

Philosophy 335: Theory of Knowledge, Spring 2011

Given that it is possible for us to make mistakes—to think we know something when we do not, what standards can we use to determine when we really do have knowledge; and what methods can we use to acquire it? These are the questions with which we will be concerned in this course. We will begin by considering several early modern thinkers (principally Descartes and Locke) who asked these questions and framed influential answers to them. We will then consider more contemporary answers to their questions and some challenges to the questions themselves. (This is an advanced course and presupposes some prior exposure to philosophy. Students should have completed at least one class in the field.)

Instructor Information

Name: Gregory Salmieri
Office: CW 207H
Email: gcs@unc.edu, gsalmieri@gmail.com
Phone: 412-576-2990
AIM: GSalmieri
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:30

Course Meetings

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:15 in CW 105

Required Texts (available at bookstore)

Descartes (edited by Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch.). *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*.
Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (any unabridged edition will do).
Bonjour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*.
Sosa, Kim, Fantil, and McGrath (eds.). *Epistemology: An Anthology*.

Course Schedule:

Readings in Gray are optional

Date	Topics	Readings
1/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Epistemology and the Enlightenment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course Syllabus• Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i>, Parts 1-2 (CSM 20-31)• Locke, <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>, Introduction (Book I, Chapter 1).• Bonjour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 1
1/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes' foundationalism• The method of doubt• The prior certainty of consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>• First Meditation (CSM 76-79)• Second Meditation, first nine paragraphs (CSM 80-83)• Bonjour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 2, pp. 9-14.• Newman, "Descartes' Epistemology" (from <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>) §2-§3
1/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses to the Method of Doubt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Austin, "Other Minds", 154-161(as marked)• SKFM, "Introduction" to Part I (through the 2nd full paragraph on p. 4)• Stroud, "The Problem of the External World" (SKFM 7-25)• Moore, "Proof of an External World" (SKFM 27-28)• Moore, "Four Forms of Skepticism" (SKFM 29-30)• Moore, "Certainty" (SKFM 31-34)
1/20		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putham, "Brains in a Vat"

1/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of Cartesian epistemology • The Cartesian circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i>, Part 4. • Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Third Meditation</i>, last two paragraphs (CSM 98) • <i>Fourth Meditation</i> (CSM 98-105) • <i>Fifth Meditation</i>, last five paragraphs (CSM 108-110) • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 2, pp. 14-22. • Newman, "Descartes' Epistemology", §4-6
1/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innate ideas and Rationalism • The Need for Method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes, <i>Rules for the Direction of our Native Intelligence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules 1-3 (CSM 1-4) • Rules 4-13 (CSM 4-19) • Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Second Meditation</i>, last seven paragraphs (CSM 83-86) • <i>Sixth Meditation</i> (CSM 111-122) • Newman, "Descartes' Epistemology" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1.4 • §7-§8 • Salmieri, "Three Approaches to Knowledge" §1-§2
2/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke's attack on innate ideas • Locke's project in the <i>Essay</i> • Sensation and immediate experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter II • Chapter III, §21-§27 • Chapter IV, §24 • Book II, Chapter I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-§7 • §22-§25 • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 6
2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prior certainty of consciousness and the attempt to prove the existence of the external world. • Direct realism about perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pp. 119-125 • pp. 126-145 • pp. 146-148 • Kelley, "The Primacy of Existence" • LeMorvan, "Arguments Against Direct Realism and How to Counter Them" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pp. 1-18 • pp. 18-23 • pp. 23-25
2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke's theory of ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple ideas • The operations whereby the several types of complex ideas are formed • Abstraction and general ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter I, §23-§25 • Chapter II • Chapter III • Chapters V-VI • Chapter VII <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-§2 • §10 • Chapter VIII, §7-§13 • Chapters XI-Chapter XII • Book III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter I, §1-§3 • Chapter III

2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticisms of Abstractionism. • Alternative theories of concepts (or general ideas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkeley, excerpts • Hume, excerpts • Geach, <i>Mental Acts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6 • Chapters 7-9 • Chapters 10-11 • Bayer, "A Role for Abstractionism in Direct Realist Foundationalism," pp. 21-30
2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke's criteria for assessing ideas • The defects in our ideas of substance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>, Book II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter XXII <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-4 • §9 • Chapter XXIII <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-§7 • §9-§11 • §10-11 • §12 • §16-§18 • §22-§24 • §30-32 • §37 • Chapter XXIX, §1-9 • Chapter XXX • Chapter XXXI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-§3 • §6-§14 • Chapter XXXII <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-§4 • §13-§18 • §24-§26
2/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke on the degrees of knowledge • Locke on Judgment and Probability • Locke on Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter IX, §1-§2 • Chapter XXXIII • Book IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters I-II • Chapters XIV-XVI
2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke on the extent of our knowledge • Locke on the epistemic consequences of the defects in our ideas of substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>, Book IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §1-10 [5] • §21-31 • Chapter IV • Chapter VI, §4-§16 • Chapter IX • Chapter XI, §1-§11 • Chapter XII, §7-§14
2/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem of induction • Hume's radical empiricism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonjour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pp. 47-57 • pp. 57-64 • pp. 64-69

