

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 3280 (F'16)
21st Century Philosophy: Social Epistemology

Logistics

Course Instructor: Dr. Kyle Bromhall **Lecture Times:** Tues and Thurs
kbromhal@uoguelph.ca 2:30 – 3:50
Office Hours: Weds 10:30 – 12:30 MCKN 226
MACK 332

Course Description

Social epistemology is the study of the epistemic effects of our social institutions and practices. Related questions have been asked since antiquity, but it has only been since the turn of the twenty-first century that social epistemology has come into its own as a subject of inquiry. Further, social epistemology has never been more relevant, thanks current events like Brexit or the rise of populism in Western democracies. In this course, we will study three of the most important topics of social epistemology: peer disagreement, expertise, and group justifiedness. We will study the work of Feldman, Fricker, Zagzebski, and many others. No prior advanced knowledge of epistemology is required for success in this course; familiarity is assumed.

Required Course Texts

1. Various readings posted on Ares.

Summary of Course Requirements

Requirement	Description	Weight	Date
Response Paper	A response to material from the first unit.	20%	By 04 Oct
Major Paper	On the material from the second unit.	35%	By 08 Nov
Participation	Self-assessed.	10%	Varies
Final Examination	A cumulative final examination.	35%	07 Dec

Primary Learning Outcomes

Knowledge: Students will *understand, explain, and assess* a major movement in the landscape of contemporary epistemology, and its application to pressing modern issues such as the significance of disagreement, the authority of experts, and the danger of groupthink.

Skills: Students will *prepare* two sustained pieces of philosophical writing in which a topic is articulated clearly and a stance on that topic is supported by appropriate and well thought-through reasons.

Students will *argue* successfully for their own view and be able to identify and critically evaluate patterns of argumentative reasoning in the works of others.

Description of Course Requirements

1. Response Paper (20%)

This will be a short (1250-word) essay on a topic assigned by the Instructor. The purpose of this essay is to test your competence with the material from the unit “Peer Disagreement.” It will be due **before 04 October**. You will be given the topic at least two weeks in advance.

2. Major Essay (35%)

This will be a long-ish (2000-word) essay on a topic of your choice from those provided by the Instructor. The purpose of this essay is for you to develop and defend a well-supported position on the material from the unit “Expertise.” If you wish to write on an alternative topic, you must get permission at least three weeks before the due by date. This essay is due **before 08 November**. You will be given the topic at least four weeks in advance.

3. Participation (10%)

You will be asked to submit participation self-assessment forms three times over the course of the term. The announcements will happen in lecture and will not be posted on CourseLink. Once announced, you will have until the next class to submit the completed form through CourseLink. Students who do not submit a form will be assigned a grade of zero for that assessment, which can only be changed for humanitarian reasons. Each form will contain a set of criteria by which you will assign yourself a grade for participation. You will be assigned whatever grade you give yourself, but note the following: If you give yourself high participation marks, I will assume that it is because you are highly engaged with the course material, and thus will revise my expectations for your written work accordingly.

4. Final Examination (35%)

Who doesn't love an opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency with the material under a time constraint? I mean, three months of material in two hours! Love or hate this adrenaline- and caffeine-fueled frenzy of academic wizardry, it will be held on **07 December 2016** from **1900-2100** at a location to be determined by the helpful folks at the Registrar. You should expect standard fare: multiple choice, short answer, and the like.

Description of Course Policies

1. Course Requirement Policies

a. Due dates & late penalties

The due dates for all assignments are found in the tentative schedule. In all cases, you will have at least two weeks—and usually longer—from the time that the assignment is distributed to when the assignment is due.

All deadlines are hard deadlines. Once the deadline passes, you will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. There are no make-up assignments or extra credit. The only exceptions shall be for medical or compassionate reasons, provided that you have the necessary evidence, as per the College of Arts's regulations.

b. Submitting assignments

All assignments are to be submitted using the dropbox function of CourseLink by the time indicated on the assignment or as amended. You may not submit assignments through email.

You must submit these assignments in either *.docx or *.doc format. Microsoft has a free online version of Word that you can use if you do not have access to the full program. I will post the link on CourseLink. Under no circumstances are you to submit work in *.odt (OpenOffice) format.

c. Style and formatting

Formatting plays a subtle but crucial role in the development of your papers. Clean, consistent formatting ensures that your reader's energies are focused where they should be—on your content—instead of being spent overcoming technical inefficiencies. Each assignment will have formatting requirements, including citation style, that you are required to follow. Failure to follow the requirements will be penalized.

