

Theories of Knowledge PHIL3300-001 Spring 2020

Instructor: Spencer Ivy
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2.00 to 3.00pm and by appointment
Office Location: Grad Room CTIHB
Preferred Method of Contact: Via email

COURSE OUTCOMES

By the end of this course and successful completion of all course requirements, the student will be able to do all of the following:

- Be conversant in contemporary epistemological issues
- Be able to use Skepticism and Virtue as tools for thinking well
- Be able to write an philosophical argument independently

COURSE MATERIALS

Linda Zagzebski, *On Epistemology*, 1st Edition, Philosopher (Wadsworth, 2008).

- [\[Amazon\]](#)
- The E-Book Version costs \$20. Buy it ASAP.

Additional Readings on course canvas page

CANVAS

- I will use this resource throughout the term to keep you updated on your grades, for course communication, and for our course calendar. Class handouts and some assigned readings will be posted here as well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Late Policy: Every Day an Assignment is late will incur a 1 point loss on the assignment. This means that late grades for smaller point assignments are more damaging. I do not accept late turn ins for online discussion posts.

Attendance / Participation / Online Discussion

(14% of final grade)

Learning will come much more easily and enjoyably if you're actively participating in your education! Accordingly, I emphasize student participation and discussion in the classroom. I expect you all to bring questions, ideas, and insights to class and to be prepared to share them. Of course, if you're not attending class, then you're not participating well either; so, attendance is *strongly encouraged*. While it is not required that you show up to class, being in class will affect your grade positively. Not showing up means that you won't get that extra help.

The rest of your grade for participation (besides showing up) will be made by participating in online discussions. You must post on the discussion board *once per week up to 7 weeks*. These posts should critically engage with the work we are reading. This means asking questions about the reading, explaining why you are asking the questions, raising a problem/objection to an argument, or applying the arguments to some other applicable area. Try to write a minimum of 100 words, but don't feel constrained with an upper or lower word limit as long as you are critically engaging. While you are required to write one discussion post per week, **I will only critically grade 2 posts of your choosing at the end of the semester. So this means that you have two grade components for discussion posts. One grade is for completing the weekly assignment, and the second grade is for the quality of the discussion (in the two posts that you choose)**. A discussion post must be on canvas by Friday at 11:59pm during its corresponding week.

Tests

(36% of final grade)

There will be a midterm and a final in this course. The way my tests work is that one week before the test you will receive a list of 4 prompts. Each of these prompts will contain about a paragraph's worth of questions concerning a topic of the philosophy that we've read and discussed in class (this is another reason you should show up to class – some of the test questions will bear on what happens in our discussions!). On the day of the test, 3 of the 4 prompts will be given to you. You will be asked to choose 2 of the given prompts and answer them for the duration of the test period.

Paper

(50% of final grade)

Philosophy is about sharing your own ideas. It is an interpretive attitude that we take towards the world in order to understand it and justify our place in it. I believe that the philosophy classroom is a workshop in which we are given the opportunity to practice our interpretive skills so that, when we are faced with problems in the real world, we can responsibly work our way through them. For this reason, I am having you all write a paper on a topic of your own choosing. You are to interpret in your own way the arguments and problems that we will deal with over the semester. The assignment is meant to give you the opportunity to practice a series of skills that are essential to working your way through a life in the real world (not just being philosophical!). This can seem a daunting task, I know – in order to promote your own success, I've scaffolded the paper so that it will be broken down into parts. Some details on this below:

Thesis: Write me a thesis statement. We will discuss in class what this should look like. In short, a thesis is an entire paper's argument in a single sentence. It is a statement of what you intend to argue for throughout the body of the paper.

Outline: Write me a skeleton of the paper that you intend to write on the basis of your thesis. The outline should contain a list of arguments, a general narrative direction, or describe how you will write your paper. Everyone outlines differently – the assignment is for you to construct a plan, or lay out a map, that will be helpful for your own writing.

Rough Draft: Write me the whole paper. I will return comments for revision.

Student Review: A critical and under-taught component of writing in academia and in the real world is sharing work. We should *always* have someone else read our work before circulating it. In order to receive full points on this portion of the paper assignment, you will need to give one of your peers critical comments on their paper. This means that part of the grade for *your* paper is how you critically engage with *someone else's* paper. I will circulate a form to help aid this process.

Final Draft: After all that work, you will have written me a polished thesis! Full points for this portion of the assignment should be responding to comments, showing improvement, and having produced a well written and well argued for thesis.

GRADING POLICY

Participation – 14 points

Online Discussion Completion:	12
Online Discussion Critical Grade:	7 (3.5 x2)
In Class Attendance:	(Variable)

Paper – 50 points

Thesis:	5
Outline:	10
Rough Draft:	10
Student Review:	NONE
Final Draft:	20

Tests – 36 Points

Midterm:	18
Final:	18

TOTAL: 100 points.

