OUP: 2014.

Always read up on the topics discussed in class on the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of

Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Submissions to this course will be automatically checked for plagiarism by means of Turnitin or equivalent software.

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No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.