

Syllabus
PHIL 3403–001: Theory of Knowledge (13837)
Spring 2022

1 Logistics

Instructor: Dr. Caton

Email: jcaton [AT] astate.edu

Lecture: TR, 9:30–10:45AM

Course Page: Blackboard

Locale: Humanities and Social Sciences 2005

Office: Humanities and Social Sciences 4052

Office Hours: *by phone or Zoom only*,

TR, 12:30–2:00PM

Office Phone (w/ voicemail): 870.972.2626

Required Texts:

Pollock, John L. and Joseph Cruz (1999): *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 2nd ed., Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN: 0847689379

2 Course Description

Critical examination of some of the major problems concerning the nature and extent of knowledge, belief and evidence, epistemic justification, rationality, memory, perception, and induction.

This is a course in epistemology. Epistemology concerns the nature, extent, and conditions of knowledge. We standardly think that knowledge is important and desirable, perhaps even fundamental to a University's purpose, so we should inquire into the concept, its meaning, and its implications. Topics will include: skeptical arguments and responses, whether knowledge has a foundational structure, the possibility of defining knowledge, whether knowledge is closed under deductive entailment, epistemic justification, contextualism, peer disagreement, and knowledge how.

3 Course Goals/Student Learning Outcomes

Program Outcomes: this course contributes to the following program-level outcomes (level: mastery):

- 1) Students will understand central issues and theories in philosophy (from among the major areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory).
- 2) Students will be able to analyze and explain complicated ideas.
- 3) Students will be able to analyze arguments.
- 4) Students will be able to evaluate arguments.

Course-Level Student Learning Outcomes: students should be able to recognize and discuss central views in cognitive science, and identify their implications.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes: Course-level SLOs will be assessed by short-answer essay questions.

4 Grading Criteria

Your course grade (100 possible points) will be a weighted average of the following:

1. **Reaction Papers:** 15%
2. **Paper 1:** 25% [Feb. 15]
3. **Paper 2:** 30% [Mar. 29]
4. **Final Examination:** 30% [May 5]

Description of the Assignments:

A **Reaction Paper** is a *one page*, approximately *two paragraph* response to the week's readings. Provide a concise summary of the main topic for the week **and** give a thoughtful but brief critique or analysis of one

or two relevant issues. You may also attempt to explain your current confusion about a topic and explore possible resolutions. The assignments will be posted on Blackboard. You will upload your answers to the problem sets in Blackboard as a PDF file. **I only accept PDF files.** More instructions will be posted on the assignment.

Paper 1 and **Paper 2** are 6 page papers. I will provide several questions based on the readings and lecture. You will upload your answers to the Papers in Blackboard as a PDF file. **I only accept PDF files.** More instructions will be posted on the assignment. With my supervision, it is possible for you to develop your own paper topic. In such a case, you must have an email exchange with me about your topic *before* you submit your paper.

The **Final Examination** is an 8 page paper. I will provide several questions based on the readings and lecture. You will upload your answers to the Final in Blackboard as a PDF file. **I only accept PDF files.** More instructions will be posted on the assignment.

Grading Scale:

Your course grade will be determined by the above weighted average. A letter grade will be assigned by the grading scale given below. In borderline cases I can consider factors such as class participation, regular attendance, and overall improvement in the course. What counts as a borderline case is determined by the entire class' overall performance.

A: 90–100
B: 80–89
C: 70–79
D: 60–69
F: 0–59

5 Readings

I will post the reading assignments on Blackboard with the expectation that you will read *before* I cover the material in class. This schedule is tentative and subject to change. The actual reading assignments will appear on Blackboard. (Reading assignments are for the week listed.)

Jan. 11: [Introduction, Problems of Knowledge]

Pollock and Cruz, 1–28.

Jan. 18: [Foundations Theories]

Pollock and Cruz, 29–45.

Jan. 25: [Foundations Theories]

Pollock and Cruz, 45–65.

Feb. 1: [Coherence Theories]

Pollock and Cruz, 66–88.

Feb. 8: [Externalism]

Pollock and Cruz, 89–111.

Feb. 15: Paper 1 Due

Feb. 17: [Externalism *cont.*]

Pollock and Cruz, 111–121.

Feb. 22: [Epistemic Norms]

Pollock and Cruz, 122–151.

