

PHIL 440A sec. 001 Epistemology

Winter Term II, 09-10 (Spring 2010) Class meets Wednesdays 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Buchanan D319

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Course Description

Philosophy 440A (540A) is an advanced, somewhat selective survey of contemporary epistemology. We will begin with the famous debate between Quine and Carnap, and then look at a number of topics including: naturalized epistemology, attempts to justify deduction and induction, arguments for and against external world skepticism, the nature of the a priori, as well as evolutionary approaches to epistemology. I will also introduce Bayesian (probabilistic) approaches to epistemology, and conclude by looking at a couple of challenges from psychology for traditional epistemology, including recent developments in experimental philosophy.

Although philosophy 240A (Knowledge and Reality I) is a prerequisite for the course, it is possible to take this course without having taken 240A. Please check with me.

Text

There is no textbook for the course. Instead, the readings will come primarily from articles that will be available from the library or from the course website (Go to the VISTA home at UBC and use your campus-wide login and click on Phil 440 (or 540, as appropriate). For those interested in buying books, however, there are a number of good introductions to epistemology as well as a number of useful anthologies. You might look at Sosa, Kim & McGrath's *Epistemology: an anthology*, Steup and Sosa's *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology* (we will read a couple of chapters from this), and Crumley's *Readings in Epistemology*.

Course Requirements

(1) 4 Short Papers (5% each)	20%
(2) Presentation and Presentation Paper	20%
(3) Term Paper	45%
(4) Discussion	15%

Marking Scale

90-100% A+	85-89% A	80-84% A-
76-79% B+	72-75% B	68-71% B-
64-67% C+	60-63% C	55-59% C-
50-54% D	0-49% F	

Each of these course requirements is explained below.

Short Papers

Throughout the term you will have the opportunity to write on various readings (see the schedule below). These short papers should be about 2-3 pages in length, with a maximum of 1,000 words. Papers longer than 1,000 words run the risk of being marked down. The papers are due in class. One of the goals of the short papers is to get you to think carefully about some part of the readings *before* it has been covered in class. As a result, these papers may not be turned in late – if you are unable to turn in that day's topic on time, you should write on a different topic. These short papers should attempt to develop an objection to some argument or claim made in one of the articles for that week. The paper does not ultimately have to disagree with the point in the article, but it should exhibit the *critical spirit*. You are free to write papers in any week, except that you must submit at least 2 short papers by March 3rd.

Presentation and Presentation Paper

Each student in the course is required to give one 10 to 15-minute (longer is OK) presentation about some part of one of the readings. The paper should not be purely expository; it should also develop an objection or criticism (though you may argue that the objection can be met by the author you're discussing). You should also raise one or more questions for the class about one of the readings for that week. The presentation should be accompanied by a 4-5 page (double spaced) paper that is due the day of your presentation. At the same time, you should not simply read your presentation paper – you should “talk through” the paper, using a handout or the blackboard, etc. if you need to. I will pass around a sign up sheet for the presentations on the first day.

Term Paper

Each student in the course is required to write a term paper. Students registered in 440A should write an approximately 3,5000 - 4,000 word term paper, whereas students enrolled in 540A are expected to write 5 to 6,000 words. The topic of the paper should be related to one of the course readings or topics. It may be a development of one of your short papers or of your presentation paper. In any event, you must get approval from me for your topic. A paragraph stating your proposed topic is due no later than **Wednesday, April 7th**. As with the presentation paper, the term paper should not merely be expository; it should be a critical examination of some topic covered in the course.

Discussion

You should regularly ask and answer questions in class. You should come prepared having done the readings for any given day, and you are encouraged to ask questions about the other students' presentations. The class is small enough that I expect *not* to lecture regularly – I will make every effort to run the course seminar-style. You can receive an “A” for the class discussion portion of your total mark by asking questions of me or the other students regularly (these questions should be ones that indicate you have done the readings), or by answering questions that I or other students ask in class. Given the nature of our topic and readings, you should have questions about all of the readings. Nothing would please me more than to come into class each day and discover that each one of you has several questions to ask.

Schedule of Topics and Readings: these readings are available on the course web site. Note: like many things in the Universe, subject to possible change

Week and Date	Topic/Assignments	Readings
1 Wed Jan 6	Introduction; positivism; history of epistemology	None
2 Wed Jan 13	Quine-Carnap debate	1. R. Carnap (1950) “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology” in <i>Meaning and Necessity</i> (also reprinted in many metaphysics anthologies – e.g., Kim and Sosa, eds. <i>Metaphysics: an anthology</i> , Blackwell, 1999,) 2. W. V. O. Quine (1951) “On Carnap’s Views on Ontology” in <i>Ways of Paradox and other essays</i> – Harvard University Press, 1966. 3. W. V. O. Quine (1953) “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (<i>From a Logical Point of View</i> Harvard University Press, 1953)
3 Wed Jan 20	Naturalized epistemology – I (Quinean)	1. Quine “Epistemology Naturalized” 2. Quine “The Nature of natural knowledge” 3. Quine “Five Milestones of Empiricism”, 4. Putnam, “Why reason can’t be naturalized”

4 Wed Jan 27	Problem of induction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skyrms – excerpts from <i>Choice and Chance</i> 2. Goodman – excerpts from <i>Fact, Fiction, and Forecast</i> 3. Good-Hempel exchange Good “The white shoe is a red herring”; Hempel “The white shoe: no red herring”; Good: “the white shoe qua herring is pink”
5 Wed Feb 3	Problem of deduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lewis Carroll “What the Tortoise Said to Achilles” 2. Susan Haack “The Justification of Deduction” 3. Paul Boghossian “How are Objective Epistemic Reasons possible?”
6 Wed Feb 10 Spring/Olympics Break	External world skepticism - 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moore “Proof of an External World” (excerpts) 2. Moore “Four Forms of Skepticism” (excerpts) 3. Unger “An Argument for Skepticism” 4. DeRose “Solving the Skeptical Problem”
7 Wed March 3	Contextualism	DeRose, continued, plus: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conee “Contextualism Contested” 2. Cohen “Contextualism Defended”
8 Wed March 10	Closure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dretske “the case against closure” 2. Hawthorne “The Case for closure” 3. Dretske “Reply to Hawthorne”
9 Wed March 17	Other responses to skepticism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pryor “The skeptic and the dogmatist” 2. Vogel “The refutation of skepticism” 3. Fumerton “The challenge of refuting skepticism”
10 Wed Mar 24	The a priori	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bonjour “in Defense of the a priori 2. Devitt “There is no a priori
11 Wed Mar 31	Naturalized epistemology II – Bayesian epistemology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sober “An introduction to Bayesian Epistemology” 2. Sober “The Design Argument” 3. Sober “Likelihood, Model-Selection, and the Duhem-Quine Problem”
12 Wed Apr 7	NE III - Evolutionary epistemology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plantinga “Is naturalism irrational?” 2. Peter Godfrey-Smith “Signal, Decision, Action”
13 Wed Apr 14	Naturalized Epistemology IV: Psychological Critique of Traditional Analytic Epistemology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nichols, Stich and Weinberg “Meta-skepticism: meditations in Ethno-epistemology” 2. Trout and Bishop “The Pathologies of Standard Analytic Epistemology” 3. Alexander & Weinberg “Analytic epistemology and experimental philosophy”