

PHI 4300 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Nicholas Power

Course Overview: The course is intended to familiarize you with the major philosophical issues surrounding our knowledge of the world around us (or of our claim to know some fact or other about the world around us). The defining issues in this area of philosophy arise from questions like ‘How do we come to believe some fact regarding, for example, our own state of mind, or another’s state of mind, or the past?’; ‘What distinguishes mere beliefs from full-fledged knowledge?’; ‘Can our knowledge claims in each case be justified in light of the skeptic?’ The arguments and the positions within the theory of knowledge are important in many areas outside of academic philosophy. Issues concerning proper standards of evidence and probity, of the nature of objectivity and information, of intellectual responsibility and education are all foundational to a broad range of studies; from mathematics and the physical sciences to computer design and psychology. In addition to providing you with new perspectives on your chosen field of study, this course affords you the opportunity to reexamine some of our most deeply felt convictions about what we can be certain of, and thus, ultimately, to know yourself better than before

Required Texts:

Louis Pojman: *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 2nd Edition
Louis Pojman: *What Can We Know*, 2nd Edition

Outline of Study:

General Overview
Epistemology as First Philosophy in Plato;
Theories of Truth; Knowledge and Justification-preliminary quandaries
Skepticism – Descartes, Hume
Skepticism – Moore, Lehrer
Knowledge: The Traditional Account; Gettier’s Counter-examples
Knowledge: The Traditional Account Amended; Causal Theories
Justification I: Foundationalism (and other minds)
Justification II: Coherentism (and Circularity)
Justification III: The Internalism-Externalism Debate (Reliabilism and Naturalized Epistemology)
Perception, Idealism and Phenomenalism vs. Realism
Memory
A Priori Knowledge
Epistemic Duties; Religious Knowledge; Alston, Plantinga and Wolterstoff
Naturalized Epistemology and the Feminist and Post-modernist Critique
Research Reports

Homework and Exams: You will be required to either (i) write 3 short (about 3-4 typed pages) response papers on assigned reading materials to be determined by the instructor throughout the term, or (ii) write a 12-15 page research paper on a topic approved by the instructor. Those choosing option (ii), will also present their research findings to the class during deadweek.

Grading Policy: The grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Response Papers/Research Paper & Presentation	50%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Class Participation: Class attendance is a must for successful completion of this course. More than five unexcused absences (or a chronic tardiness condition) through the first half of the course, will result in a recommendation that you withdraw from the course. Your grade for response papers will drop one-third of a letter grade for each class meeting they are late.

All University policies concerning **withdrawal** from the course, **plagiarism** and other forms of cheating, etc. are in full effect. Consult your *Student Handbook* for details.