

PHIL-210: Knowledge and Certainty

August 17, 2015

Instructor Carlotta Pavese, PhD

Main Lecture Time W/F 10.05-11:20am

Main Lecture Location West Duke Building 202, East Campus.

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

Office Hours Wednesdays 4-6- Fridays 11.30-1 (after class).

Website There will be a Sakai site for the course.

Course Description This course will be a survey of central issues in contemporary epistemology. The first part of the course will be devoted to considering skeptical arguments to the effect that we can't really know whether the world is the way it appears to us: What is it like to be in the Matrix? What would it be so bad about it, if anything? Then we will consider other forms of skepticisms, such as *skepticism about induction*: how can we be justified in believing that tomorrow the sun will rise, on the basis of our past experiences? We will look at different strategies to respond to such skeptical arguments. This endeavor will bring us to explore questions concerning the nature of knowledge and the relation between knowledge and other epistemologically significant concepts, such as certainty, justification and evidence: What is knowledge? What more is there to knowledge than justified true belief? Does knowledge require certainty? What does being justified in believing that something is the case requires of the believer? Can perception give us immediate justification? The last part of the course will be devoted to introducing some recent topics in contemporary epistemology, such as, for example: Can epistemic peers reasonably disagree? In other words, can two individuals with the exact same evidence concerning a certain subject matter reasonably disagree about it? Can religious beliefs be epistemically justified? Can it be rational to believe something that one believes to be unsupported by evidence? In other words, can an epistemically akratic subject be rational?

Textbook and Readings

Mandatory:

Feldman, Richard. *Epistemology*. Pearson College Division, 2003.

Rosenberg, Jay. *Three Conversations about knowing*, Hackett Publishing 2000.

Optional:

Sosa, Ernest, *Judgment and Agency*, Oxford University Press 2015.

Other Readings: Some of the readings aren't in the mandatory textbook. All such 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:

Exams 50% 2 Exams (Exam 1: 20%, Exam 2: 30%). See the schedule for the exam days.

The 2 exams will require you to answer 3 short-answer essay questions. Each exam will present you with 3 pairs of questions and you will have to select one from each pair to answer; all the answers will have to be completed in-class. Prior to each exam I will post 12 study-questions. The 6 exam questions will be among these study questions. The exams will be non-cumulative, but there is a good deal of interdependence in the course material, so it may be necessary to revisit old notes and texts in studying for an exam.

Essays 40% 2 essays (Essay 1: 15%, Essay 2: 25%). The second exam is going to be a take-home, and should be electronically submitted on December 8th, by noon.

Attendance, class discussion, mandatory office hours and quizzes 10%. There are seven quizzes spread out during the semester. Please, look at the schedule to see when they are scheduled. At the beginning of October starting the 6th, students have to mandatorily meet once with the professor during office hours.

Academic Integrity Students that are found faulty of plagiarism in any single one of the above assignments will be given an F in the class (and consequently will fail the class).

Policy on Absences: Students are expected to attend all classes. Please note: My policy for missed classes and missed exams is the following. If you miss an exam and want to make it up, you will need an official excuse of your absence. In all but the most extreme

cases, you will be required to make up the missed exam within 10 days. You've got up to *two* excused absences during the semester.

The religious holidays page on the T-Reqs website communicates to students the policy and procedures to be followed if they will miss class due to **observation of a religious holiday**: <http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/religious-holidays>. The procedure includes the submission of a Religious Observance Notification Form to their instructor. Students who miss class to observe a specified religious holiday are expected to make prior arrangements with their instructor to make up any work missed.

Note on Midterm As stated in the Faculty Handbook, faculty are required to submit midterm grades to the University Registrar by 5:00 pm on Friday, October 9, 2015, for all first-year undergraduate students, as well as for all other students who are doing unsatisfactory work i.e.; D or F.

(Provisional) Schedule

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

1st week Wednesday *When:* 26th August.

Readings: None.

Topic: Introduction to Epistemology. Belief, Truth and Knowledge.

Friday *When:* 28th August.

Readings: Rosenberg's First Conversation.

Topic: Knowledge and objectivity.

2nd week Wednesday *When:* 2nd September. **First Quiz**

Readings: "What is so bad about living in the Matrix?" by Jim Pryor

<http://www.jimpryor.net/research/papers/matrix/plain.html>

Topic: The Matrix

Friday *When:* 4th September.

- Descartes, First Meditation, Meditations on First Philosophy, made available.
- Feldman pp. 108-119.

Topic: The Dreaming Argument.

3rd week Wednesday *When:* 9th September.

Readings: *Readings:*

- Rosenberg, Second Conversation, pp. 18-22.

Topic: Knowledge and Certainty

Friday *When:* 11th September. *Readings:* *Readings:*

- Selections of Hawthorne's "Knowledge and lotteries" made available.

Topic: Lottery Paradox, Closure, Multiple-premises Closure.

