

Theory of Knowledge

Philosophy 422/522, Spring 2022, W 3:00–5:50 Hudson 0110

This is a survey of some central issues in epistemology. With a couple of exceptions, the readings are all recent and contemporary works.

Professor: P.D. Magnus

E-mail pmagnus<at>albany.edu, Campus phone x2-4223

Office: HU-218

Office hours: Tu 1:30–2:30 (online), Fr 1:30–2:30 (face-to-face), and by appointment

Prerequisites for 422: Introduction to Logic and a 300-level course in philosophy, or permission of instructor.

Course texts: Course readings will be available on the Blackboard page for the course.

I strongly recommend printing out readings from Blackboard. In general, people do not comprehend as well when they read on-screen as when they read on paper. And having a hard copy will allow you to reference it when we are discussing it in class. Regardless of how much time you plan to spend looking at the readings, it will be time better spent if you have a hard copy.

Enough of the readings will come from Miranda Fricker's *Epistemic Injustice* that you may want to get your own copy; Oxford UP, 2007; ISBN 0199570523

Response papers: Students are required to write a 300–500 word critical response to the assigned readings each week. These should be turned in via Blackboard by midnight on **Monday** before the class meeting for which the reading is assigned.

- The simple formula for a reading response is to provide a critical summary: try to state the *central thesis* of the reading and explain briefly what the author is trying to do. Ask yourself: What *reasons* does the author give for believing their thesis? Why do they think it matters?
- A reading response paper should *not* mention everything from the reading, but should instead identify the key issue.
- A response paper which seriously engages with the reading will receive an A. You are not expected to fully understand or master the reading.
- Response papers written after we have met will receive no higher than a grade of C.

Presentation: Students registered for 522 will make a presentation to start the discussion of one of the course readings.

Final paper: Undergraduates (registered for 422) will be required to write 5–8 pages on an assigned topic. Graduate students (registered for 522) will be required to write 10–12 pages on a topic of their choosing.

Grading: Undergraduates (422)
65% Response papers
35% Final paper

Graduates (522)
55% Response papers
10% Presentation(s)
35% Final paper

Participation: Participation in class discussion is expected. Exemplary participation in class discussion will add to your grade, up to two-thirds of a letter grade.

Electronic devices in the classroom: This policy will be discussed and settled upon at the first class meeting.

Academic honesty: You are encouraged to discuss issues from the course with each other and with others outside of class, but you are responsible for their own ideas. Papers should include citations to any works cited or consulted, and they may include acknowledgments of helpful interactions.

Schedule: The following schedule is probably too ambitious. The topics for a given meeting may change as the term progresses.

Week 1: Introduction jan 26

Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

Week 2: Analysis and explication feb 2

Zagzebsky, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"

Nado, "Conceptual engineering, truth, and efficacy"

Week 3: Analysis again feb 9

Blome-Tillman, "Ignorance and Epistemic Contextualism"

Weiner, "The (mostly harmless) Inconsistency of Knowledge Ascriptions"

Week 4: Ethics of belief feb 16

Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"

James, "The Will to Believe"

Week 5: Ethics of belief, continued feb 23

Maruszic, "Ethics of Belief"

Schoenfield, "Meditations on Beliefs Formed Arbitrarily"

Week 6: The nature of belief mar 2

Schwitzgebel, "The Pragmatic Metaphysics of Belief"

Fraser, "The Will in Belief"

Week 7: Ignorance mar 9

Kassar, "What Ignorance Really Is"

Pritchard, "Ignorance and Epistemic Value"

Spring break

Week 8: Ignorance, continued mar 23

Arfini et al., "The Diffusion of Ignorance in On-Line Communities"

Pinto, "Agnotology and the Social Construction of Ignorance in Commercially Driven Research"

Williams, "Motivated Ignorance, Rationality, and Democratic Politics"

Week 9: Epistemic injustice mar 30

Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* pp. 17–29, 43–108

Week 10: Epistemic injustice, continued apr 6

Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* pp. 147–175

Medina, "Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism"

Week 11: Social epistemology apr 13

Ballantyne, "Epistemic Trespassing"

Nguyen, "Transparency is Surveillance"

Week 12: The epistemic community apr 20

Kitcher, "The Division of Cognitive Labor"

Wu and O'Connor, "How Should We Promote Transient Diversity in Science?"

Week 13: Conclusion apr 27