

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Philosophy 2240 (F'17)
Knowledge & Belief**

Logistics

Course Instructor: Dr. Kyle Bromhall **Lecture Times:** Mon, Wed, Fri
kbromhal@uoguelph.ca 9:30 – 10:20
Office Hours: TBA; MCKN 332 MCKN 224

Course Description

This course is an introduction to epistemology, the branch of philosophy that studies the possibility, sources, and justification of knowledge. Epistemology is central to public discourse, and familiarizing yourself with its concepts will enable you to navigate public discourse more effectively. The need for such familiarity has never been more pressing: on one hand, there is more information available to more people; on the other, most people do not take the time to consider how such information translates into beliefs, actions, and knowledge. In this course, we will consider three central epistemological problems: the problem of *epistemic causation*; the problem of *justification*; and, the problems posed by *collective epistemology*. Figures include Plato, Descartes, James, Elgin, and more.

Required Course Texts

1. Pritchard, Duncan. *What is this Thing Called Knowledge?* 3d. ed. (Routledge, 2013).
2. Various articles posted to Ares.

Summary of Course Requirements

Requirement	Description	Weight	Date
Midterm	One midterm on the material from unit one.	25%	13 Oct
Participation	Assessed on the quality and quantity of participation.	10%	Ongoing
Essay	One five-to-six-page paper on a topic of units two or three.	30%	08 Dec
Final Examination	One sit-down examination.	35%	15 Dec

Primary Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge:** Students will be able to *identify* and *critically evaluate* the practical and cultural significance of epistemology. They will also know that they do not know that they know (epistemology joke).
- Skills:** Students will develop the ability a stance on a topic and support it with reasons in a well-argued piece of philosophical writing.
- Values:** Students will acquire an interest and ability to contribute to and participate in civic life, and articulate and understand different viewpoints in the realm of discourse.

Description of Course Requirements

1. Midterm (25%)

There will be one midterm, held in-class on **13 October**. It will cover all the material from the first unit, “Snows that Piff,” and will feature short answer, multiple choice, and similar sorts of questions.

2. Participation (10%)

Your grade in this portion of the course will be determined by the quality and quantity of your contributions to in-class discussion. These grades will not be assigned in a vacuum; I will seek *your* input into what grade *you* think is most appropriate, and I will take this very heavily into account when I assign your grade. Participation will be scored at the midpoint and endpoint of the course.

3. Essay (30%)

All students will write one paper of approximately five-to-six pages (1500-ish words). The topic can be anything from units two or three. This will be due by **11:59:59 PM** on **08 December**. More information shall be available once the term starts.

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 **15 December** at **11:30 AM** 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.

Tentative Course Schedule

All information subject to change with notice.

Week	Readings			Topic
	M	W	F	
04 Sep			Syllabus.	Welcome!

Snows that Piff

11 Sep	TCK: 1-7; 10-15.	TCK: 20-3; E1; E2.		The Standard Analysis
18 Sep	TCK: 31-4.	E3.		Agrippa's Trilemma
25 Sep	TCK: 35; E4.			Coherentism
02 Oct	TCK: 36-7; E4.			Foundationalism
09 Oct	[Thanksgiving]	[Review]	[Midterm]	Midterm

Escaping the Vat

16 Oct	TCK: 169-72; E5.	TCK: 69-71; E5.		Academic Skepticism
23 Oct	TCK: 49-51.	TCK: 55-6; E6.		Reliabilism
30 Oct	TCK: 57-60; E7.	[Instructor away]		Virtue Epistemology
06 Nov	TCK: 177-9; E8.			Contextualism

The Knowing of Things Together

13 Nov	TCK: 42-9; E9.			Epistemic Rationality
20 Nov	TCK: 80-6; E10.			Expertise
27 Nov	TCK: 101-7, 115-7; E11.			Science & Induction
04 Dec	TCK: 183-7; E12; E13.			Truthiness

Legend

TCK	<i>What is this Thing Called Knowledge?</i>	E7	Zagzebski, L. <i>Virtues of the Mind</i> .
E1	Plato, <i>Meno</i>	E8	Dretske, F. "The Pragmatic Dimension..."
E2	Plato, <i>Thaetetus</i>	E9	James, W. "The Will to Believe"
E3	Sextus Empiricus	E10	Goldman, A. "Experts: Which Ones...?"
E4	Sosa, Ernst. "The Raft and the Pyramid"	E11	Goodman, N. "The New Riddle..."
E5	Descartes, R. <i>Meditations</i>	E12	Elgin, C. "True Enough"
E6	Alston, W. "How to think..."	E13	Frankfurt, H. "On Bullshit"