

# Knowledge and Reality, Lecture 01

Brian Weatherson

2022-08-29

Logistics

Pasnau

Siegel

Four Issues in Epistemology

# Hello World

- Welcome to **Philosophy** 383 - Knowledge and Reality

# Who We are

Lectures by:

- Brian Weatherson

Discussion sections by:

# Who We are

Lectures by:

- Brian Weatherson
- [weath@umich.edu](mailto:weath@umich.edu)

Discussion sections by:

# Who We are

Lectures by:

- Brian Weatherson
- weath@umich.edu

Discussion sections by:

- Sumeet Patwardhan

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Lectures by:

- Brian Weatherson
- weath@umich.edu

Discussion sections by:

- Sumeet Patwardhan
- sumeetcp@umich.edu

# Logistics

- Two 1.5 hour meetings like we're having now.



# Logistics

- Two 1.5 hour meetings like we're having now.
- One 1 hour discussion section per week.

# Interaction

- One hour out of four being interactive isn't enough.

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- Feel free to put your hand up to ask questions a lot.

# Interaction

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- Feel free to put your hand up to ask questions a lot.
- I will be asking you some questions too.

# Demographics

How many people here are:

- Cog Sci majors?

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- PPE majors?

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- Cog Sci majors?
- PPE majors?
- Philosophy majors?

# Demographics

How many people here are:

- Cog Sci majors?
- PPE majors?
- Philosophy majors?
- Some other major?



# Demographics

How many people here have previously taken:

- 0-1 philosophy classes?

# Demographics

How many people here have previously taken:

- 0-1 philosophy classes?
- 2 philosophy classes?

# Demographics

How many people here have previously taken:

- 0-1 philosophy classes?
- 2 philosophy classes?
- 3-4 philosophy classes?

# Demographics

How many people here have previously taken:


- 0-1 philosophy classes?
- 2 philosophy classes?
- 3-4 philosophy classes?
- 5+ philosophy classes?

# Course Goals




- What are you hoping to get out of the course? Why did you enroll in it?


# Canvas

## Published Courses (10)








**PHIL 296 001 FA 2022**  
PHIL 296 001 FA 2022  
Fall 2022









**Introduction to Formal Methods ...**  
PHIL 305 001 WN 2022  
Winter 2022









**Knowledge and Reality F22**  
PHIL 383 001 FA 2022  
Fall 2022

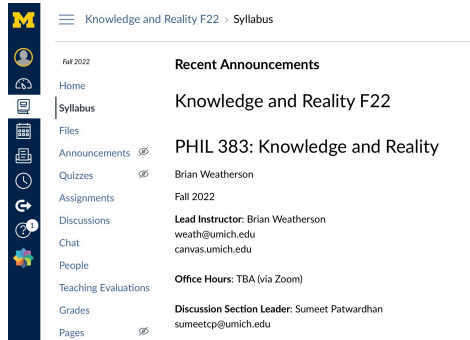




**Groups and Choices W22**  
PHIL 444 001 WN 2022  
Winter 2022



# Syllabus



The image shows a screenshot of a Canvas LMS interface. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with a vertical menu of icons: a large 'M' logo, a person icon, a clock, a document, a calendar, a printer, a clock, a circular arrow, a question mark with a '3' badge, and a group of people. The main content area has a header 'Knowledge and Reality F22 > Syllabus'. Below this is a 'Recent Announcements' section. The main heading is 'Knowledge and Reality F22'. Below that is 'PHIL 383: Knowledge and Reality'. The instructor is listed as 'Brian Weatherson' with email 'weath@umich.edu' and 'canvas.umich.edu'. Office hours are 'TBA (via Zoom)'. The discussion section leader is 'Sumeet Patwardhan' with email 'sumeetcp@umich.edu'. A left-hand navigation menu lists: Home, Syllabus (highlighted), Files, Announcements (with an external link icon), Quizzes (with an external link icon), Assignments, Discussions, Chat, People, Teaching Evaluations, Grades, and Pages (with an external link icon).


