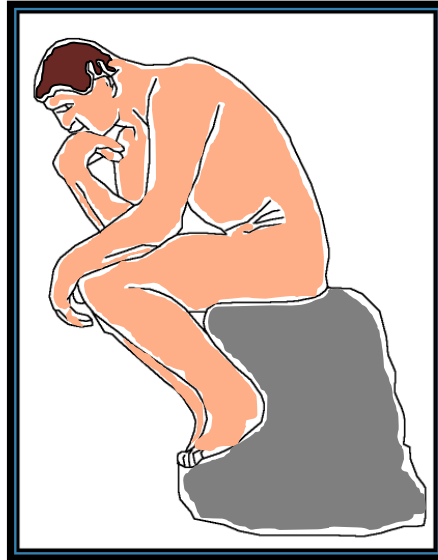


**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Undergraduate Course Outline 2016**

**PHIL3501G: Epistemology**



Winter Term 2016  
Tues. 1:30-2:30 p.m. Thursday 1:30-3:30 p.m.  
Location: TBA

Instructor: Jacqueline Sullivan  
4151 Stevenson Hall  
Tues. & Thurs. 12-1 p.m.  
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**DESCRIPTION**

*Epistemology* is the branch of philosophy directed at understanding what knowledge is and how we acquire it. Of central importance is the issue of *epistemic justification*—when, if ever, are we justified in claiming that a belief or proposition counts as *knowledge*? Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, analytic epistemologists have provided different and competing responses to this question. The general approach that they take to this question, namely, to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, is referred to as “The Standard Analytic Approach”.

However, philosophers critical of standard approaches have sought alternative ways of understanding what knowledge is and how we come to have it. For example, some have turned to those sciences that study human cognitive processes (e.g., cognitive psychology) in order to identify those reasoning strategies most likely to be “knowledge-producing”. These philosophers take what is referred to as a “Naturalistic Approach”.

However, one limitation of naturalized approaches to knowledge is that their legitimacy is to a significant extent contingent on whether those sciences that study human cognitive processes are knowledge generating. This can only be determined if the methods by which these sciences produce knowledge claims are subjected to adequate scrutiny. The domain of philosophy of science that is intended to serve this function is the “Epistemology of Experiment”. Philosophers who work in this area are interested in determining when investigative strategies used in science are knowledge generating, when they fail to be, and why. Findings from such analyses are often used as a basis for making suggestions as to how to improve these strategies.

In this course, we will consider representative examples of each of these three types of

approaches to understanding what knowledge is and how we acquire it. While we will concern ourselves primarily with assessing the merits and failings of paradigmatic examples of each approach, our ultimate goal is to use the fruits of our analyses to answer for ourselves the questions of what knowledge is and when, if ever, we are justified in claiming that we have it.

## **TEXTS**

- (1) Williams, Michael. *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- (2) Additional readings (journal articles) will be made available as pdfs on Owl.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Students who successfully complete this course will have developed a detailed understanding of a subset of traditional and contemporary approaches to the issues of knowledge and epistemic justification, the ability to critically evaluate these positions, and the capacity to formulate and defend a position on a topic in contemporary epistemology that interests them.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

<b>Attendance &amp; Participation:</b>	10%
<b>Exam 1 (Nov 1):</b>	30%
(Short answer)	
<b>Exam 2 (Dec 6):</b>	30%
(Short answer)	
<b>Term Paper</b> (3000-3500 words maximum due <b>Nov 29</b> ):	30%

## **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Tentative Schedule of Classes  
(Subject to change during the course of the term)

