

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge

Course Number and Section:

PHILOSOP

2500G 550

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Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

Course Description:

In this age of fake news, climate change denial, global pandemics, anti-vaxxers, and our political and social leaders becoming ever-more willing to stretch the truth or deny facts outright, the study of epistemology is ever-more relevant. Many of these issues, and much of what we take ourselves to “know” in general, depend upon fundamental but often unexamined philosophical assumptions. Should we trust an expert’s testimony or predictions? Can we trust our memories and perceptions? Our intuitions? Logic and mathematics? Science or faith? Can we be sure beliefs formed by these methods correspond to reality? When should we consider that we’ve been misled or bamboozled, and when should we stick to our epistemic convictions?

In this course we will begin by considering just what it means to “know” something in the first place, and then move on to examine some of the classic philosophical notions which underlie our concepts of knowledge, belief, justification, and trust. In the second half of the course we will return to some of the practical issues mentioned above, trying to make sense of them by deploying the philosophical concepts and methods developed in the first half – our focus will in part linger on so-called Conspiracy Theories as a social and epistemic phenomenon. Ultimately, our goal is to equip ourselves with tools and conceptual frameworks useful for navigating these issues, that we may attentively confront the knowledge environments of our modern age.

Learning Outcomes:

An appreciation of just how much our daily affairs are underpinned by philosophical convictions and concerns.

The means to critically evaluate those convictions.

Practice your time and attention management skills.

Develop your written, communication, critical analysis, and argumentative abilities.

Textbooks and Course Materials:

Course readings will be posted on OWL. (Cost: \$0)

Methods Of Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Discussion Questions	Weekly, in-class	20
Argumentative Essay	02/05/25	25
Podcast & Writeup	03/12/25	25
Final Exam	Winter Exam Period	30

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.

Tuesday, December 10, 2024