

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Philosophy 2500F: Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge 2017-18

Fall Term, 2017

Prerequisites: none

Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30, W101

Thursdays, 2:30-4:30pm, W101

Instructor: Dr. Steve Bland

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Office hours: Mondays, 12:30-2:30pm

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The study of knowledge, known as epistemology, is of fundamental importance to nearly every philosophical endeavor. All philosophers – all human beings, for that matter – have a vested interest in knowing when and how their claims are justified. In this course we will critically examine various concepts and theories of knowledge. We will be concerned, in particular, with such questions as: what, if anything, can be known? What distinguishes knowledge from mere belief? How much of our knowledge rests on experience? What is the structure of human knowledge? By considering and discussing these issues, it is hoped that students will develop not only many of their own epistemological views, but an important set of skills for evaluating knowledge claims and engaging in inquiry.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the factors that are relevant in distinguishing between justified and unjustified beliefs.
2. Articulate arguments both for and against important epistemological positions.
3. Apply epistemological concepts and theories to better understand concrete situations.

CLASS METHODS

This course consists of two highly interactive lectures per week. Students will be expected to attend **every** class, having done **all** of the required readings, and ready to contribute to discussion.

TEXTS

Lawrence BonJour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*, Second Edition. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

10% Class participation

The bulk of this grade will be determined on the basis of attendance, but a perfect attendance record, by itself, will not earn a perfect participation grade. In addition, you will be expected to make informed contributions to the class by way of asking questions, interpreting texts, and offering arguments.

Any student with an attendance record of less than 70% will receive a participation grade of 0%.

10% Forum Posts

You are responsible for posting at least one question or comment in the Forum section of OWL **within 24 hours of every class**. These posts should engage the material covered in class. They can be questions about something that is unclear to you, objections to any of the views discussed, suggestions about how to extend a theory, comments about where to find other relevant information on the topics under consideration, or responses to something that someone else has said. Forum posts will be evaluated on the basis of their relevance, insight, and capacity to generate discussion.

5% Discussion questions (due at the end of every new lecture)

At every lecture, you will be asked to write down an answer to a topical question and hand it in at the end of lecture. The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate your interest and involvement by making explicit your intuitions about the topics under discussion. It will also provide you with the opportunity to evaluate the reliability of your philosophical intuitions, and possibly use them to motivate your arguments. All questions must be completed in class, so it is very important that you bring **a pen and paper** with you to every class. All questions will receive a grade of either 0 or 1. As long as you put some thought into your answer, it will receive a grade of 1.

20% Dialogue on scepticism (due October 12th)

Many philosophers have argued for their views by presenting a dialogue between a variety of characters, some of whom agree with the views under consideration while others do not. This mode of exposition is not only entertaining, but critically effective. In groups of three or four, you will be responsible for writing and acting out a five to ten minute dialogue on the problem of scepticism. This exercise is meant to develop your abilities to apply philosophical ideas to concrete situations and develop arguments for opposing positions.

25% Essay (2000 words, due November 16th)

You will be given the essay topic, as well as advice about how to write a philosophy essay, at least one month in advance of the due date.

5% Essay comments (due 3 days after the essays are returned)

I will return your graded essays, having filled out a rubric and commented on the first half only.

You will then be responsible for commenting on the second half of your essay, pointing out mistakes, weaknesses, and ways in which your essay could be improved.

25% Glossary (due on December 7th)

In groups of 3-4, you will be responsible for submitting a glossary consisting of 50 of the most central expressions in this course (a helpful hint: the terms in bold on the PowerPoint slides are pretty central). Each entry must explain the meaning and the significance of the expression in less than 200 words. Each group member will be responsible for the same number of entries, and for commenting on earlier versions of other group members' entries. 40% of your grade will be determined by the quality of your group's final version of the glossary, and the 60% will be determined by your individual contributions to the glossary.

LATE PENALTY: the penalty for submitting assignments late is 3% per day, including weekends, up to a maximum of 50%.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Lecture	Topic	Reading
Lecture 1	The Concept of Knowledge	BonJour, Ch. 3
Lecture 2	Immediate Experience	BonJour, Ch. 6
Lecture 3	Knowledge of the External World	BonJour, Ch. 7, 12
Lecture 4	The Problem of Induction	BonJour, Ch. 4
Lecture 5	A Priori Justification	BonJour, Ch. 5
Lecture 6	Foundationalism and Coherentism	BonJour, Ch. 9
Lecture 7	Internalism and Externalism	BonJour, Ch. 10
Lecture 8	Social Epistemology	None
Lecture 9	New Frontiers	BonJour, Ch. 11



Appendix to Course Outlines

Prerequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Provost and Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Conduct of Students in Classes, Lectures, and Seminars

Membership in the community of Huron University College and the University of Western Ontario implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. The academic and social privileges granted to each student are conditional upon the fulfillment of these responsibilities.