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jones, sections on Hume’s epistemology from <i>A History of Western Philosophy</i>,” Volume II, Chapter 10.
3/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle on the degrees of knowledge and the role of principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> A.1 • Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> I.1-2
3/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle on the discovery of essences. • Bacon on the discovery of essences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • II.19 • II.1-2 • II.7-8 • II.10 • Bacon, excerpts from the <i>New Organon</i>
3/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A priori</i> knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 5
3/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining Knowledge • The Gettier Problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gettier, “Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?” (SKFM 192-193) • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 3 • SKFM, Part III, Introduction (189-191) • Zagzebski, “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” (SKFM 207-212)
3/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An alternative view of the relation between knowledge and belief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Williamson, “A State of Mind” (SKFM 213-236) • McGinn, “The Concept of Knowledge”
3/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundationalism vs. Coherentism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonjour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 9
3/29		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sellars, “Does Empirical Knowledge Rest on a Foundation?” (SKFM 94-98) • Sellars, “Epistemic Principles” (SKFM 99-108) • Davidson, “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Justification” (SKFM 124-133)
3/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internalism vs. Externalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 10
4/5		
4/12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goldman, “What is Justified Belief” (SKFM 333-347) • Goldman, “Internalism Exposed” (SKFM 379-393)
4/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturalized Epistemology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BonJour, <i>Epistemology</i>, Chapter 11 • Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized” (SKFM 528-537)
4/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skepticism and the Problem of the Criterion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion”
4/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epistemology and its problems reconsidered 	

Abbreviations:

“SKFM” refers to Sosa, Kim, Fantl, and McGrath (eds.), *Epistemology: An Anthology*, second edition.

“CSM” refers to Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch (trans.) *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*.

Assignments and Grading

Students will be expected to write four papers over the course of the term. Two of these will be brief “stimulus” papers (each of 300-400 words and counting for 5% of the semester average), one a “follow-up” paper (of 900-1200 words and counting for 20% of the semester average), and one a final paper (of 1500-1800 words and counting for 40% of the semester average). In addition to the papers there will be a final exam (counting for 15% of the semester average), and students will be expected to participate regularly in online discussion via the Blackboard discussion forum (with their participation grade comprising

the remaining 15% of the semester average. Extra credit points, which will be added to the semester average, can be earned for exceptional contributions to in-class discussion.

A student's **online participation** will be judged by the degree to which it reflects engagement with the course materials and contributes to the intellectual environment of the class. Since there are different axes along which student's posts can vary (quality, frequency, length, relevance, etc.) I cannot specify a formula by which this portion of the grade will be determined. However, no student who submits at least ten posts will receive less than an 80% for this component of the grade, provided that each post meets the following conditions: (1) it is at least 150 words, (2) it makes a point of relevance of the course that has not already been made in a post or classroom discussion, (3) it is consistent with a familiarity on the student's part of the content of the course readings and discussions. (In saying that the post must be consistent with a familiarity with the course content, I do not mean that the post must reference material from the readings or discussions, but only that it must not ignore it by, for example presenting as novel an idea that ought to be familiar from the readings or treating as uncontroversial and idea that we have seen is disputed.) Students will not receive grades on individual posts; however estimates of your participation grade will be available upon request throughout the term.

Each student will be assigned two class sessions for which he will be required to write (300-400 word) **stimulus papers** based on the session's assigned readings. The purpose of the papers is to serve as a point of departure for classroom discussion by summarizing an important issue from one or more of the assigned readings and raising questions about it. Stimulus papers are due on the midnight preceding the relevant class session, and will not be accepted any earlier than three hours after the end of the preceding class session. The papers must be submitted in two ways: (1) they must be turned in via the Blackboard "Assignments" feature as an MS Word (.doc or .docx) file, and (2) they must be posted to the Blackboard discussion forum. When posted to the discussion forum, each stimulus paper should begin a new thread, and the post title, should begin with "Stimulus:" (Though posted to the discussion forum, stimulus papers will not count as part of the participation grade.) For most class sessions, several students will be writing stimulus papers, and the papers should raise distinct questions (and, ideally, focus on distinct issues from the readings). It is up to each student, when submitting a stimulus paper, to ensure that the paper adds something new rather than duplicating any stimulus papers that have already been posted for the day. Because of this, the first student to post a stimulus paper for a given day has a somewhat easier job than the last student to do so, so it is in your interest to post earlier rather than later. The author of a stimulus paper is expected to be present in class on the day that the topic is under discussion and prepared to elaborate on the paper upon request. Up to ten points may be deducted from the paper's grade if this is not the case. If, for any reason, you will be unable to complete a stimulus paper (and to be present to discuss it) on one of the dates assigned to you, let me know prior to the previous class session, and I will assign you to an alternate date. In the case of illness or emergency, alternative arrangements can be made at any time.

Each student must, at some point in the term, submit a (900-1,200 word) **follow-up paper** on an issue already discussed in class (and/or on the discussion board). The paper must take and defend a position on the issue (or some aspect of it), engaging with the relevant assigned readings and with any directly relevant points made in class discussion (both in class and online). Appropriate topics for follow-up papers will be issues of the sort raised by (well written) stimulus papers and will typically be subjects of a single-day's classroom discussion. I will periodically suggest appropriate topics for follow-up papers, and students should feel free to solicit such suggestions or to run prospective topics by me. (Students may but needn't write follow-up papers on issues that they themselves raised in earlier stimulus papers.) Follow-up papers may be submitted at any point between January 23rd and April 8th. However, I discourage submitting a follow-up paper prior to receiving the grade on the first stimulus paper or more than two weeks after the close of classroom discussion of the relevant topic. As with stimulus papers, follow-up papers should be both submitted via the Blackboard "assignments" feature (in an MS Word format) and posted to the discussion board where each should begin a new thread and have a title beginning with "Follow-up." (Also, as with stimulus papers, follow-up papers will not count towards the online participation grade.)

Final papers (of between 1,500 and 1,800 words) will be due on April 18th. Papers must take and defend a position on an issue studied in the course, engaging with the assigned readings and, where relevant, with positions articulated in discussion (both in-class and online). A student may write his final paper on a topic he has already treated in an earlier paper, but the final paper must be a distinct paper (rather than a revised or expanded version of earlier work). Final paper topics must be approved beforehand.