Points translate to grades as follows:

93 and above	= A
90-92	= A-
88-89	= B+
83-87	= B
80-82	= B-
78-79	= C+
73-77	= C
70-72	= C-
etc.	
Below 60	= E

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tuesday January 7th : Introduction

Syllabus Discussion

Thursday January 9th : Getting Acquainted with Epistemology

Zagzebski Chapter 1 pgs 1-19
(stop at §IV – Bullshit)

Unit 1: Knowing How to Be Skeptical

Tuesday January 14th : Descartes & Doubt

Descartes' Meditation 1 & 2

Thursday January 16th : Descartes and Doubt

Descartes' Meditation 1 & 2

Tuesday January 21st : Descartes on God

Descartes' Meditation 5

Thursday January 23rd : Descartes on Knowledge

Descartes' Meditation 6

Tuesday January 28th : Learning How to Doubt

Zagzebski Chapter 2 (§1 and §2)

+ Selections from Sextus
Empiricus (Canvas)

+ Hume's Problem of Induction (Canvas)

Thursday January 30th : No class meeting
Out of Class assignment

Unit 2: Justified True Belief

Tuesday February 4th : Edmund Gettier
Breaks Knowledge

Gettier, *Is Justified True Belief
Knowledge?* (Canvas)

Thursday February 6th : Edmund Gettier
Breaks Knowledge

Zagzebski Chapter 5 §I and §III

Tuesday February 11th : What is a Belief?

Velleman, *On the Aim of Belief*
(Canvas)

Thursday February 13th : What is Truth?

Russell, *Truth By Correspondence*
(Canvas)

**Midterm Prompts
Assigned/Distributed**

Tuesday February 18th : What is
Justification?

Alston, *Internalist Externalism*
Thesis Due

Thursday February 20th : How to Write a
Philosophy Paper

In Class Workshop & Midterm
Review

Tuesday February 25th : Test Day

Midterm

Unit 3: Knowing Well

Thursday February 27th : Foundationalism,
Coherentism, & Virtue

Sosa, *The Raft and the Pyramid*
(Canvas)

Paper Outline Due

Tuesday March 3rd : Foundationalism,
Coherentism, & Virtue

Sosa, *The Raft and the Pyramid*
(Canvas)

Thursday March 5th : Virtue Epistemology

Zagzebski, Chapter 6

***Tuesday March 10th* : SPRING BREAK**

***Thursday March 12th* : SPRING BREAK**

Tuesday March 17th : Self Trust

Selection from Zagzebski *Epistemic Authority* (Canvas)
Paper First Draft Due

Thursday March 19th : Trusting Experts –
Testimony and Expertise

Hardwig, *Epistemic Dependence* +
Selection from Plato's Theatetus
(Canvas)

Unit 4: The Down and Dirty of Doing Epistemology Differently

Tuesday March 24th : CANCELLED DUE TO
COVID

Thursday March 26th : Know How vs. Know
That

Ryle, Selection from *Concept of
Mind* (Canvas)

Tuesday March 31st : Pragmatism

William James, *The Will to Believe*
(Canvas)

Thursday April 2nd : CANCELLED DUE TO
COVID

Tuesday April 7th : AI - What do Computers
Know?

THIS IS OPTIONAL & THERE
WILL BE NO LECTURE. BUT THERE
IS A DISCUSSION SECTION FOR
POSSIBLE POINTS. Read as much or
as little as you like

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/artificial-intelligence/#AddiTopiReadPhilAI>

Thursday April 9th : AI – What Computers
CAN'T Know

Dreyfus, Selection from *What
Computers Still Can't Do* (Canvas)
Final Exam Prompts
Assigned/Distributed

Tuesday April 14th : Wittgenstein on
Epistemic Humility

READING TBD

Thursday April 16th : CANCELLED DUE TO
COVID

Let me know by this date which two
discussion posts you want critically
graded
Final Exam Review

Tuesday April 21st : Test Day: NOW
ONLINE

Final Exam

Wednesday April 29th : End of Semester &
Finals

Final Draft of Paper Due at 11:59pm.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

1. **The Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in

an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

2. **Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).
3. **Drop/Withdrawal.** Last day to Add/Drop this class: Friday Sept. 1st. Last day to withdraw from this class: Oct 21st
4. **University Policies and Procedures:**
 400. Student Code: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)
 401. Accommodation Policy (see Section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)
 402. **General Education Statement:**This course contributes to the University of Utah's Quantitative Reasoning requirement. For such courses, academic units must identify three essential learning outcomes (ELOs) that are relevant to university general education objectives. The ELOs for this course are: Inquiry and Analysis, Quantitative Literacy and Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance & Punctuality: According to University policy, "**Instructors must communicate any particular attendance requirements of the course to students in writing on or before the first class meeting**" (PPM, Policy 6-100III-O)]. While attendance is not strictly mandatory, not showing up to class will negatively affect your grade.

Participation: A component of your grade will be based on participation. Participation includes contributions to in-class discussion, regular visits to the class Canvas site and contribution to discussions on the class site and discussion with the instructor in office hours.

Food & Drink: If you bring drinks to class, please tidy up and be respectful of your classmates. Eating is not allowed in class.

Electronic Devices in Class: You may use a laptop or tablet to take notes on the lecture in class. Otherwise, no electronic devices may be used in class. If you use your laptop or tablet to check Facebook etc., play games or engage in other non-class activities you will be asked to turn those applications off. Repeat offenders will be asked to leave class.

Canvas: All information about this class will be posted on Canvas. Please consult the class Canvas page regularly. Your Canvas activity for each class is logged automatically. The system detects every time you log on and records how long you visited for. Your participation through Canvas is measured this way.

Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements and in the Calendar.