

PHIL 3300 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Fall 2017

10:45am-11:35am MWF (ST 215)

Course content and objectives: This course surveys the main contemporary philosophical theories of knowledge and justification, critically examining their strengths and weaknesses. All these theories aim to answer two central philosophical questions: what is knowledge, and how is it possible that we have it? At the end of the course, students will articulate and defend their own answers in an original research paper and group presentation. The first two-thirds of the course build up to this project, using textbooks and classic articles to sketch the theoretical landscape of epistemology today. The last third of the course will be devoted to original research, with students working in groups to develop their arguments and improve their writing and presentation skills. 3 Credits

Pre-requisites: No prerequisite.

Contact Information:

Melinda Fagan, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Office: CTIHB 421 (1-7424)

Email: mel.fagan@utah.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm and by appointment

To set up an appointment, please stay after class or send an email. For many issues, it is more efficient to meet in person. Please use email only to set up an appointment or to ask very quick specific questions about the course. Note: please use your campus email account to send me messages.

Required Texts: (at campus bookstore)

[1] Richard Feldman (2003) *Epistemology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

[2] Linda Zagzebski (2009) *On Epistemology*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Additional readings posted on *Canvas* (on syllabus page).

Course Outcomes: At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- identify key issues and arguments relating to major contemporary theories of knowledge
- understand questions and problems in emerging areas of epistemological research
- connect abstract issues in theory of knowledge to concerns of everyday life
- articulate major positions and objections in debates about knowledge, justification, skepticism, evidence, social aspects of knowledge, and the value of knowledge
- formulate a clear and persuasive argument on one or more of the above topics
- articulate ideas from the course in a group presentation
- work constructively with other students in writing papers and planning presentations

Teaching and Learning Methods: Lecture and discussion, with some small-group work. Students are expected to read assigned texts carefully before class, and come to class meetings prepared to discuss key issues and ideas. Course outcomes will be achieved by individual reflection, followed by discussion, and then articulation of ideas in writing and oral presentations. Assignments are structured so students build up to more difficult projects later in the semester.

Grading and Evaluation:

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

≥100	A+	88-89	B+	78-79	C+	68-69	D+	0-59	F
93-99	A	83-87	B	73-77	C	63-67	D		
90-92	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-		

Each requirement contributes a number of points toward the overall grade, corresponding to the percentage stated (max total=105). No curve.

Requirements:

1. *Participation* (15%) Discussion is essential to philosophy. Thoughtful participation in class discussions is an important component of this course. Please come to each class meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Participation in class (or lack thereof) will be noted at each class meeting.
2. *Short papers* (30%) Three short papers (5-7 pages, typewritten and double-spaced in 12 point font) on key topics (details to be announced in class). Papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated in the course schedule. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of excused absence, and (barring exceptional circumstances) must be turned in at or before the next class meeting. All three papers will be graded, but only the highest two will count toward your overall grade (15% each).
3. *Research paper* (40%) One longer paper (10-12 pages typewritten and double-spaced in 12 point font) on one of three topics: Naturalism, Social epistemology, or Knowledge and values. Reading lists for each topic, along with details about the assignment, will be handed out in Week 10. Using one or two of these texts, you will formulate an original research question, propose an answer, and develop arguments to support your conclusion. Individual research will be enhanced by regular discussion with in-class working groups. Organized by topic, working groups will discuss and offer feedback on paper ideas at every stage. Each paper, however, should be written individually. The first draft is due in Week 13, and will be returned with comments in the last week of classes. The final draft, with revisions, is due one week after classes end. The final draft counts more toward your final grade, but both will be graded.
4. *Group presentation* (15%) One 30-minute group presentation, right before the end of classes (Weeks 14-15). Groups correspond to research paper working groups. The organization and format of the presentation are up to you; just be sure everyone is involved in planning or execution, and make sure that everyone's paper ideas are included. A checklist for presentations, with grading criteria, will be handed out in class.
5. *Extra credit* (maximum 5%) Throughout the semester, there will be talks in the Philosophy Department (and elsewhere) relevant to this course. I will announce upcoming talks in class or on Canvas. You can receive extra credit for attending a talk and writing a short (1-2 page) report describing its relation to issues discussed in class.