**M** Knowledge and Reality F22 > Syllabus


Fall 2022

Home

**Syllabus**

Files

Announcements 

Quizzes 

Assignments


Discussions

Chat

People

Teaching Evaluations

Grades

Pages 

**Recent Announcements**

**Knowledge and Reality F22**

**PHIL 383: Knowledge and Reality**

Brian Weatherson

Fall 2022

**Lead Instructor:** Brian Weatherson  
weath@umich.edu  
canvas.umich.edu

**Office Hours:** TBA (via Zoom)

**Discussion Section Leader:** Sumeet Patwardhan  
sumeetcp@umich.edu

# Slides

- All the slides are on Canvas.



# Slides

- All the slides are on Canvas.
- You don't need to copy down anything that's up here.

# Grading

- Three essays

# Grading

- Three essays
- Three quizzes

# Grading

- Three essays
- Three quizzes
- Discussion section participation

# Co-authorship

- Essays can be co-authored.

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- At most one co-author per paper.

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- Essays can be co-authored.
- At most one co-author per paper.
- Different co-authors for different papers.

# Skills

Why are we going to read about what some 14th century dudes thought?

1. Intrinsically interesting.



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2. Cultural history.

# Skills

Why are we going to read about what some 14th century dudes thought?

1. Intrinsically interesting.
2. Cultural history.
3. Thinking and writing clearly about hard subjects is valuable.

# An Extrinsic Payoff

## DO PHILOSOPHY MAJORS MAKE ANY MONEY?

### Annual Salaries and Salary Growth by Undergraduate Major

Source: "Salary Increase by Major," Wall Street Journal ([http://www.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-Degrees\\_that\\_Pay\\_you\\_Back-sort.html](http://www.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-Degrees_that_Pay_you_Back-sort.html))

#### Annual Salary

Median salary of mid-career graduates  
without higher degrees  
Data collected in 2008

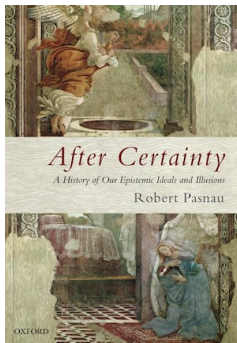
Economics	\$98,600
Engineering	\$93,600
Mathematics	\$92,400
Philosophy	\$81,200
Chemistry	\$79,900
Political Science	\$78,200
Business	\$72,100
History	\$71,000
Biology	\$64,800
English Literature	\$64,700
Art History	\$61,900
Psychology	\$60,400
Sociology	\$58,200

#### Salary Growth

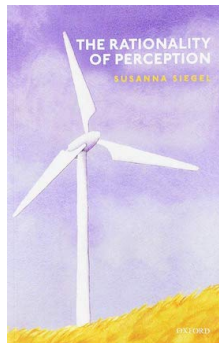
Increase from starting to mid-career median  
salary of graduates without higher degrees  
Data collected in 2008

Philosophy	103.5%
Mathematics	103.5%
Economics	96.8%
Political Science	91.7%
Chemistry	87.6%
Art History	81.3%
History	81.1%
English Literature	70.3%
Engineering	69.1%
Psychology	68.2%
Business	67.7%
Biology	67%
Sociology	59.5%

# The Two Books We're Reading



Pasnau, After certainty



Siegel, Rationality of Perception

Logistics

Pasnau

Siegel

Four Issues in Epistemology

# Belief

Here are some things I believe:

# Belief

Here are some things I believe:

- I have two hands.

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- The Battle of Gettysburg was in 1863.



# Belief

Here are some things I believe:

- I have two hands.
- The Battle of Gettysburg was in 1863.
- Human action is causing global warming.

# Two Questions

Two questions about each of these beliefs:

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1. What would it take for these beliefs to be ideal, and how can we be more like that?

