

Epistemology

Phil 352A · Prof. J. Dunn

Spring 2014
MWF 12:40-2:10
Asbury Hall 206
DePauw University

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Description

We seem to know various things: *that the Colts had a good season last year; that there will be a presidential election in 2016; that $5+7=12$; that DNA has a double helical structure.* Maybe we don't actually know these things. Even so, we at least seem to have very good reason to believe them. But what is it to know or have a reason to believe something? Since we're often interested in evaluating the beliefs that we (or others) hold, this question seems to be important. Epistemology is the discipline that attempts to answer it. In this course we will cover the central topics within epistemology. We will read some classic work in philosophy by authors such as Descartes and Hume, but the majority of reading will be recent work by contemporary philosophers.

Books

- ▶ *Epistemology* (second edition), Laurence Bonjour, Rowman & Littlefield.
- ▶ *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature*, Hilary Kornblith, Oxford University Press.
- ▶ *Putting Logic in Its Place*, David Christensen, Oxford University Press.

(The books above are available at the Eli's Books on the square.)

Other materials will be made available to you online through Moodle.

Grading

Participation & Discussion	10%
Paper 1:	10%
Paper 2:	10%
Final Paper Presentation:	3%
Final Paper:	25%
Midterm Take-Home Exam:	17%
Final Exam:	25%

Course Requirements

Participation & Discussion

One of the best and most engaging ways to learn philosophy is to participate in careful, informed discussion about the material being read. This class will center on such discussion and you are expected to be an active participant each day in class. For such discussions to be profitable, they must be *informed*. This means that you are also expected to have *carefully* and *thoughtfully* have completed the reading for each class. A schedule of the reading assignments is available online.

To help encourage participation, you are required to submit to a Moodle forum one question, comment, or objection to the reading before the class for which the reading is assigned. There are 24 days that we have reading assignments. You get 1 point for each question, comment or objection that you post. You get full credit for this portion of the course if you reach 21 points. (This means you can fail to post on three days.) For more information about this aspect of the class, see the course Moodle site.

Your participation and discussion grade is based on (i) your submissions to the Moodle forum, (ii) your involvement in class discussion, (iii) your engagement outside of class, (iv) your attendance, and (v) a peer-review activity we will do near the end of the semester.

Writing Assignments

Paper 1

Paper 1 is a short writing assignment that comes early in the semester and allows you to get early feedback on your progress in the course. The paper will address a fairly specific prompt, which will be posted on Moodle.

Paper 1 Assigned: **Jan. 30**

Paper 1 Due: **Feb. 6**

Paper 2

Paper 2 is a writing assignments where you will be asked to write a clear and careful essay to a focused question concerning one of the topics discussed in class. This paper is a good chance to hone your philosophical writing for the final paper. Specific information about this paper will be posted on Moodle when it is assigned.

Paper 2 Assigned: **Feb. 20**

Paper 2 Due: **Mar. 4**

Final Paper

Your final paper for this course will be an argumentative paper on a topic of your choosing. It should be approximately a 2,500-3,000 words. There are four main parts to this assignment:

1. Give a 5-minute presentation to the class, explaining your thesis, main arguments, and sources. Then respond to questions from the class. **Apr. 10 and Apr. 15.**
2. Compose a first draft of your paper and exchange papers with other students in our class for a peer review. **Apr. 22.**
3. Revise your paper in light of the peer review and submit a second draft to me for comments. **Apr. 29.**
4. Revise your paper in light of my comments and submit a final draft. **May 8.**

To give you an idea of what is expected, below are two examples of the kind of structure that would be appropriate for your paper. (For more detailed information about the paper, please see the document posted on the course Moodle site.)

Example 1:

1. Present a view discussed in class.
2. Present an objection to that view.
3. Consider possible replies to the objection.
4. Evaluate the replies and offer an assessment.

Example 2:

1. Present a key argument from a paper that you selected in the area of your topic.
2. Explain this argument, defining all technical terms, and providing the best possible reasons in favor of each premise of the argument.
3. Evaluate the argument, explaining how someone could criticize it.

* I strongly recommend that you take advantage of the Writing Center in the Academic Resource Center, located in 115 Asbury. After scheduling an appointment, you will have the chance to meet with a trained tutor who will read your work and offer feedback. This is a great way to improve your writing, however, slots can fill up quickly, so please plan ahead and take advantage of this great resource.

Exams

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam for this course is a take-home exam. Any material in the course readings or in the class discussions is fair game. It will be assigned on **Mar. 13** and is due by midnight on **Mar. 16**.

Final Exam

The final exam for this course is *not* a take-home exam. It will be taken during the final exam period. It is a cumulative exam. Any material in the course readings, student presentations, or in the class discussions is fair game. It will be on **Wednesday, May 14 from 1:00 - 4:00 pm**.

Other Requirements

You should take control of your experience in this course: what you get out of the course will largely be a function of what you put in to it. If you are falling behind or are confused about something, please make arrangements to meet with me. I really like the material we're covering in this course, and I'm on campus every day. So come talk to me about it!

Things You Can Expect From Me

I will give clear and prompt feedback on your work.

I will assist you in choosing a paper topic, finding outside sources, and editing your paper.

I will be available to discuss the material outside of class, whether over email, during office hours, or at other times.

Special Considerations

DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university-administered activities and reasonable modifications/accommodations to students with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended in 2008. Any student needing special accommodations due to a disability should contact the Coordinator of Student Disability Services, Pam Roberts, 302 Harrison Hall or call (765) 658-6267. It is the responsibility of each student to discuss implementation of approved modifications/accommodations with each faculty member and/or staff member within one week of the date of receiving a modification/accommodation approval memo or within the first two weeks of the academic semester.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is very important, and violations are serious offenses, which I take very seriously. There is a clear Academic Integrity Policy that can be found here:

<http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/academic/policies/integrity/>

It is your responsibility to read the university policy. If you are unclear about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, it is your responsibility to contact me with any questions so that you are clear about it. Ignorance is not an excuse. The *minimum* penalty for violations of Academic Integrity is a 0 on the relevant assignment and a further reduction in your overall grade.