In the classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Students can avoid any unnecessary disruption of the class by arriving in sufficient time to be seated and ready for the start of the class, by remaining silent while the professor is speaking or another student has the floor, and by taking care of personal needs prior to the start of class. If a student is late, or knows that he/she will have to leave class early, be courteous: sit in an aisle seat and enter and leave quietly.

Please see the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/StudentLifeandSupportServices/StudentDiscipline>

Technology

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Academic Accommodation for Medical/Non-Medical Grounds

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

(a) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising

University Senate policy, which can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf,

requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform_15JUN.pdf.

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Provost and Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Provost

and Dean.

**(b) Accommodation on Medical Grounds for assignments worth less than 10% of final grade:
Consult Instructor Directly**

When seeking accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth less than 10% of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Provost and Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Provost and Dean.

(c) Non-medical Grounds: Consult Instructor Directly

Where the grounds for seeking accommodation are not medical, the student should contact the instructor directly. Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor. Apart from the exception noted below, academic advisors will not be involved in the process of accommodation for non-medical reasons.

Where a student seeks accommodation on non-medical grounds where confidentiality is a concern, the student should approach an academic advisor with any documentation available. The advisors will contact the instructor after the student's request is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the challenge without breaching confidence. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified that significant circumstances are affecting or have affected the student's ability to complete work, and the student will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. Before denying a request for accommodation where documentation has been submitted to an academic advisor, the instructor will consult with the Provost and Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Provost and Dean.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Statement on Academic Integrity

The International Centre for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action." (CAI Fundamental Values Project, 1999).

A lack of academic integrity is indicated by such behaviours as the following:

- Cheating on tests;
- Fraudulent submissions online;
- Plagiarism in papers submitted (including failure to cite and piecing together unattributed sources);
- Unauthorized resubmission of course work to a different course;

Helping someone else cheat;
Unauthorized collaboration;
Fabrication of results or sources;
Purchasing work and representing it as one's own.

Academic Integrity: Importance and Impact

Being at university means engaging with a variety of communities in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge and understanding in ways that are clear, respectful, efficient, and productive. University communities have established norms of academic integrity to ensure responsible, honest, and ethical behavior in the academic work of the university, which is best done when sources of ideas are properly and fully acknowledged and when responsibility for ideas is fully and accurately represented.

In the academic sphere, unacknowledged use of another's work or ideas is not only an offence against the community of scholars and an obstacle to academic productivity. It may also be understood as fraud and may constitute an infringement of legal copyright.

A university is a place for fulfilling one's potential and challenging oneself, and this means rising to challenges rather than finding ways around them. The achievements in an individual's university studies can only be fairly evaluated quantitatively through true and honest representation of the actual learning done by the student. Equity in assessment for all students is ensured through fair representation of the efforts by each.

Acting with integrity at university constitutes a good set of practices for maintaining integrity in later life. Offences against academic integrity are therefore taken very seriously as part of the university's work in preparing students to serve, lead, and innovate in the world at large.

A university degree is a significant investment of an individual's, and the public's, time, energies, and resources in the future, and habits of academic integrity protect that investment by preserving the university's reputation and ensuring public confidence in higher education.

Students found guilty of plagiarism will suffer consequences ranging from a grade reduction to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. In addition, a formal letter documenting the offence will be filed in the Provost and Dean's Office, and this record of the offence will be retained in the Provost and Dean's Office for the duration of the student's academic career at Huron University College.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,

- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Policy on Special Needs

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Provost and Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Class Cancellations

In the event of a cancellation of class, every effort will be made to post that information on the Huron website, <http://www.huronuc.ca/AccessibilityInfo> (“Class Cancellations”).

Mental Health @ Western

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Academic Advising

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation [see above], students should contact an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support Services (huronsss@uwo.ca). An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/AcademicAdvisorsandServices>

Department Chairs and Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about their individual programs. Their contact information can be found on the Huron website at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/Academics/FacultyofArtsandSocialScience>