

Introduction to Epistemology

Summer 2013 (5/28 – 7/05)

Instructor: Kurt Sylvan

Meets: Tuesday/Thursday

6:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Scott Hall, Room 204

Course Description

Epistemology is a major branch of philosophy dedicated to questions about the nature and structure of knowledge, justified belief, evidence, good inference, etc. Examples of central questions include:

- What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge?
- To gain knowledge from a reliable source, does one also need to know that the source is reliable?
- Must all beliefs be justified by other beliefs, or are there some non-inferentially justified beliefs?
- Are the factors that make for justified belief all internal, or are some external?
- Is evidence necessary for justified belief? If so, is good evidence *all* one needs for justification?
- Do we know anything? Can we answer the skeptic? (Must we answer the skeptic?)

We will read and argue about some classic answers to these questions (and others) in the class.

Readings

Many readings will come from Epistemology: An Anthology (eds. Sosa, Kim, Fantl and McGrath). I also recommend (but don't require) reading from Richard Fumerton's introductory book Epistemology. These books and almost everything else that we will read are available on the Sakai site for the class. A few background readings will also be drawn from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, which is free online (plato.stanford.edu).

Here is the order in which we will cover the topics, and what we will probably read (broken down into required readings and recommended readings):

5/28: The Justified True Belief (JTB) Analysis of Knowledge and the Gettier Problem

Required. Gettier, E. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" in E:AA

Recommended. Ichikawa, J. & Steup, M. "The Analysis of Knowledge"
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/knowledge-analysis/>

5/30: Responses: Defeasibility Theories and Causal Theories of Knowledge

Required. Harman, G. Selections from Thought in E:AA
Goldman, A. "A Causal Theory of Knowing" separately on Sakai

Recommended. Lehrer and Paxson. "Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief." on Sakai
Klein, P. "Knowledge, Causality and Defeasibility." on Sakai
Sudduth, M. "Defeaters in Epistemology"
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/ep-defea/#SH2b>

6/4: Responses: Sensitivity and Safety Theories

Required. Nozick, R. "Knowledge and Skepticism" in E:AA
Sosa, E. "How to Defeat Opposition to Moore" in E:AA

Recommended. Comesaña, J. "Knowledge and Subjunctive Conditionals" on Sakai

6/6: Responses: Virtue Epistemology *a la* Sosa

Required. Sosa, E. Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, v.1 Chapters 2 and 5 on Sakai

Recommended. Greco, J. and Turri, J. "Virtue Epistemology"
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-virtue/>

6/11: The Structure of Justification

Required. Bonjour, L. "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?" in E:AA
Alston, W. "What's Wrong with Immediate Knowledge?" separately on Sakai

Recommended. Fumerton, R. "Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification"
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justep-foundational/>
Klein, P. "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." in E:AA
Alston, W. "Level Confusions in Epistemology."

6/13: Internalism and Externalism

Required. Fumerton, R. "Traditional (Internalist) Foundationalism" (Ch. 4 of Epistemology)
Goldman, A. "What Is Justified Belief?" in E:AA

Recommended. Fumerton, R. "Externalist Versions of Foundationalism" (Ch. 4 of Epistemology)

6/18: Internalism and Externalism

Required. Goldman, A. "Internalism Exposed" in E:AA
Vogel, J. "Reliabilism Leveled" in E:AA

6/20: Evidentialism and Reasons in Epistemology

Required. Conee and Feldman. "Evidentialism" in E:AA
Sylvan, K. "Reasons and the Metaphysics of Justification."

6/25: The Problem of Easy Knowledge

Required. Cohen, S. "Basic Knowledge and the Problem of Easy Knowledge." on Sakai
Van Cleve, J. "Is Knowledge Easy—or Impossible?" on Sakai

Recommended. Weatherson, B. "Easy Knowledge and Other Epistemic Virtues."
<http://brian.weatherson.org/eko3.pdf>

6/27: Skepticism and Closure

Required. Dretske, F. "Epistemic Operators" in E:AA
Stine, G. "Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Deductive Closure" in E:AA

Recommended. Weatherson, B. "Sceptical Arguments and Sceptical Scenarios"
First part of: <http://brian.weatherson.org/ScepticismNotes.pdf>

7/2: Skepticism and Underdetermination

Required. Brueckner, A. "The Structure of the Skeptical Argument" on Sakai
Pritchard, D. "The Structure of Sceptical Arguments." on Sakai

7/4: Dogmatism and the Modest Anti-Skeptical Project

Required. Pryor, J. "The Skeptic and the Dogmatist." on Sakai

Recommended. Pryor, J. "What's Wrong with Moore's Argument?"

Assignments, Grading and Policies

Your grade will be based on:

A. *Discussion Board Comments/Questions.* You are responsible for posting (I) some questions about the reading or (II) some critical comments or objections to the arguments in the reading on the Discussion Board on Sakai. These can be anywhere from a few sentences to several pages: what matters is that they help you learn the material. You should post these, at latest, at 9:00 on the night before the class meeting. Each of you should do this for 5 meetings of your choosing. This is for 20% of the grade.

B. *Attendance and Participation.* You must attend the class regularly to do well and avoid getting lost. I will allow one unexcused absence, and you will be penalized for every subsequent unexcused absence. You are also encouraged to participate by talking as much as possible. This will be for 10% of the grade.

C. *Exam.* There will be a take-home mid-term exam. I'll hand out questions on 6/13 and you will have a week to write answers to them, and hand them into me in printed form on 6/20. This is for 30% of the grade.

D. *Final Paper.* A final paper of 6-10 pages is due on 7/4 or earlier by email. I'll post topics on 6/13. You can also design your own topic, but you must pass it by me first. This is for 40% of the grade.

Do not plagiarize on your papers! This is severely penalized by the University and easy to detect.

Contact Information and Office Hours

You can contact me via ksylvan@philosophy.rutgers.edu. I will hold office hours in Seminary 1, Room 012 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00-5:30. Feel free to arrange an appointment with me if you can't make the office hours and have any questions or want to discuss your work.