**Part I : Problems of Knowledge**

- Sept 8 (Th) – Course Introduction & Overview
- Sept 13 (T) – **What is Knowledge? – Introduction & The Standard Analysis**  
Williams, Introduction pp. 1-12, Chapter 1, pp. 13-27
- Sept 15 (Th) – **The Gettier Problem – Knowledge without evidence**  
Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge” (1963) [OWL]  
Williams, Chapter 2, pp. 28-37
- Sept 20 (T) – **What do attempts to solve the Gettier problem reveal about the standard analysis of knowledge?**  
Williams, Chapters 3&4, pp. 38-47, 48-57  
Excerpts from Peter Klein “A Proposed Definition of Propositional Knowledge”
- Sept 22 (Th) – **Confronting the Classical Skeptic: Is knowledge even possible?**  
Williams, Chapter 5, pp. 58-68
- Sept 27 (T) – **Confronting the Cartesian Skeptic: Is knowledge of the external world possible?**  
Williams, Chapter 6, pp. 69-80
- Sept 29 (Th) – **How does Foundationalism respond to the Skeptical Challenge?**  
Roderick Chisholm (1964) “The Myth of the Given”  
Williams, Chapter 7, pp. 81-93  
\*\*\*\*\*Possible paper topics posted on OWL\*\*\*\*\*
- Oct 4 (T) – **Is Foundationalism a satisfactory response to the Skeptical Challenge?**  
Williams, Chapter 8&9, pp. 94-116  
Roderick Chisholm (1964) “The Myth of the Given”
- Oct 6 (Th) – **How does Coherentism respond to the Skeptical Challenge?**  
Williams, Chapter 10, pp. 117-127  
Donald Davidson (1989) “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge”
- Oct 11 (T) – **Is Coherentism a satisfactory response to the Skeptical Challenge?**  
Williams, Chapter 11 pp. 128-137
- Oct 13 (Th) – **Is Coherentism a satisfactory response to the Skeptical Challenge?  
Contextualism’s response to Classical Skepticism**

Williams, Chapters 11, pp. 138-145 & Chapters 13-14, pp. 146-172

Oct 18 (T) – **Contextualism’s response to Cartesian Skepticism**

Williams, Chapter 15, pp. 173-200

Oct 20 (Th) – **Contextualism & Relativism**

Williams, Chapter 16

Williams, Chapter 19, pp. 220-229

Oct 25 (T) – Review for Exam 1

Oct 27 (Th) – Fall Study Break

Nov 1 (T) - Exam 1 (in-class)

Nov 3 (Th) - **What is Naturalized Epistemology?**

Quine, W.V, “Epistemology Naturalized” (1969).

Jaegwon Kim “What is “Naturalized Epistemology”?”(1988)

## **Part II: Naturalized Epistemology and Its Problems**

Nov 8 (T) – **Reliabilism**

Alvin Goldman, “What is Justified True Belief?”(1976)

Alvin Goldman, “Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology” (1992)

Nov 10 (Th) – **Warrant & Proper Function**

Alvin Plantinga, “Warrant: A First Approximation” (1992)

Nov 15 (T) – **Cognitive Relativism**

Stich, S. “Reflective Equilibrium, Analytic Epistemology, and the Problem of Cognitive Diversity”, (1988)

Nov 17 (Th) – **Problems with Naturalized Approaches**

J. D. Trout & Michael Bishop (2005). The Pathologies of Standard Analytic Epistemology. *Nous* 39 (4):696-714.

## **Part III: Knowledge in Science**

### **Reliability and Replicability**

Nov 22 (T) – Bogen & Woodward, “Saving the Phenomena”, (1988)

Deborah Mayo (1991) “Novel Evidence and Severe Tests”, *Philosophy of Science* 58: 523-552.

Nov 24 (Th) – Allan Franklin (1994) “The Experimenter’s Regress”, *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 463-491. (Available through Sterne

Library)

Collins, H.M. (1994) "The Experimenter's Regress", *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 493-503. (Available through Sterne Library)

Nancy Cartwright (1991) "Replicability, Reproducibility, and Robustness: Comments on Harry Collins", *History of Political Economy* 23:1. (Available through Sterne Library)

Nov 29 (T) – Francesco Guala (2003) "Experimental Localism and External Validity" *Philosophy of Science* 70: 1195-1205.

D.G. Mook (1983) "In Defense of External Invalidity", *American Psychologist* 379-387.

**FINAL PAPER DUE**

### **Internal and External Validity**

Dec 1 (Th) – Review for Exam 2

Dec 6 (T) – Exam 2