**PHIL 3170—Epistemology**

**Fall 2018**

**Tues/Thurs 12:15-1:30**

Instructor: Jennifer Jensen, PhD

Cell Phone: 574-234-1975

Email: jjensen2@uccs.edu

Office: Columbine 4054

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs -9:30-10:30 or By Appointment

**Course Description**

This course will introduce you to central issues in epistemology, the study of knowledge. We will begin by considering a debate about the proper order of epistemological inquiry. Should we start by answering the question: Can we know anything to be true? Or rather should we begin by answering the question: What is involved in knowing a proposition to be true? We will investigate examples of each approach. Then we will consider the most popular account of knowledge—justified true belief—and the famous little paper that attempts to undermine it. After our analysis of knowledge, we will narrow our focus to the notion of *rational* (or justified) belief. What structure can a set of rational beliefs have? What is *justified* belief? The course will culminate in the application of these epistemological concepts to an issue that we, as a class, will determine.

**Course Objectives**

1. To become familiar with historical and contemporary philosophical literature in epistemology.
2. To use basic philosophical methodology to analyze arguments in epistemology.
3. To clearly and precisely articulate your philosophical position on issues in epistemology.
4. To profitably and charitably discuss controversial issues with those with whom you disagree.

**Required Texts**

* *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 3rd Edition, 2011. Robert Audi.

**Basis for Grading**

#### RRs = 20 points

Short Paper 1 = 20 points

Short Paper 2 = 20 points

Final Paper = 40 points

ISBN: 978-0-415-87923-1

* *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings*, 2002. Michael Huemer.

ISBN: 0-415-25921-5

* Other readings will be made available on Canvas.

**Course Requirements**

* + - *Reading Reports (20 points)*: You will have a reading assignment for each week. In my experience, it takes novice and expert philosophers alike 1-1 ½ hours to carefully read 10 pages of high quality philosophical writing. I have provided a page count in the schedule of assignments that will help you to plan the amount of time required to complete each week’s reading assignment. After you have carefully read the assignment, you will post a reading report on Canvas. You will turn in your RRs on Canvas by the beginning of class on Tuesdays. Your reports should reveal that you have made a significant attempt to understand and think about the reading. I will grade your reports on the following scale:

0 = You did not complete the assignment.

1 = You completed the assignment but gave very little evidence of having carefully done the readings.

2 = You completed the assignment and gave good evidence of having carefully done the readings including citations from your assigned readings.

Over the course of the semester, there will be 13 opportunities to submit a reading report. Each will be worth 2 points. I will drop your lowest three scores. Thus, if you miss RRs one or two or three weeks, your RR grade will not suffer. Please note: I DO NOT accept late reading reports.

* *Short Papers (20 points each):* You will write two short papers over the course of the semester. Each will be about 3 pages in length. Each will involve explaining an argument that we have been exploring in class and offering critical evaluation of the argument. For each paper, you will choose from 2 topics, each with a different due date. On September 6th, we will discuss how to write a position paper in more detail. I will pass out a rubric and sample papers at that time.

All short papers must be submitted by the due date. You will lose one point for every day that your paper is late. If your paper is submitted after class on the due date, you will lose ½ point.

* *Final Paper (40 points)*: You will write a longer paper during the final month of class. The paper will be 6-8 pages in length. I will present possible topics for your final paper on Tuesday, November 6th. We will peer review drafts of your papers in class on Tuesday, December 4th. Six points (15%) of your final paper grade will be based on your draft and participation in this peer review session.

Your final paper must be submitted by Monday, December 10 at noon. As with your short paper, you will lose one point for every day that your paper is late and ½ point if your paper is submitted after noon on December 10th.

* + - *Attendance:* You are expected to attend every class session and be prepared to engage in the classroom discussion. I realize that you may sometimes miss class for reasons beyond your control. Therefore, there will be no penalty for the first four missed classes. Every absence beyond four will result in a 1.5 point reduction in your final grade. If you miss more than 10 classes, you will automatically receive an F in the course.

**Class Policy**

*Technology in the Classroom*: The bulk of our class time will be spent in large group discussion. This will require your active participation. To facilitate this, laptop computers, I pads, etc. will not be permitted in the classroom. The only exception to this is if your textbook is on an e-reader. I also ask that you turn your phones off before entering the classroom and store them in a backpack or purse where they are out of sight.

