

# PHIL 210: Knowledge and Certainty

<b>Term:</b>	Spring 2017	<b>Instructor:</b>	Robert Smithson
<b>Time:</b>	WF 10:05 AM-11:20 AM	<b>Email:</b>	robert.smithson@duke.edu
<b>Room:</b>	Carr 240	<b>Office:</b>	206 West Duke Building
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://sakai.duke.edu/portal/site/phil411.sp17">https://sakai.duke.edu/portal/site/phil411.sp17</a>	<b>Office Hours:</b>	F 1-3 PM and by appt.

## Course Description

How do we know that we are not dreaming? Are we justified in our beliefs about the external world? Are we justified in making predictions about the future on the basis of observations made in the past? What separates knowledge from mere opinion? How are knowledge and belief shaped by social and cultural factors? Epistemology is the study of these types of basic questions about knowledge. In this introductory course, we will use philosophical arguments to discuss these issues.

## Course Goals

1. To provide an overview of eight important topics in epistemology (*external world skepticism, analyses of knowledge, the architecture of knowledge, theories of justification, the problem of induction, peer disagreement/objectivity/relativism, social epistemology, and feminist epistemology*). Each of the eight units is designed to motivate a certain “lesson” or “moral” about how to approach philosophical questions.
2. To develop students’ philosophical writing and philosophical argumentation through a series of short writing assignments throughout the term.

## Course Texts

All texts for the course will be posted to the course’s Sakai site.

## Honor Code

In this class, the Honor Code is taken very seriously and all infractions will be reported to the Honor Council. In particular, papers previously turned in for other classes are not eligible to be turned in for this class.

## Grading

Four writing assignments (3-3.5 pages each): 60%

Final: 30%

Participation/Unannounced quizzes: 10%

The participation grade takes into account both attendance and discussion in class. Class attendance is mandatory. If you have an excused absence (such as a medical absence), please bring me a note or send me an email.

### Writing Assignments

In light of the second listed goal for the course, there will be a series of writing assignments throughout the term, each 3-3.5 pages long (double-spaced). There will be a different prompt (or prompts) for each of the course's eight units. Students are required to respond to four of those prompts. Students have the option of submitting more than four papers; if more than four papers are submitted, the instructor will drop the lowest paper scores.

Assignments should be emailed to the instructor by the beginning of class period on the assigned due date; the due dates will be announced in class. Students will lose a third of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. To facilitate grading, include only your PID number (and not your name) at the top of the document. For helpful advice on writing philosophy papers, see Jim Pryor's introduction: [www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html).

### Technology

In order to promote classroom discussion, no laptops, tablets, phones, etc. are permitted during class except by instructor permission.

### Course Schedule

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, depending on the progress of the discussion in the class. If there are changes, I will make note of them in class and will send out an email about the changes.

Date	Topic
	<b>UNIT 1: EXTERNAL WORLD SKEPTICISM</b>
F 1/15	Introduction, syllabus, external world skepticism. <i>Reading:</i> None.
W 1/18	Heroic responses to skepticism. <i>Reading:</i> Keith DeRose (1999). Responding to Skepticism. Introduction to <i>Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader</i> , sections 1-3, 5, 7. Sakai handout.
F 1/20	Concessive responses to skepticism. <i>Reading:</i> Keith DeRose (1999). Responding to Skepticism. Introduction to <i>Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader</i> , sections 4, 8. David Chalmers (2005). The Matrix as Metaphysics. In Grau (ed.). <i>Philosophers Explore the Matrix</i> . Sections 1-8. Sakai handout.
W 1/25	Skepticism and human life; writing philosophy papers. <i>Reading:</i> None. Sakai handout.
	<b>UNIT 2: ANALYSES OF KNOWLEDGE</b>
F 1/27	TJB accounts. <i>Reading:</i> Edmund Gettier (1963). "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Sakai handout.

- W 2/01            Other accounts.  
*Reading:* Linda Zagzebski (1994). “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems.”  
Sakai handout.
- F 2/03            The project of analysis.  
*Reading:* Roderick Chisholm (1973). “The Problem of the Criterion.”  
David Chalmers (2012). *Constructing the World*. (excerpt)  
Sakai handout.

