

PHL 232 H1F: Knowledge and Reality

Instructor: Robbie Matyasi

May-June 2019

- Our meetings will be on Mondays 3-6pm and Wednesdays 3-5pm in SK 548.
- There are two tutorial sections: Wednesdays 5-6pm and 6-7pm, both in SK 346; you must enroll in one or the other (tutorial is mandatory).
- The TA for this course is Melissa Rees: melissa.rees@mail.utoronto.ca. Melissa is your first point of contact on matters related to assignments and tutorials.
- The best way to reach me is by email. My email is robbie.matyasi@mail.utoronto.ca. I should be the person you email about general course matters, lecture, etc.
- My office hours will be Fridays 2-4 in JHB 519. Please come see me at office hours if you have questions or need help! My number one goal is for you to learn, and the material is difficult, so don't feel you need to go through it alone. As a matter of policy, I do not read drafts of essays. However, I'm happy to talk to you about your essay at any stage of the process—if you are deciding which prompt to choose, if you have a vague idea, if you have an outline, etc. I'm also happy to answer questions about course material or go over things again that you are still unsure about.
- We will be using Quercus for course materials: It is your responsibility to check the Quercus page for this course on a regular basis. Assignments will also be submitted via Quercus.

Course description

Welcome to *Knowledge and Reality*!

This course is an introduction to some key issues in two central areas of contemporary philosophy: epistemology and metaphysics. Epistemology is the study of knowledge; metaphysics is the philosophical study of the nature of reality. In the epistemology section we will cover topics such as skepticism, the nature of epistemic justification, reliabilism, contextualism, and truth-tracking accounts of knowledge. In the metaphysics segment we will discuss causation and causal explanations, the nature of time, metaphysical questions concerning material objects, free will, and the possibility of time travel. We will also cover some basic concepts of logic that are necessary to engage with these topics and that will prove to be useful in your future as a student of philosophy and a critical thinker.

The course has no textbook: all readings will be made available electronically through Quercus. I expect you to do the readings closely and attentively *at some time*—you may find it helpful to skim them first and read them in detail after the lectures, whatever suits you best. The readings will be supplemented by a logic primer and lecture handouts summarizing the main arguments and directing your focus to the most essential parts of the readings. The handouts supplement the readings, but you cannot substitute doing the readings by just reading the handouts.

Assignments and exams

All exam material will come from the handouts and the logic primer. Both essays are mainly concerned with arguments found in the readings.

- Mid-term Exam: 22 May (20%)

The mid-term will cover the epistemology section of the course.

- Short Essay: due 2 June (20%)

350–500 words

The short essay is asking to reconstruct an argument from an excerpt selected by me from the readings covered at that point.

- Long Essay: due 14 June (30%)

1000–1500 words

The long essay is asking to (i) reconstruct and (ii) critically evaluate an argument from an excerpt selected by me from the readings covered at that point.

- Final Exam: exam period in June (20%)

The final will cover the metaphysics section of the course.

- Tutorial participation (10%)

Determined by the TA.

Topics and Reading

6 May Introduction: basic logic, skepticism, tripartite account of knowledge

Reading:

- Logic Primer (sections 1-3)
 - Plato, *Theaetetus* (excerpt)
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8 May Problems with the tripartite account; justification

Reading:

- Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
 - Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry* (selection)
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13 May Truth-tracking

Reading:

- Logic Primer (sections 4-5)
- Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (selection)
- Sosa, “How to Defeat Opposition to Moore”

15 May Reliabilism and contextualism

Reading:

- Goldman, “What is Justified Belief?” (selection)
 - Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge” (§1–7, 10, 11, 14, 16)
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20 May No lecture today! (Victoria Day)

22 May Midterm in class

No tutorials today!

27 May Hume on causation

Reading:

- Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (selection)
 - Morris & Brown, “David Hume” (sections 5&6)
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29 May Causation and counterfactual dependence

Reading:

- Lewis, “Causation” (selection)
 - Fine, “Critical Notice of *Counterfactuals* by David Lewis”
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3 June No lecture today!

5 June Causal primitivism

Reading:

- Strawson, “Causation and Explanation”

10 June Time

Reading:

- McTaggart, “The Unreality of Time”
 - Shoemaker, “Time Without Change”
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12 June Persistence

Reading:

- Ney, *Metaphysics: An Introduction* (chapters 3&6)
 - Lewis, “Survival and Identity”
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17 June (Make-up Monday) Persistence continued; Time travel

Reading:

- Ney, *Metaphysics: An Introduction* (chapter 9)
- Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel”

Policies

Respect

In general, I expect you all to be respectful of me, and one another, and I consider it my duty to be respectful of you. This means that you must not interrupt, speak over, or shout down other people in the class. Philosophy (and academic investigation in general) requires a relatively dispassionate, rational engagement with the ideas and arguments of others—both living and dead. The careful but critical evaluation of ideas, arguments, and theories is essential and will be encouraged; insulting, condescending to, or otherwise attacking individuals in this class for their beliefs, views, theories, or for any other reason, will be quashed. Please remember to be courteous, humble, and open-minded. Don’t assume that other people don’t understand the material and that you know everything.

Late work

It is important that you learn to produce work on time—in case this isn't already obvious, completing your assigned work on a set schedule, or for a set deadline, is a feature of succeeding in pretty much any sort of employment (and many other things besides). This is but one reason to insist that you turn in your writing assignments by the deadline. Barring illness or other legitimate excuse, of course. Late assignments will lose a grade for each day (including weekend days and holidays) after the deadline for up to seven days. That is, if you hand in an A paper two days late, it will count as a B+. After seven days, the assignment will receive a grade of zero.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Adapted from the *Instructor's Handbook*:

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your University of Toronto degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviors that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offenses, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document, which is available on the University of Toronto website.

Potential offenses include, but are not limited to:

- On papers and assignments:
 - Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment.
 - Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
 - Making up sources or facts.
 - Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

- On tests and exams:
 - Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
 - Looking at someone else's answers.
 - Letting someone else look at your answers.
 - Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centers, the Academic Success Centre, or the University of Toronto Writing Website, at: writing.utoronto.ca

The common penalty in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences for plagiarism in a written assignment or examination is a grade of 'F' on the individual assignment. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an assignment or cheating on an examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or from all courses taught in this Faculty.

Please see the website of the Office of Student Academic Integrity (OSAI) for more information on academic integrity and plagiarism: artsci.utoronto.ca/osai

Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are very welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible and also get in touch with Accessibility Services. You can call them at 416-978-8060 or go to their website: accessibility.utoronto.ca

Important dates

<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/course/timetable/20195/dates>