

PHIL 551S: Knowledge and Action

January 4, 2015

Instructor Carlotta Pavese, PhD

Main Lecture Time Th 4:40PM - 7:10PM .

Main Lecture Location West Duke 204 (20)

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Office West Duke Building, Philosophy department, room 201I.

Office Hours Thursdays 2-4.

Website There will be a Sakai site for the course.

Course Description This course will be an advanced course in knowledge-first epistemology. According to knowledge-first epistemology, the concept of knowledge plays a foundational explanatory role with respect to a variety of other philosophically interesting concepts. Traditionally, knowledge-first epistemologists insist on the conceptual priority of knowledge with respect to other epistemological concepts, such as justification and evidence. In this course, we will mostly focus instead on the explanatory role played by knowledge with respect to practical concepts, such as the concepts of intentional action, sound performance and intelligent action. Here are a few topics we will touch on: We will start reading part of the bible for knowledge-first epistemology—Timothy Williamson's *Knowledge and its limits*. We will look at the literature on whether knowledge is the norm of assertion and action. We will look at the compatibility of the knowledge-first approach to epistemology with a Bayesian approach to decision theory. Finally, we will address the question whether practical knowledge is a kind of propositional knowledge and how an answer to this question bears on the issue concerning the priority of knowledge in the practical domain.

Required book

Mandatory:

Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its limits*, Oxford University Press 2002.

Other Readings: All other readings will be available electronically on Sakai. You should print these out and bring them to class.

Advice on Reading: It is more important to reach a basic grasp of the overall point of a reading than to understand any particular detail. Accordingly, I advise you to do each of the readings once quickly in a single sitting and then return to the details you missed. If, on a second reading, you can't sort out some specific detail, write down what you don't understand and bring it to class for discussion. Do your best to raise your question at a point in the class where that detail is relevant to what's being discussed. It is much more likely that you will get a satisfying answer if you ask your question at the appropriate time. In all the readings, it will be helpful to ask yourself 'what is the problem or issue at stake here?' and then 'what solutions or positions is the author arguing for here?'

Grading for Undergraduates:

Essays 2 shortish essays (Essay 1 (5-7 pages) 30%), Essay 2 (10-12 pages) 40%.

Students will be provided with essay topics two weeks in advance of when the essays are due. For deadlines, see the schedule.

1 Student Presentation 20%. Every student is required to do a presentation on one of the readings during the semester. If student is presenting on day n , they need to send me an outline of their presentation by day $n-2$.

Attendance, class discussion, mandatory office hours 10%. At the end of February, students have to mandatorily meet once with the professor during office hours (Thursday 2-4).

Grading for Graduate Students:

Essay Final essay (70%). Outline of the essay is due on April 1st. On the 16th of April, each graduate student will have to give a presentation of their project for the final essay. The final essay (15-20 pages) is then due on May 1st. No incompletes.

1 Student Readings Presentation 10%. Every student is required to do a presentation on one of the readings during the semester. If student is presenting on day n , they need to send me an outline of their presentation by day $n-2$.

1 Student Final Essay Presentation 10%. The last day of classes (April 16th), graduate students have to present their final projects to the whole class.

Attendance, class discussion, mandatory office hours 10%. At the end of February, students have to mandatorily meet once with the professor during office hours (Thursday 2-4).

Policy on Absences: Students are expected to attend all classes.

(Provisional) Schedule

The following schedule is only provisional and most likely subject to changes as we go on.

1st week Thursday *When:* January 8th 2015.

Readings: Williamson KAL (Preface and Introduction).

Topic: Introduction to Knowledge First Epistemology.

2nd week Thursday *When:* January 15th 2015 (cancelled class, in Mexico).

3rd week Thursday *When:* January 22nd 2015.

Readings:

1. KAL chapter I and II.
2. Jennifer Nagel: "Knowledge as a mental state". (Presenter?).

Topic: Is knowledge a mental state?

4th week Thursday *When:* January 29th 2015.

Readings: KAL (chapter III (Presenter?) and IX).

Topic: Is knowledge prime?

5th week Thursday *When:* 5th February 2015

Readings:

1. KAL (chapter XI).
2. DeRose "Assertion, Knowledge and Context". (Presenter?)
3. Ishani Maitra "Assertion, Norms and Games". (Presenter?)
4. (Recommended: Jessica Brown "Knowledge and Assertion".)
5. (Recommended: Jessica Brown "The Knowledge Norm of Assertion").

Topic: Knowledge and assertion.

6th week Thursday *When:* 12th February 2015.

Readings:

1. Hawthorne and Stanley "Knowledge and action".
2. Ishani Maitra "Assertion, Knowledge and Action" (With Weatherson); (Presenter?).
3. Jessica Brown "Knowledge and Practical Reason". (Presenter?).

Topic: Knowledge and action.

7th week Thursday *When:* 19th February 2015.

Readings: KAL Chapter X, other readings TBD.

Topic: Introduction to Bayesianism (me lecturing).

8th week Thursday *When:* 26 February 2015. (**First short essay for undergraduates due**).

Readings:

1. Weisberg "Knowledge in action" (Presenter?).
2. Weatherson "The Bayesian and the dogmatist." (Presenter?)
3. Sara Moss's "Epistemology formalized".

Topic: The place for knowledge within Bayesianism.

9th week Tuesday *When:* 5th March 2015.

1. Weatherson's "Games and reason-knowledge principle". (Presenter?)
2. Weatherson's "Knowledge, bets and interests." (Presenter?)

Topic: Weatherson on Knowledge: Knowledge, decision theory and game theory.

10th week Thursday *When:* 12th March 2015 (no class, spring recess).

11th week Tuesday *When:* 19th March 2015.

Readings:

1. Gibbons "Knowledge in Action".
2. Mele and Moser "Intentional action" (Presenter?).
3. Mele and Sverdlik "Intention, Intentional Action and Moral Responsibility" (Presenter?)

Topic: Knowledge, skills and intentional action.

12th week Thursday *When:* 26th March 2015.

Topic: Introduction to know how.

Readings:

1. Ryle "The Concept of Mind" (selections).
2. Williamson and Stanley's "Knowing how".

13th week Thursday *When:* 2nd April 2015.

Topic: Knowledge, know how and intentional action.

Readings:

1. Setiya "Know how" (Presenter?);
2. Pavese "Knowing a rule";
3. Pavese "Know how, abilities and intentionality"

14th week Thursday *When:* 9th April 2015.

Topic: Know how, safe performances and skills.

Readings:

1. Sosa *A virtue epistemology*, sections.
2. Sosa "How Competence matters in Epistemology".
3. Pavese "Safe beliefs and safe performances".

15 week Thursday *When:* 16th April 2015. (**Second essay for undergraduates due**).

Topic: Presentations by Graduate Students on their essays.

Readings: No readings.

References