*Academic Honesty:* All written assignments are to be completed individually; students are in no way to work in a collaborative manner on papers unless explicitly given permission to do so. Any ideas that appear in your work that were obtained from an outside source must acknowledge that source. Note that academic dishonesty is a serious offense and will be handled according to the university policy. For more information, go to the UCCS Dean of Students webpage under the tab *Student Conduct*.

*Classroom Conduct:* Classroom disruptions negatively affect the learning environment. “Disruption,” as applied to the academic setting, means verbal and other behavior in the classroom that a faculty member judges as interfering with normal academic functions. Disruptive behavior will be handled according to the university policy. For more information, go to the UCCS Dean of Students webpage under the tab *Student Conduct*.

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topic/Readings** | **Assignments Due on Tuesday** |
| Aug 21/23 | **Introduction to Epistemology**  Zagzebski—“Epistemic Value and What We Care About” (pp. 1-24) \*\*CANVAS\*\* | None |
| Aug 28/30 | **Epistemological Inquiry: Where do I start?!?**  Audi—Chapter 13 (pp. 334-353)  Descartes—excerpt from *Meditations on First Philosophy* (pp. 513-523) | RR #1 Due |
| Sept 4 | **No Class—Labor Day** | None |
| Sept 6 | **Epistemological Inquiry: Where do I start?!?**  Putnam—“Brains in a Vat” (pp. 524-538) | None |
| Sept 11/13 | **Epistemological Inquiry: Where do I start?!?**  Chisholm—“The Problem of the Criterion” (pp. 590-601)  Locke—excerpt from *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (pp. 32-36)  Hume—“Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy” (pp. 46-50) | RR #2 Due |
| Sept 18/20 | **Epistemological Inquiry: Where do I start?!?**  Unger—excerpt from “An Argument for Skepticism” (pp.131-137) \*\*CANVAS\*\*  Moore—“Hume’s Theory Examined” (pp. 606-610) | RR #3 Due  Paper #1—Topic A Due |
| Sept 25/27 | **JTB and its Successors**  Audi—Chapter 10 (pp. 246-253)  Ayer—“Knowing as Having the Right to be Sure” (pp. 440-443)  Gettier—“Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (pp. 444-446) | RR #4 Due |
| Oct 2/4 | **JTB and its Successors**  Audi—Chapter 10 (pp. 253-257)  Zagzebski—“The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” (pp. 207-212) \*\*CANVAS\*\*  Goldman—“A Causal Theory of Knowing” (pp. 450-463) | RR #5 Due  Paper #1—Topic B Due |
| Oct 9/11 | **JTB and its Successors**  Audi—Chapter 10 (pp. 257-264)  Zagzebski—“From Reliabilism to Virtue Epistemology” (pp. 113-122) \*\*CANVAS\*\* | RR #6 Due |
| Oct 16/18 | **Foundationalism and Coherentism**  Audi—Chapter 9 (pp. 206-221)  BonJour—“Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?” (pp. 109-120) \*\*CANVAS\*\* | RR #7 Due |
| Oct 23/25 | **Foundationalism and Coherentism**  Audi—Chapter 9 (pp. 221-236)  BonJour—“The Structure of Empirical Knowledge” (pp. 387-401) | RR #8 Due  Paper #2—Topic A Due |
| Oct 30/Nov 1 | **Foundationalism and Coherentism**  Sosa—“The Raft and the Pyramid” (pp. 145-164) \*\*CANVAS\*\* | RR #9 Due |
| Nov 6/8 | **Externalism and Internalism**  Alston—excerpt from “Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology” (pp. 179-189; 203-204) \*\*CANVAS\*\*  Feldman and Conee—“Evidentialism” (pp. 15-32) \*\*CANVAS\*\* | RR #10 Due  Paper #2—Topic B Due |
| Nov 13/15 | **Externalism and Internalism**  BonJour—“Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge” (pp. 363-376) \*\*CANVAS\*\* | RR #11 Due |
| Nov 20 | **Application**  TBD | RR #12 Due |
| Nov 22 | **No Class—Thanksgiving Break** | None |
| Nov 27/29 | **Application**  TBD | RR #13 Due |
| Dec 4 | **Final Paper Peer Review Session** | Final Paper Draft Due |
| Dec 6 | **Writing Workshop** | None |

**FINAL PAPER MUST BE SUBMITTED TO CANVAS BY MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, NOON.**