University policies:

- *The Americans with Disabilities Act*: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

- *Addressing Sexual Misconduct*: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

- *Drop/Withdrawal deadlines*:

The last day to drop classes is Fri. Sept 1; the last day to withdraw from this class is Fri., Oct 20. Please check the academic calendar for more information pertaining to dropping and withdrawing from a course. Withdrawing from a course and other matters of registration are the student's responsibility.

- *Standards of Academic Conduct*: In order to ensure that the highest standards of academic conduct are promoted and supported at the University, students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct. misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. For more information, see: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>

- *Accommodation Policy* (Sections O and Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

Course policies:

- *Advising*: see <<http://philosophy.utah.edu/undergraduate/contact-advisor.php>>

- *Attendance and punctuality*: Success in this course requires showing up. Regular attendance is expected of everyone enrolled (see <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>, Section O). Participation in discussion obviously requires attendance, so absences reduce this portion of your grade. In addition, many ideas and arguments relevant to the written assignments will be discussed in class. So absence puts one at a serious disadvantage. If you miss more than two classes consecutively, please see me asap to catch up on material you've missed. If you are absent on a day that an assignment is due, you will need to show that the absence is excused (due to illness, emergency, or similarly unavoidable circumstance) before handing in that assignment. If you are aware of any scheduling conflicts with class meetings, please see me asap so accommodations can be made in advance. For details on accommodations other than scheduling, see Section Q of the

Accommodations Policy (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>). Punctuality is also expected. Arriving late to class will result in a lower participation grade for that day.

- *Deadlines*: All written material is due in class, hard-copy, at the beginning of the class meeting. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated in the course schedule. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of excused absence, and (barring exceptional circumstances) must be turned in at or before the next class meeting. Plan ahead, and start writing early!
- *Electronic etiquette*: Please turn off all electronic devices during class, except those required for note-taking and to access texts.
- *Food and drink*: Please do not bring food and drink to class.
- *Plagiarism*: “Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression (see ‘Student Code’). Proper acknowledgment means using a citation to indicate where you make use of another person’s words or ideas. Citations may be in footnotes, or inserted in the main text; in either case, they should include the author surname and publication date. A bibliography with full citation information should appear at the end of your essay or paper (see course handouts for details and format). If you are unsure how to correctly cite a source or have questions about how the Student Code applies to written work, please consult me or an academic advisor.
- *Scheduling accommodations*: Absences due to participation in officially sanctioned University activities, government obligations, and religious obligations are excused, as a matter of university policy (see <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>, Section O). If you have any scheduling conflicts with assignment due dates for these reasons, please let me know asap so accommodations can be made in advance.
- *Student code*: The Student Code (see: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>) applies throughout the course. If you have specific questions about its application in this course, consult me asap.
- *Wellness*: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.

Schedule of Topics and Readings: *

Week 1 Theory of knowledge: introduction

- M 8/21 Course introduction and overview
- W 8/23 What is knowledge? The Standard View
- Feldman Ch1 (1-7)
 - Zagzebski Ch6 §III (149-152)
- F 8/25 The Standard View, continued
- Plato 'Theaetetus' (excerpt)
 - Zagzebski Ch1 §I (1-9)

Week 2 The traditional analysis of knowledge

- M 8/28 Analysis of knowledge
- Feldman Ch2 (8-24)
- W 8/30 Analysis of knowledge, continued
- Zagzebski Ch5 §I (105-108)
 - Feldman Ch4, §§0-1 (39-49)
- F 9/1 The Gettier problem **Paper 1 assigned**
- Gettier 'Is justified true belief knowledge?'

Week 3 Paper-writing

- M 9/4 NO CLASS (Labor Day)
- W 9/6 NO CLASS (Professor away)
- F 9/9 NO CLASS (Professor away)

Week 4 The Gettier problem

- M 9/11 The Gettier problem, continued
- Feldman Ch3, §I (25-28)
- W 9/13 Responses to Gettier
- Feldman Ch3, §§II-IV (28-37)
 - Zagzebski Ch5 §§III (114-124)
- F 9/15 Discussion: Gettier problems
- Zagzebski 'The inescapability of Gettier problems'

Week 5 The regress argument

- M 9/18 The regress argument **Paper 1 due**
- Feldman Ch4, §II (49-52)
 - Zagzebski Ch2 §IIA (28-32)

* May be subject to change. Any changes will be announced more than a week in advance, in class and by email announcement (through *Canvas*). Changes, if any, will not reduce the time available for completing assignments.

