

PHIL2110: KNOWLEDGE

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Course Description

There are many vexing philosophical questions about knowledge. In this class, we will focus on 3 clusters of such questions. We will also look at a 4th cluster that is somewhat different from the others in that the questions in this 4th cluster are *meta*-epistemological questions about how philosophers theorize about knowledge. With the exception of the questions in the 1st cluster, all of the questions are of relatively recent vintage. This is a class in *contemporary* epistemology.

1. Inferential justification. Sometimes our beliefs are justified on the basis of inference from other things we believe. Must these other things we believe also be justified? Must they be justified by further justified beliefs? If yes, then it seems that any time we have an inferentially justified belief we must have an infinite chain of justified beliefs that support it. How can that be?

2. Epistemic injustice. Epistemology has recently been married to social and political philosophy through the notion of *epistemic injustice*. Roughly, this is the idea that some forms of oppression and discrimination have a distinctly epistemic flavor: Certain groups are treated as *knowing less* or being *less reliable* in believing truly. How should this affect our epistemic practices?

3. Disagreement. You and your friend disagree but you have the same evidence and you're equally smart, equally attentive, etc. What should you do? Stick to your side or suspend judgment? What do these options imply? Does the latter lead to a form of skepticism, for example?

4. Meta-epistemology. How do we know what we know about knowledge? By just *thinking* about it, or are empirical methods relevant? These are *meta-epistemological* questions. We'll investigate some of these.

Coursework:

- (a) Two exams (midterm and final) 15% each. (Final will *not* be cumulative.)
- (b) A term paper 35%.
- (c) Group presentation 15%.
- (d) Participation 20% [including "spotlighting" work]

Web Resources: There is a Moodle site for this course. It will contain lecture notes, links to readings, etc.

Readings: Readings will be put on reserve or posted online via Moodle. Readings are not optional. You'll almost certainly fail the course, if you don't do the readings.

Week 1: Infititism and the regress of reasons. Read: (1) Peter Klein, "Human knowledge and the infinite regress of reasons." Available via moodle.

Week 2: Infititism continued (hahaha!). Read: (1) Klein, (2) Carl Ginet, "Infititism is not the solution to the regress problem." Available via moodle.

Provisional Reading List

Cluster 1, Infititism and the regress of reasons:

Peter Klein, "Human knowledge and the infinite regress of reasons."

Carl Gillet, "Infititism is not the solution to the regress problem."

Cluster 2, Epistemic Injustice:

Selections from Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*. (Chapters 1, 2, 6 and 7...maybe)

Jennifer Saul, "Skepticism and Implicit Bias."

Cluster 3, Disagreement:

Thomas Kelly, "Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence."

Jennifer Lackey, "A Justificationist View of Peer Disagreement."

Cluster 4, Meta-epistemology:

Avner Baz, "Must Philosophers Rely on Intuitions?"

Max Deutsch, "Avner Baz On the Point of a Question."