

# HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

## *Philosophy 2500F: Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* 2018-19

Fall Term, 2018

Prerequisites: none

Mondays, 2:30-3:30, W18

Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30pm, W18

Instructor: Dr. Steve Bland

Office: A304

Office hours: Thursdays, 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 for and against important epistemological positions.
3. Apply epistemological concepts and theories to better understand concrete situations.

### **CLASS METHODS**

This course consists of two lectures per week. Although much of the lecture will be delivered by the instructor, students will be expected to attend class **having done all of the readings and prepared to contribute to class discussions**. There will be regular in-class assignments, so bring a **pen** and **paper** with you to every class.

You are welcome to use a laptop to take notes in lecture, though you should be aware that students who do so tend to do worse on average than students who take notes with pen and paper. However, if you are caught using your laptop for any other purpose, you will be asked to leave class and forfeit the grade of any assignment you miss. When you use your laptop for social or entertainment purposes, you distract others, and do yourself a disservice. It is **NOT ACCEPTABLE** behavior and it **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED** in my classroom.

Please do not take your phone out at any point during class. If you are caught looking at your phone during lecture, you will be asked to leave class and receive a grade of 0 on any assignment you

miss. If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate you checking your phone during class, please inform me BEFORE the beginning of class.

## **TEXTS**

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

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

10% Forum Posts

You are responsible for posting at least one question or comment in the Forum section of OWL **by the end of every week**. 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. **You will not receive credit for forum posts about lectures you did not attend.**

20% Discussion questions (due in class)

Every lecture, you will be asked to write down answers to topical questions and hand them 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.

15% Dialogue (due October 15<sup>th</sup>)

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. You will be required to write and submit such a dialogue on the topic of our knowledge of the external world.

25% Essay (2000 words, due November 19<sup>th</sup>)

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.

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

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% Draft exam (due December 5<sup>th</sup>)

You will be required to draft a set of exam questions, answers, and a grading rubric that covers material from the entire term. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
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	New Frontiers	BonJour, Ch. 11



The Appendix to Course Outlines is posted on the OWL course site.