

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2018-19

Philosophy 2500F: Introduction to Theory of Knowledge

Fall Term

Class Times: M 1:30-2:30, W 1:30-3:30

Class Location: SSC 2020

Instructor: Gillian Barker

Office Hours: WIRB 7058, Times TBA

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DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to epistemology or theory of knowledge. The course will focus on the core questions of epistemology: What is knowledge? What, if anything, do we know? How do we know it? More specific topics include the nature of perception, belief, justification and truth; the sources of knowledge; skeptical questions concerning the extent of our knowledge; and the role of social context as reflected in debates about relativism, social construction, and feminist epistemology. In the first half of the course we will explore the history of epistemological thought in Western philosophy, from its roots in Ancient philosophical thought through the Early Modern debates between Rationalists and Empiricists and responses to these, and more recently to American Pragmatism and Logical Positivism. In the second half, we will turn to the contemporary scene, looking at central epistemological debates from the mid-twentieth century to the present, with a focus on debates about the nature of knowledge (a topic of renewed controversy!), naturalized epistemology, theories of truth, and whether justification depends on factors internal or external to the mind of the knower.

TEXTS

Our main source of readings will be *Human Knowledge: Classical & Contemporary Approaches*, edited by Paul K. Moser and Arnold Van der Nat, and *An Introduction to Epistemology* by Jack S. Crumley III. A few additional readings will be supplied as we go along.

OBJECTIVES

This course has three main aims. The first is to acquaint students at an introductory level with the core questions, theories and arguments of classical and contemporary epistemology in the Western philosophical tradition. The second is to give students training and practice in the basic skills of philosophy, including following, analyzing and evaluating logically-complex arguments, contributing to fruitful exploratory discussions and debates with their peers employing the tools of philosophical thought, and constructing clear and cogent arguments in a philosophical idiom. The third is to provide students with the opportunities and models that they need to begin to do some epistemological investigation themselves—to make sense of the large-scale relationships among philosophical ideas about knowledge, to identify and weigh philosophical problems, and to formulate substantial original philosophical claims and defend them both orally and in writing.

REQUIREMENTS

The class format will consist of lecture and discussion. Discussion will be an important element of the course, so it is important that you stay on top of the reading and do some thinking about it before class. Course requirements include active participation, several short informal writing exercises, two short (4 page) papers, a longer (7 page) final paper, and a short-essay final exam. They are weighted as follows:

Participation.....	10%
Informal Writing.....	15%
Short Paper	20%
Exam.....	30%
Final Paper.....	25%

AUDIT

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

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

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.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.