

PHILOSOPHY 2500: INTRODUCTION TO THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE  
T 8:30 - 10:30, Th 8:30 - 9:30; TC 343

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Office Hours: W 9-10, Th 9:30 - 10:30

*Course Description:* The main aim of this course is to present several central themes in epistemology, at the introductory level. Epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief and is concerned with questions such as the following: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits? How are we to understand the concept of justification? What makes justified beliefs justified? Is justification internal to one's own mind, or external to it? In addition to considering answers to some of these questions, we will focus in more detail on recent arguments in favor of the claim that knowledge is "socially constructed."

*Evaluation*

1. Papers (60 % total; 25 % for first, 35 % for second): two papers (4-5 pages for the first, 6-8 pages for the second; typed, double-spaced, in Times Roman 12 pt. font, with 1 inch margins). Topics and additional guidelines will be distributed well in advance of the due dates. These papers will focus on developing the skill of carefully reading and assessing arguments presented in the texts. I will expect careful exposition and exploration of the argument, and you will not be rewarded for merely summarizing points made in lecture. You should feel free to consult with me while working on these papers. The papers will be due on Feb. 12 and March 31.
2. Final exam (35 %): approximately 3 hours, closed book and no notes.
3. Discussion questions and participation (5 %): A portion of class each week will be devoted to discussing questions and comments regarding the readings posted on the course webpage. Students will be evaluated based on the quality of their contributions via posting questions and participating in the discussions.

*Required Texts:* Michael Williams, *Problems of Knowledge*, Oxford University Press (2001); Paul Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, Oxford University Press (2006). We will also read the following articles, posted online:

- Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 26 (1963): 144-46.
- Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing," *Journal of Philosophy* 64 (1967): 355-372.
- Sellars, selections from "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in *Science, Perception, and Reality*.
- Bonjour, selections from *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*.
- Bonjour, "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge" *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5 (1980): 53-73.
- Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 771-791
- Kuhn, selections from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
- Rorty, selections from *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

*Course Webpage:* Check the course webpage for an updated schedule and other class announcements. Any handouts or other materials distributed in class will be posted on the webpage, along with supplemental readings and links to other useful websites.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading
Jan. 6	Introduction and Overview	PoK, Intro
8 -13	The Gettier Problem	PoK 1-3; Gettier
15 -20	Stability and Skepticism	PoK 4-6 ; Goldman, "A Causal Theory..."
22 -29	Foundationalism	PoK 7-9; Sellars
Feb. 3 - 10	Coherentism	PoK 10-11; Bonjour, from <i>Structure...</i>
12	1 <sup>st</sup> Paper Due	
12 - 26	Responses to Skepticism	PoK 13-16
Mar. 3 - 5	Reliabilism	Goldman, "Discrimination ...," Bonjour "Externalist ..."
10 - 12	Relativism & Constructivism Introduced	Kuhn; Rorty; PoK 19-20; FoK 1
17 - 24	Varieties of Relativism and Constructivism	FoK 2-4
26 - April 2	Defending and Rejecting Relativism	FoK 5-9, Epilogue
March 31	2 <sup>nd</sup> Paper Due	
April 7	Review and Conclusion	
	<i>Final Exam</i>	

**Audit:** Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes are granted at the exclusive discretion of the Undergraduate Program Chair, and only on the basis of documented medical or compassionate grounds. If, during the course, you envisage any difficulty completing all the required work by the completion deadline, consult immediately with the instructor and the Undergraduate Program Chair.

The Department of Philosophy Policies which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/proceduresappeals.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus cannot be used as grounds of appeal.