

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for PHIL 4

INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY: KNOWLEDGE

Effective: Fall 2010

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

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

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

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

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

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

1. analyze philosophical statements about knowledge, truth and belief;
2. explain and evaluate core philosophical texts about the nature of knowledge, truth and belief;
3. apply epistemological concepts to one's own beliefs and experiences;
4. evaluate one's personal belief system in light of the history of epistemological ideas;
5. apply understanding of the limits of knowledge, truth and belief in developing ones 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:

A. **Methods**

1. Exams/Tests
2. Papers
3. Projects

B. **Frequency**

1. Frequency
 - a. One to two midterm exams
 - b. One final exam
 - c. Short writing assignments will be given throughout the course
 - d. One to two term papers
 - e. One to two group projects
 - f. In-class analysis projects at the instructor's discretion

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. Dancy, Jonathan & Ernest Sosa. *Epistemology: An Anthology.*, Wiley/Blackwell, 2008.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: