

Las Positas College  
3000 Campus Hill Drive  
Livermore, CA 94551-7650  
(925) 424-1000  
(925) 443-0742 (Fax)

## Course Outline for PHIL 4

### INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY: KNOWLEDGE

Effective: Spring 2019

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

PHIL 4 — INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY: KNOWLEDGE — 3.00 units

Systematic analysis of documents that constitute the major statements in the theory of knowledge. Investigation of the nature of knowledge, truth and belief. Emphasis placed on enabling students to analyze, critique and defend their own systems of beliefs.

3.00 Units Lecture

#### **Strongly Recommended**

- Eligibility for ENG 1A -

#### **Grading Methods:**

Letter Grade

#### **Discipline:**

- Philosophy

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

#### II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

#### III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

**Before entering this course, it is strongly recommended that the student should be able to:**

- A. -Eligibility for ENG 1A
1. Use strategies to assess a text's difficulty, purpose, and main idea prior to the act of reading
  2. Annotate a text during the act of reading
  3. Employ strategies that enable a critical evaluation of a text
  4. Respond critically to a text through class discussions and writing
  5. Use concepts of paragraph and essay structure and development to analyze his/her own and others' essays
  6. Write effective summaries of texts that avoid wording and sentence structure of the original
  7. Respond to texts drawing on personal experience and other texts
  8. Organize coherent essays around a central idea or a position
  9. Apply structural elements in writing that are appropriate to the audience and purpose
  10. Provide appropriate and accurate evidence to support positions and conclusions
  11. Produce written work that reflects academic integrity and responsibility, particularly when integrating the exact language and ideas of an outside text into one's own writing
  12. Utilize effective grammar recall to check sentences for correct grammar and mechanics
  13. Proofread his/her own and others' prose

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

- A. Analyze philosophical statements about knowledge, truth and belief
- B. Explain and evaluate core philosophical texts about the nature of knowledge, truth and belief
- C. Apply epistemological concepts to one's own beliefs and experiences
- D. Evaluate one's personal belief system in light of the history of epistemological ideas
- E. Apply understanding of the limits of knowledge, truth and belief in developing one's own pursuit of knowledge

#### V. CONTENT:

- A. Overview and introduction
  1. Definitions and presuppositions in epistemic enquiry
  2. Historical overview of theories of knowledge, truth and belief
  3. Introduction to major philosopher's writings about knowledge, truth and belief
  4. Intercultural perspectives on the epistemic quest
- B. Core epistemological theories
  1. Rationalism and empiricism
  2. Naturalized epistemology

3. Intuitionism
4. Verificationism
5. Skepticism
6. Relativism, subjectivism and contextualism
7. Pragmatism
8. Coherence
9. Correspondence
10. Virtue epistemology
11. Internalism and externalism
- C. Investigations central to the epistemological project
  1. A priori and a posteriori truth
  2. Analytic and synthetic truth
  3. Necessary and contingent truth
  4. The nature of mind and the limits of knowledge
  5. Language, concepts, meaning, and truth claims
  6. Knowledge and the scientific method
  7. Morality & religion as domains of knowledge

#### VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Instructor-guided discussion
- C. Small group discussion and presentation
- D. Individual research, textual analysis, application and presentation
- E. Video presentations and discussion

#### VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading:
  1. Read the dialog between Glaucon and Socrates in Plato's Republic; be prepared to discuss the relationship between "good" and "knowledge."
  2. Read Berkeley's "A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge;" be prepared to discuss its description of empirical truth.
- B. Writing:
  1. Sample short writing assignment: Write a one- to two-page essay responding to this weeks assigned reading. Essay should contain both personal reactions and critical analyses of the philosophers arguments.
  2. Term papers: Write a Four- to five-page analytical essay discussing the relationship between a priori/a posteriori truth and analytic/synthetic statements in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Give your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with Kant's claim that synthetic a priori truth is possible.
- C. Collaborative learning:
  1. Small group oral presentation of an appropriate epistemological philosopher and his/her central ideas.
  2. Group term project: choose an epistemological system such as skepticism or pragmatism and apply that theory to a specific domain of knowledge. Use the application to draw out what you see as the strengths or weaknesses of that epistemological system.

#### VIII. EVALUATION:

##### **Methods/Frequency**

- A. Exams/Tests
  - one to three midterms and a final exam
- B. Papers
  - three to five
- C. Projects
  - one

#### IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Plato *Protagoras and Meno...*, Penguin Classics, 2006.
2. Descartes, Rene *A Discourse on Method.*, Oxford World's Classics, 2006.
3. Hume, David *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008.
4. Kant, Immanuel *The Critique of Pure Reason.*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
5. Prichard, Duncan. *What is this Thing Called Knowledge?*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2018.
6. O'Brian, Dan. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. 1st ed., Polity Press, 2016.

#### X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: