

PHI 312: Epistemology

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

Fall Semester 2019; T/R 9:30-10:45 CCC 126

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Office: 422 CCC **Office Hours:** M/W 1-3 and by appointment

Course Description

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. We will begin by examining various questions from both contemporary and classical epistemology, such as what is knowledge? Where does it come from? When are we justified in knowing something? Do we have to be certain, in order to know something? Can we know anything? We will also explore two recent books in more detail, *Transformative Experience* and *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

Essential Questions

- What are we claiming, when we claim we know something?
- Can we be confident in the things we think we know?
- Is the world we perceive an illusion?
- How do cognitive biases affect what we know?
- How can we make rational decisions about life-transforming choices?

Enduring Understandings

You will come to understand that:

- There are various disputes about the nature and justification of knowledge.
- Our perception of the world can easily be corrupted by cognitive biases.
- We should always think critically and carefully about the things we claim to know.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

You should be able to:

- Identify and evaluate philosophical arguments.
- Apply critical thinking skills to other professional and personal pursuits.
- Understand a variety of philosophical concepts, questions, and positions.
- Defend your own philosophical positions against criticisms.
- Read and comprehend challenging philosophical works.
- Appreciate and respect differing points of views.

Required Texts:

- Goldman, Alvin and Matthew McGrath, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2015, Oxford University Press
- Pojman, Louis, *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings (ToK)*, 2002, Cengage
- Additional readings will be posted on our D2L site.

Graded assignments will include:

1. Three Exams (20% each, 60% total)
2. Ten Quizzes/Assignments (10% total)
3. Two 1,000 Word Papers (15% each, 30% total)

Quizzes/Assignments: Most quizzes will be “pop” and can occur anytime during class. I promise to give at least (12) quizzes or assignments and only the best (10) will count. As a result of this policy, quizzes cannot be made-up for any reason (including sickness, etc.). Please do not ask if there will be a quiz on any particular day.

Exams: There will be three exams. Exams will consist of multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer and essay questions. Exams will be, to a limited extent, cumulative. Exam dates are listed on the schedule.

Paper: You will be required to write two 1,000-word papers. The writing assignments will be distributed at least a week before it is due. At that time I will also distribute requirements and guidelines for constructing a successful paper.

Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

100-93 A	<87-83 B	<77-73 C	<67-63 D
<93-90 A-	<83-80 B-	<73-70 C-	<63-60 D-
<90-87 B+	<80-77 C+	<70-67 D+	<60 F

Late Policy: Quizzes cannot be made-up. Short assignments will be docked 10% off per day late. Exams cannot be made-up without a university approved absence notification (e.g. a note from a health care provider explaining why the student couldn't be there). Furthermore, you need to contact me immediately in order to reschedule the exam as early as possible. If this condition is not met, you may not be able to re-take the exam.

Academic Honesty: If you commit any acts of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism on written work or cheating on an exam) you will earn a zero for that work (and possibly other disciplinary actions). Please refer to the Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures for more information (<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>)

Attendance: Attendance is not mandatory and will not be recorded (with the exception of the first few classes, which is mandatory). With that said, if you do not attend class on a regular basis, you will do poorly. Furthermore, quizzes and assignments will be administered on a regular basis and schedule changes will be announced in class.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement: The ADA is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, see: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>.

If you require *classroom and/or exam accommodations*, please register with the **Disability and Assistive Technology Center** and then contact me at the beginning of the course. For more information, please visit the Disability Center's office, located at 604 LRC or their webpage at: <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>.

Risk Management:

"In the event of a medical emergency, call 911 or use red emergency phone. Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim.

In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure. See www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures/other/floor-plans for floor plans showing severe weather shelters on campus. Avoid wide-span rooms and buildings.

In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner. Notify instructor or emergency command personnel of any missing individuals.

Active Shooter – Run/Escape, Hide, Fight. If trapped hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Follow instructions of emergency responders.

See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Management Plan at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point."

*Schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class or via email.

Sept 3 Sept 5	Introduction and Syllabus Russell: <i>Appearance and Reality</i> (ToK, 5-9)
Sept 10 Sept 12	Skepticism Descartes: <i>Meditations I and II</i> (ToK, 22-28) Hume: <i>Skepticism Regarding the Senses</i> (ToK, 29-39)
Sept 17 Sept 19	Moore: <i>A Defense of Common Sense</i> (ToK, 49-55) Stroud: <i>The Problem of the External World</i> (Canvas)
Sept 24 Sept 26	Perception Locke: <i>Representational Theory of Perception</i> (ToK, 75-88) Berkeley: <i>An Idealist Theory of Knowledge</i> (ToK, 88-96)
Oct 1 Oct 3	Review EXAM 1
Oct 8 Oct 10	Theories of Justification Goldman and McGrath, Chap 1: <i>The Structure of Justification</i> Goldman and McGrath, Chap 2: <i>Two Debates About Justification</i>
Oct 15 Oct 17	Goldman and McGrath, Chap 3: <i>Defining Knowledge</i> Zagzebski: <i>The Inescapability of Gettier Problems</i> (Canvas)
Oct 22 Oct 24	Goldman and McGrath, Chap 7: <i>Epistemology, Cognitive Science, and Experimental Philosophy</i> A Priori Knowledge Kant: <i>A Priori Knowledge</i> (ToK, 370-378)
Oct 29 Oct 31	Continued Kripke: <i>A Priori Knowledge, Necessity and Contingency</i> (ToK, 422-430)
Nov 5 Nov 7	Review EXAM 2
Nov 12 Nov 14	Humean Skepticism and Scientific Knowledge Hume: <i>The Problem of Induction</i> (TOK 434-339) Hume: <i>On Causation</i> (Canvas)
Nov 19 Nov 21	Stroud: <i>Humean Skepticism</i> (Canvas) Ayer: <i>The Verification Method and Elimination of Metaphysics</i> (TOK, 468-476)
Nov 26 Nov 28	Popper: <i>Science: Conjectures and Refutations</i> (TOK, 484-497) Thanksgiving Break
Dec 3 Dec 5	Longino: <i>Values and Objectivity</i> (Canvas) The Ethics of Belief Clifford: <i>The Ethics of Belief</i> (ToK, 515-518) James: <i>The Will to Believe</i> (ToK, 518-526)
Dec 10 Dec 12	Film: <i>12 Angry Men</i> Continued and Review

FINAL: Tuesday, Dec 17th, 10:15-12:15