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Two questions about each of these beliefs:

1. What would it take for these beliefs to be ideal, and how can we be more like that?
2. When is the belief good enough to assert/act on/hold?

# Pasnau's Focus

One big theme of his book:

- Philosophers used to care more about the first question, but they came to care more about the second.

# Pasnau's Focus

One big theme of his book:

- Philosophers used to care more about the first question, but they came to care more about the second.
- This was a mistake.

# The Ideal

If you like the first question, then some natural questions arise from it.

- Can we ever be epistemically ideal?

# The Ideal

If you like the first question, then some natural questions arise from it.

- Can we ever be epistemically ideal?
- If so, in what situations can we be ideal? Is it when thinking about mathematics, or our own minds, or, most optimistically, the external world.



# Pasnau

The book is primarily about two time periods:

- Early 14th century; and

# Pasnau

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- Early 14th century; and
- Late 17th century.

# Pasnau

- The body text, which we'll cover, is only about 1/3 of the book.

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- The body text, which we'll cover, is only about 1/3 of the book.
- The endnotes are fascinating, and while I encourage you to read them, they aren't required.

# Pasnau

- The book is very focussed on Western Europe; mostly France and England.

# Pasnau

- The book is very focussed on Western Europe; mostly France and England.
- It's a bit of a pity it didn't do more to connect the debates here to debates in Indian philosophy.

Logistics

Pasnau

Siegel

Four Issues in Epistemology

# An Example



Photographer: Ian Macdonald, 1970s

I'm sick and tired  
of hearing things  
From uptight, short-sighted,  
narrow-minded hypocritics  
John Lennon,  
"Gimme Some Truth"



# Two Epistemic Shortcomings

## 1. Short-sighted

# Two Epistemic Shortcomings

1. Short-sighted
2. Narrow-minded

# Epistemic Vices

If we treat these literally,  
narrow-mindedness is a **vice**,  
while short-sightedness is at worst a **misfortune**.

# A Simple Picture of Empirical Knowledge

1. We get inputs from reality via our perceptual system.

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1. We get inputs from reality via our perceptual system.
2. We use our minds to figure out more things about the world using these inputs.

# Philosophical Differences Between Stages

- If dualism is true, the first is carried out by our body, the second by our mind.

# Philosophical Differences Between Stages

- Even if that's not right, philosophy has something to say about the second, but not really about the first.

# Philosophical Differences Between Stages

- Relatedly, we criticise people for doing badly at the second, but not the first.



# Some Questions

1. Where is the perception/inference boundary?

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1. Where is the perception/inference boundary?
2. What are the inputs that perception provides to inference?
3. Does the postulation of a boundary make sense given modern biological theories?
4. Does the two-stage, dualist, picture make sense?

## Two Radical Views

- Philosophical, evaluative, terms are appropriate either side of the boundary. We can talk about the **Rationality of Perception**.

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- Philosophical, evaluative, terms are appropriate either side of the boundary. We can talk about the **Rationality of Perception**.
- The boundary does not in fact make sense, and should be abandoned as pre-scientific.

# Motivation for Radicalism

Prejudiced seeing

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Four Issues in Epistemology



# Ways of Knowing

- How many distinct ways of knowing are there?

# Ways of Knowing

- How many distinct ways of knowing are there?
- Is testimony one of them?

# Justification

Is having a justified belief more a matter of:

- Having a well-ordered mind?; or

# Justification

Is having a justified belief more a matter of:

- Having a well-ordered mind?; or
- Having a reliable connection to reality?

# Knowledge

- What is the difference between knowledge and lucky guesses?

# Scepticism

- Do we know anything about the external world?

# Scepticism

- Do we know anything about the external world?
- If so, how and why do sceptical arguments fail?

## For Next Time

- We will start a fair way back, with a (very quick!) survey of some issues that come up in Classical Indian Epistemology.