W 9/20 The regress argument, cont.
• Chisholm ‘The myth of the given’ (§§2-6 only)

F 9/22 Basic beliefs and ‘The Given’
• Chisholm ‘The myth of the given’ (§§1,7 only)

Week 6 Foundationalism

M 9/25 Cartesian foundationalism
• Feldman Ch4 §III (52-60)

W 9/27 Modest foundationalism
• Feldman Ch4 §V (70-75)

F 9/29 Objections to foundationalism **Paper 2 assigned**
• Feldman Ch4 §V (75-78)
• BonJour ‘Can empirical knowledge have a foundation?’ (skip §III)

Week 7 Coherentism

M 10/2 Coherentism – main ideas
• Feldman Ch4 §IV (60-66)
• Zagzebski Ch2 §IIB (36-38)

W 10/4 Coherentism, continued
• BonJour ‘The elements of coherentism’ (87-101 only)

F 10/6 Problems for coherentism
• Feldman Ch4, §IV (66-70)
• BonJour ‘The standard objections’ (106-110)

OCTOBER 8-15 FALL BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week 8 Internalism and Externalism

M 10/16 Why externalism? **Paper 2 due**
• Goldman ‘Internalism exposed’ §§I, VI-VIII (271-276, 288-292)
• Zagzebski Ch2 §IIIC (46-47)

W 10/18 Reliabilism
• Feldman Ch5 §III (90-93)
• Goldman ‘What is justified belief?’ §§0-II (333-342)

F 10/20 Objections to reliabilism
• Feldman Ch5 §III (94-99)
• Goldman ‘What is justified belief?’ §§II-III (342-345)

Week 9 Skepticism

M 10/23 Cartesian skepticism
• Zagzebski Ch1 §V (23-24), Ch2 §I (25-28), Ch2 §IIIA (38-40)
• Feldman Ch6 §§I-IIIC (108-117)
• Descartes (1641) ‘Meditation One’ (excerpt)

- W 10/25 Moore's "proof" **Paper 3 assigned**
- Feldman Ch6 §IIID (118-119), §IVB (121-122)
 - Moore 'Proof of an external world'
 - Soames 'Moore on skepticism, perception, and knowledge'

- F 10/27 Fallibilism and the brain in the vat
- Feldman Ch6 §IVC-D (122-128)
 - Feldman Ch7 §IIA (141-143)
 - Moore 'Certainty'

Week 10 Responding to skepticism

- M 10/30 Responding to skeptical doubt
- Feldman Ch7 §§IIB-C (143-152)
 - Feldman Ch7 'Appendix: contextualism' (152-155)
- W 11/1 Relativism **Paper 3 due**
- Feldman Ch9 §§I-II (177-189)
 - Zagzebski Ch4 §III (97-102)
- F 11/3 Research paper assignment **Research paper assigned**
- Feldman Ch8 §§II-III (166-175)
 - Kelly 'The epistemic significance of disagreement' (§1 only)
 - Zagzebski Ch3 §IV 'Skepticism, self-trust, and conscientious belief'

Week 11 Research paper – topics and outlines

- M 11/6 Guided group discussion **Research groups assigned**
- N: Quine 'Epistemology naturalized' (start at 1st para. p.297)
 - S: Christensen 'Disagreement as evidence'
 - V: Clifford 'The ethics of belief'
- W 11/8 Group discussion – paper topics
- F 11/10 Group discussion – paper outlines

Week 12 Research papers - discussion

- M 11/13 Group discussion – examples **Paper outline due**
- W 11/15 Group discussion – objections
- F 11/17 Group discussion – refining arguments

Week 13 Research presentations – discussion

- M 11/20 Group presentations –guidelines
- W 11/22 Group presentations - planning **Research paper due – first draft**
- F 11/24 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

Week 14 Research presentations

M 11/27 Group presentation - practice

W 11/29 Naturalism

F 12/1 Social epistemology

Week 15 Research presentations, final discussion

M 12/4 Knowledge and values

W 12/6 Final discussion

W 12/13 Research paper due – final draft