### **UNIT 3: ARCHITECTURE OF KNOWLEDGE**

- W 2/08            The regress argument.  
*Reading:* Richard Feldman (2003). “Evidentialist Theories of Knowledge and Justification.” (section II)  
Ernest Sosa (1980). “The Raft and the Pyramid.” (sections 1-3)  
Sakai handout.
- F 2/10            Classical foundationalism.  
*Reading:* Richard Feldman (2003). “Evidentialist Theories of Knowledge and Justification.” (section III)  
Sakai handout.
- W 2/15            No class.
- R 2/17            Coherentism, Modest foundationalism.  
*Reading:* Richard Feldman (2003). “Evidentialist Theories of Knowledge and Justification.” (section V)  
*Optional background:* James Pryor (2000). “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist.”  
Sakai handout.

### **UNIT 4: THEORIES OF JUSTIFICATION**

- W 2/22            Externalism.  
*Reading:* Alvin Goldman (1969). “What is Justified Belief?”  
Sakai handout.
- F 2/24            Externalism, continued.  
*Reading:* Laurence Bonjour (1980). “Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge.”  
Sakai handout.
- W 3/01            Internalism.  
*Reading:* Richard Feldman & Earl Conee (1985). “Evidentialism.”  
Alvin Goldman (1999). “Internalism Exposed.”  
Sakai handout.

### **UNIT 5: INDUCTIVE SKEPTICISM**

- F 3/03            The problem of induction.  
*Reading:* David Hume (2008). *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. (excerpts)  
Sakai handout.

- W 3/08            The new riddle.  
                    *Reading:* Nelson Goodman (1955). “The New Riddle of Induction.”  
                    Sakai handout.
- F 3/10            Review.

**SPRING BREAK**

**UNIT 6: PEER DISAGREEMENT, OBJECTIVITY, AND RELATIVISM**

- W 3/22            Peer disagreement.  
                    *Reading:* Catherine Elgin (2010). Persistent Disagreement.  
                    Peter van Inwagen (2010). We’re Right. They’re Wrong.  
                    Sakai handout.
- F 3/24            Peer-disagreement, bias, and objectivity.  
                    *Reading:* Richard Feldman (2012). Reasonable Religious Disagreements.  
                    Sakai handout.
- W 3/29            Metaphysical relativism, social construction  
                    *Reading:* Paul Boghossian (2006). *Fear of Knowledge*. (excerpts)  
                    Sakai handout.
- F 3/31            Epistemic relativism.  
                    *Reading:* Paul Boghossian (2006). *Fear of Knowledge*. (excerpts)  
                    Sakai handout.
- W 4/05            Epistemic relativism, continued.  
                    *Reading:* none

**UNIT 7: SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY**

- F 4/07            Testimony and expertise.  
                    *Reading:* Jennifer Lackey (2010). Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge From  
                    Others.  
                    David Coady (2012). Experts and the Laity.  
                    Sakai handout.
- W 4/12            Testimony and expertise, continued.  
                    *Reading:* Sakai handout.
- F 4/14            Collective decisions, epistemic democracy, and deliberation.  
                    *Reading:* David Coady (2012). Epistemic Democracy.  
                    Alvin Goldman and Thomas Blanchard (2015). Social Epistemology.  
                    (excerpts)  
                    Sakai handout.

**UNIT 8: FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY**

- W 4/19            Situated knowers.  
                    *Reading:* Elizabeth Anderson (2015). “Feminist Epistemology and  
                    Philosophy of Science.” (excerpts)  
                    Sakai handout.

PHIL 210: Knowledge and Certainty

- F 4/21 Feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory.  
*Reading:* Sandra Harding (2005). "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity?'"  
Sakai handout.
- W 4/26 Epistemic injustice.  
*Reading:* Miranda Fricker (2007). *Epistemic Injustice*. (chs. 1-2, ch. 7 through section 7.2)  
Sakai handout.
- F 4/18 Epistemic injustice, continued.  
*Reading:* Sakai handout.
- M 5/01 9am-12pm **EXAM**