- Mar. 1:** [Epistemology and Rationality]
Pollock and Cruz, 152–190.
- Mar. 8:** [Direct Realism]
Pollock and Cruz, 191–239.
- Mar. 15:** [Skepticism]
Vogel, “The Refutation of Skepticism”[‡]
Fumerton, “The Challenge of Refuting Skepticism”[‡]
- Mar. 22:** [Spring Break] No Class
- Mar. 29:** Paper 2 Due
- Mar. 31:** [Feminist Epistemology]
Grasswick, “Feminist Epistemology”[‡]
Wylie, “Why Standpoint Matters”[‡]
- Apr. 5:** [Epistemic Injustice]
Pohlhaus, Jr., “Varieties of Epistemic Injustice”[‡]
Fricker, “Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Injustice”[‡]
- Apr. 12:** [Disagreement]
Kelly, “Disagreement and the Burdens of Judgment”[‡]
Christensen, “Epistemic Modesty Defended”[‡]
Cohen, “A Defense of the (Almost) Equal Weight View”[‡]
- Apr. 19:** [Knowledge How]
Fantl, “Knowledge How”[‡]
Cath, “Knowing How Without Knowing That”[‡]
- Apr. 26:** [Knowledge How cont.]
Brogaard, “Knowledge-How: A Unified Account”[‡]
- Apr. 28:** [Knowledge How cont., Last Day of Class]
Stanley, “Knowing (How)”[‡]
Stalnaker, “Intellectualism and the Objects of Knowledge”[‡]
- May 5:** Final Exam (Thursday, 8:00AM, Humanities and Social Sciences 2005)

[‡] Reading available on Blackboard.

6 Academic Integrity and Administration

1. Plagiarism of any kind is not tolerated and will be prosecuted through the appropriate University offices. Plagiarism is the act of taking and/or using the ideas, work, and/or writings of another person as one's own. Cheating is obtaining and/or using information in a fraudulent manner. Both are serious offenses against academic integrity that could result in failure for the assignment, and/or failure for the course, and/or expulsion from Arkansas State University.

You are responsible for knowing and conforming to the University code of academic integrity, which you may find at:

<http://www.astate.edu/a/student-conduct/index.dot>

2. If you have a disability which makes it difficult for you to succeed in this course, please contact me as soon as possible. Your privacy will be respected and every effort will be made to meet your needs. All students requesting accommodations for disabilities should be registered through A-State's Access and Accommodation Services (870.972.3964). If Access and Accommodation determines you should be able to take tests in their office, it is your responsibility to schedule the test for the same time and date as the exam is administered to other students.

<http://www.astate.edu/a/disability/Students/register.dot>

3. Students should conduct themselves in respectful and courteous ways. Ways of being discourteous or disrespectful include but are not limited to: answering or using a cellular phone in class, using a computer for non-class related purposes, arriving late, leaving early without permission, asking excessive or off topic questions (but I greatly encourage reasonable and on topic questions).

*Electronic device policy: Do not use cell phones in class. I expect cell phones to be put away and turned to silent (not vibrate). Only use laptops and tablets for class related purposes.

4. Do not take photographs of the white board during lecture, and do not record audio or video during lecture. From the student handbook, "viewing, transmitting, recording, filming, photographing, producing or creating a digital electronic file of the image or voice of another person, including classroom settings, without their knowledge, or consent" is deemed "non-academic misconduct". For more information, see the Student Handbook, pg. 68.

5. For 3000-level classes and above, attendance alone should not result in a failing grade but may be linked to grading factors such as class participation or in-class work.

6. I expect that all assignments will be completed on their respective due dates. The only exceptions are: 1) medical, with signed documentation from a doctor, 2) all University recognized holidays, 3) special events observed by organized religions (will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion), and 4) absences officially excused by the University. Airplane tickets, weddings, trips, and so forth, will not be excused. If you are unsure about a particular case, speak with me *before* a due date.

7. The due dates for **Paper 1** and **Paper 2** are nonnegotiable. In special circumstances I will allow one paper to be accepted past the deadline at a penalty of one letter grade per day late. What counts as a special circumstance is up to my discretion. If you are unsure about a particular case, speak with me *before* a due date.

8. Information on campus closure can be found on the A-State web page, on KASU, and on local radio and television stations. If inclement weather reasonably prevents you from being able to come to class and campus is not closed, please call or email me as soon as possible.

9. The best way to contact me is through University email. You are responsible for regularly checking your University email and the Blackboard course page. Please use your A-State email account for all email correspondence. Please compose email correspondence thoughtfully and professionally.