

Epistemology

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Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge and justification. This course will be organized around three main topics. First, we will consider the nature of knowledge: what is it to know something, and how can knowledge be obtained. In the course of doing so, we will discuss many attempts to analyse the notion of knowledge, and arguments that it cannot be analysed at all. Second, we will study scepticism, the view that we know very little indeed. While scepticism may seem like a fringe claim, there are many powerful arguments for it, displaying real tensions in the way we think about our beliefs about the world. Third, we will consider the point or function of knowledge, including some of its possible connections to assertion, lying, action, interpretation, and justice.

Some readings you might find helpful:

- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy has excellent overviews of some of the topics we'll discuss. I especially recommended the following entries: (a) The Analysis of Knowledge; (b) Skepticism; (c) The Value of Knowledge.
- Jonathan Dancy *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Wiley). Exactly what it sounds like.
- Timothy Williamson *Knowledge and Its Limits* (OUP). Probably the most influential recent book on knowledge; we'll cover some parts in class, but the whole thing is worth reading.

Week 1: Introduction & the Gettier problem

Gettier: Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?

Week 2: Externalism I: causal theories and reliabilism

Goldman: A Causal Theory of Knowing

Goldman: What is Justified Belief?

Week 3: Externalism II: truth tracking theories

Nozick: Philosophical Explanations (excerpts)

Week 4: Is the Gettier problem unsolvable?

Zagzebski: The Inescapability of Gettier Problems

Williamson: Knowledge and Its Limits (excerpts)

Week 5: Cartesian & Humean scepticism

Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy (excerpts)

Hume: Treatise of Human Nature (excerpts)

Week 6: Responses to scepticism I: Moore & evidentialism

Pryor: The Skeptic and the Dogmatist

Steup: Evidentialist Anti-skepticism

Week 7: Responses to scepticism II: closure-denial & externalism

Dretske: The Case Against Closure

Williamson: Knowledge and Its Limits (excerpts)

Week 8: **Responses to scepticism III: entitlement & self-defeat**

Wright: Warrant for Nothing

Rinard: Reasoning One's Way Out of Skepticism

Week 9: **The role of knowledge; knowledge and assertion**

Craig: Knowledge and the State of Nature (excerpts)

Williamson: Knowing and Asserting

Week 10: **Knowledge and action; knowledge and injustice**

Hawthorne and Stanley: Knowledge and Action

Fricker: Epistemic Injustice (excerpts)

Week 11: **Encroachment: pragmatic and moral**

Fantl and McGrath: Evidence, Pragmatics, and Justification

Moss: Moral Encroachment