2. Technology Policies

a. CourseLink

I will use CourseLink extensively in this course. On CourseLink you will find news items, errata, grades, minor announcements, the course FAQ, assignments, the assignment dropbox, and so on. It is your responsibility to check CourseLink on a regular basis. If you have a question, you should check CourseLink (especially the FAQ) first.

b. Turnitin

The University of Guelph has adopted Turnitin, integrated with the CourseLink dropbox tool, to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain academic integrity at the university.

All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

c. Document distribution

All readings are on electronic reserve through *Ares*. The library will determine the format in which they are available and which functions are enabled; I have no control over that.

All lectures will be posted in Portable Document Format (PDF) on CourseLink for online viewing. You will need a program like Adobe Reader, Nitro Reader, or Microsoft Word to open these files. Note that printing has been disabled. Let us save a few trees, shall we?

All assignments will be posted in PDF on CourseLink with printing enabled.

d. Laptop and smartphone use

Laptops are allowed in lecture just as long as they are being used for course related purposes. If I deem that they are causing a nuisance, I will take measures to reduce their effects through measures such as requiring laptop users to all sit together in the back of the room or banning laptops outright.

Smartphones have no place in the classroom. Refrain from using them. If it is difficult for you to go through the entire class without interacting with your phone, you should seriously reconsider the prominence of electronics in your life. I may ask you to leave the room if I repeatedly catch you using your phone during class.

e. Email

As I do not live in Guelph, email is my preferred method of communication outside of class or office hours. I will try my best to respond to your email within a few hours of receiving it, although please understand that circumstances may not always permit this. Note that you should be directing inquiries to your Teaching Assistant first.

f. Recording lectures

As per the standard statements of the College of Arts, you must receive explicit permission of the Instructor (me) before recording—whether video, audio, or both—a lecture.

This is my explicit statement that you, collectively and severally, categorically **do not** have my permission to record lectures.

3. Governance Policies

a. Distractions

Be aware of actions that others may find distracting. Talking, accessing social media, texting and so on all have a *scientifically-demonstrated* negative effect on your grade, but also on those around you. It is also extremely disrespectful. Therefore, please refrain from doing anything that would distract others. If any of these things start to be a problem, I may impose limitations on the class.

b. Tolerance

More so than in many other disciplines, philosophy asks you to vigorously and precisely defend your own position and to attack those of others. This does not mean that at any time you should ever show any sort of disrespect towards another student. As philosophers, we exhibit significant tolerance for differences of view, and it is expected that you demonstrate this tolerance.

c. Transparency

This course is not a democracy, but that does not mean that we are inscrutable. If you have an issue with something in the course, we will provide you with a full explanation of the process. We will honestly reconsider our position should the situation call for it.

College of Arts Standard Statements

1. Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their mail.uoguelph.ca email account regularly: email is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

2. When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person,

such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and email contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.

3. Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday, 4 November 2016**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar.

4. Copies of Out-of-Class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable backup copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

5. Accessibility

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. For more information, contact CSD at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email sas@uoguelph.ca, or see the website: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/csd/>

6. Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

7. Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not

excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8. Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

9. Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

Tentative Schedule of Readings

All information subject to change with notice.

Week	Topic	Day	Readings
01	Social Epistemology	Tues	[no class]
		Thurs	Syllabus; Clifford (1877), "The Ethics of Belief"

Peer Disagreement

02	Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreements"
03	Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News"
04	Elgin, "Persistent Disagreement"

Expert Testimony

05	Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Do You Trust?"
06	
07	Turner, "What's the Problem with Experts?"
08	Whyte and Crease, "Trust, Expertise, and the Philosophy of Science"
09	Lane, "When the Experts are Uncertain: Scientific Knowledge and the Ethics of Democratic Judgment"

Collective Epistemology

10	Surowiecki, "The Wisdom of Crowds"
11	Pettit, "When to Defer to Majority Testimony—And When Not"
12	Fricke, M. "Group Testimony: The Making of a Collective Good Informant"
13	Lackey, "What is Justified Group Belief?"