4th week Wednesday *When:* 16th September. **Second Quiz**

Readings:

- §1 & §2 "The problem of induction", Stanford Encyclopedia Entry at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/induction-problem/>

Topic: Skepticism about induction

Friday *When:* 18th September.

Readings:

- Keith DeRose, "Contextualism: an explanation and defense" in John Greco and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. (Blackwell, Malden, Mass., 1999), pp. 187-205.
- Feldman, pp. 152-155
- Selection from Ernest Sosa, "Skepticism and contextualism" *Philosophical Issues* 10 (2000), pp. 1-10.

Topic: Relevant Theories and Contextualist solutions to skepticism.

5th week Wednesday *When:* 23rd September.

Readings:

- Keith DeRose, "Contextualism: an explanation and defense" in John Greco and Ernest Sosa, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. (Blackwell, Malden, Mass., 1999), pp. 187-205.
- Feldman, pp. 152-155
- Selection from Ernest Sosa, "Skepticism and contextualism" *Philosophical Issues* 10 (2000), pp. 1-10.

Topic: Relevant Theories and Contextualist solutions to skepticism, continued.

Friday *When:* 25th September. **Third Quiz.**

Readings: No reading.

Topic: Review for Midterm.

6th week Wednesday *When:* 30th September. *Readings:*

- Feldman chapter 1 and 2.
- Rosenberg, *Second Conversation* pp. 22-36.
- Edmund Gettier, "Is justified true belief knowledge?," *Analysis* 23 (1963), pp. 121-23. Reprinted in Paul K. Moser, ed., *Empirical Knowledge: readings in contemporary epistemology* (Rowman Littlefield, Totowa, NJ, 1986), pp. 231-33.

Friday *When:* 2nd October.

Topic: **First Exam.**

7th week Wednesday *When:* 7th October *Topic:* What is knowledge? Traditional analyses of knowledge and Gettier's challenge.

Readings:

- Feldman chapter 1 and 2.
- Rosenberg, Second Conversation pp. 22-36.
- Edmund Gettier, "Is justified true belief knowledge?," *Analysis* 23 (1963), pp. 121-23. Reprinted in Paul K. Moser, ed., *Empirical Knowledge: readings in contemporary epistemology* (Rowman Littlefield, Totowa, NJ, 1986), pp. 231-33.

Friday *When:* 9th October. **Fourth Quiz.**

Topic: Goldman's response to Gettier. Reliabilism.

Readings: Alvin Goldman, "Discrimination and perceptual knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976), pp. 771-791. Rosenberg, Third Conversation, especially up to p. 43.

8th week Wednesday *When:* 14th October

Topic: Goldman's response to Gettier. Reliabilism. Part II

Readings: Rosenberg, Third Conversation, especially up to p. 43. Goldman's "What is justified belief?"

Friday *When:* 16th October **First essay (3-4 pages) due.**

Readings: Bonjour's "Externalist theories of empirical knowledge."

Topic: Problems for Reliabilism.

9th week Wednesday *When:* 21st October

Readings: Stanford encyclopedia entry on Analysis of knowledge, section 5 (Sensitivity, Safety and relevant alternatives): <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/knowledge-analysis/>

Topic: Modal conditions on knowledge, Sensitivity and safety.

Friday *When:* 23rd October

Readings: Selection of Sosa "Judgment and Agency".

Topic: Virtue epistemology. Part I.

10th week Wednesday *When:* 28th October

Readings: Selection of Sosa "Judgment and Agency".

Topic: Virtue epistemology. Part II.

Friday *When:* 30th October. Class Cancelled.

11th week Wednesday *When:* 4th November. **Fifth Quiz.**

Readings: Readings: "Bayesian Epistemology" Hayek & Hartmann.

Topic: Other approaches to epistemology: Introduction to Bayesian epistemology.

Friday *When:* 6th November.

Readings: "Bayesian Epistemology" Hayek & Hartmann.

Topic: Other approaches to epistemology: Introduction to Bayesian epistemology (Continued).

12th week Wednesday *When:* 11th November **Sixth Quiz.** *Readings:* Daniel Greco "The iteration principles in epistemology, I and II".

Topic: KK and its problems.

Friday *When:* 13th November

Readings: Trent Dougherty and Chris Tweedt, "Religious Epistemology".

Topic: Religious Epistemology.

13th week Wednesday *When:* 18th November

Readings Sophie Horowitz "Epistemic Akrasia"

Topic The problem of Epistemic Akrasia.

Friday *When:* 20th November

Readings: David Christensen "Disagreement as Evidence. The epistemology of controversy".

Topic: Social epistemology and the problem of peer disagreement.

14th week Wednesday *When:* 25th November, no class, thanksgiving recess

Friday *When:* 27th November, no class, thankgivings recess

15th week Wednesday *When:* 2nd December **Seventh Quiz**

Readings: Gendler "Alief". Allan Buchanan "Political Liberalism and Social epistemology". (Made available).

Topic: Political epistemology.

Friday *When:* 4th December *Readings:* None.

Topic: Review.

Second Essay (5-7 pages) Due.