



Epistemology and Metaphysics

Philosophy 350

California State University, Northridge

Spring 2010

Instructor: Tim Black
Class meets: Tuesdays & Thursdays; 4:00 p.m. – 5:40 p.m. in SH 190
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Other hours by appointment
Office: ST 534
Office phone: 818.677.7205
Instructor's email: tim.black@csun.edu

I invite you to visit me during my office hours and to talk with me via telephone or e-mail. I always welcome your comments and questions, and I am exceptionally happy to talk with you about the course material or about other philosophical or administrative matters.

Department office: ST 522
Department phone: 818.677.2757

I will add *no* students to this class this semester (... unless spaces become available. In that case, I will add students who are on the waiting list for the class. I will adjust the order of the waiting list so that it complies with following hierarchy: (1) Philosophy majors who are graduating seniors, (2) philosophy majors who are not graduating seniors, and (3) graduating seniors who are not philosophy majors.)

REQUIRED TEXT

Epistemology: Contemporary Readings, Michael Huemer, editor (Routledge: London and New York, 2002).

AIMS OF THE COURSE: This course is designed to introduce some leading views in a particular branch of philosophy, namely, epistemology, or the theory of knowledge. It also introduces some views in metaphysics that have a bearing on issues in epistemology. We will consider a broad range of topics, but we'll try to do so without sacrificing a consideration of the details. We will address at least the following topics: The nature of sources of knowledge, including the nature of perception, of memory, and of testimony; the structure of knowledge; the analysis of the concept of knowledge; and skepticism. These are among the general aims of the course: to hone both your ability to read and your ability to understand philosophical texts, your ability to discuss the issues addressed in those texts, your ability to write about philosophical issues, and your ability to write in general.

ATTENDANCE: Since you are responsible for any and all material presented in class, and since each class represents an important opportunity to discuss the material, regular attendance is essential to doing well in the course.

Friday, February 5, 2010 is the last day this semester to register late, to add a class using a permission number, to drop a class, or to change basis of grading. After that date, according to CSUN's policies, "[c]hanges in academic schedules [...] are rarely approved and only in cases where the student can provide written proof of

extraordinary circumstances that have arisen from events beyond his or her control.” For more information, see the page at <http://www.csun.edu/a&r/soc/adjsched.html>. If you enroll in a course and do not officially drop it, you will remain enrolled and will receive a grade, even if you never attend. There are no “automatic” drops, and I cannot drop you from any of my classes.

POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF COMPUTERS DURING CLASS: *You may not use a computer of any sort during class.* This means that, during class, you may not use the computers at your desks in SH 190, you may not use your own laptop computer, you may not use someone else’s laptop computer, and so on.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have a disability, please identify yourself to me and to the university so that we can reasonably accommodate your learning and the preparation and evaluation of the work that you must do for this course. Please contact Disability Resources and Educational Services, Bayramian Hall 110, 818.677.2684 (fax: 818.677.4932; email: dres@csun.edu). For more information, visit DRES’s website at the following address: <http://www.csun.edu/dres/index.php>.

EVALUATION: Your final grade in the course will be based on the following:

4 papers	20% each
Participation	20%

GRADES: I will use the plus/minus grading system. Letter grades are assigned according to the following system:

100-92% = A	86-83% = B	76-73% = C	66-63% = D
91-90% = A-	82-80% = B-	72-70% = C-	62-60% = D-
89-87% = B+	79-77% = C+	69-67% = D+	59-0% = F

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: I consider academic dishonesty a very serious issue. If you are unclear about what constitutes academic dishonesty or about the possible repercussions of and penalties for acts of academic dishonesty, please consult the California State University, Northridge Student Conduct Code (see <http://www.csun.edu/a&r/soc/studentconduct.html>). Moreover, I subscribe to and will enforce CSUN’s Policies on Nondiscrimination and Student Conduct as they are stated in Appendices D and E of the California State University, Northridge University Catalog (see <http://www.csun.edu/catalog/appendices.html>).

PAPERS: You are required to write four papers, on topics of my choosing. Each paper should be between 1400 and 1750 words in length (or between 4 and 5 pages long). For each of the four paper assignments, you will choose between two topics, each of which has its own due date. So, for example, there are two topics, A and B, for Paper #1, and you must write on *just one* of these. If you choose Topic A, your paper is due Tuesday, February 9, 2010 at 4:00 PM; if you choose Topic B, your essay is due Thursday, February 18, 2010 at 4:00 PM. See the schedule (below) for more details. *I will accept no paper submitted after its due date; that is, a paper submitted after its due date will earn none—0%—of the points available for that assignment.*

I will evaluate each of your four papers on the basis of the quality of the arguments you provide in favor of your position. More specifically, your paper (a) must be well organized and readable, (b) must demonstrate your ability to provide charitable and reasonable interpretations of the philosophical arguments we encounter, (c) must demonstrate your ability to provide reasonable critical evaluations of those arguments, and (d) must demonstrate your ability to present and defend your own reasonable and persuasive philosophical argument.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation grade will be based on the following: Your participation in class discussions and in some cases, perhaps, the quality of your participation in class discussions; your

completion—and, again, in some cases, your successful completion—of in-class projects, activities and assignments. Should you miss, due to absence *etc.*, an in-class project, activity or assignment, you may not make it up. *You may submit an in-class project, activity or assignment only during the class meeting when it was assigned.*

EXTRA CREDIT: I will assign *no* extra-credit work. There is nothing that you, individually or collectively, can do for extra credit. This means that you should concentrate on the *credit* assignments; you should make every effort to do as well as you can on the exams and on the projects. I will ignore requests that I receive via e-mail for extra-credit work.

SCHEDULE		
INTRODUCTION	January 19	Introduction to the course
PERCEPTION	January 21	John Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , pages 32-36 George Berkeley, <i>Of the Principles of Human Knowledge</i> , pp. 37-45
	January 26	George Berkeley, <i>Of the Principles of Human Knowledge</i> , continued David Hume, “Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy,” pp. 46-50
	January 28	Thomas Reid, <i>Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man</i> , pp. 51-63 Bertrand Russell, <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> , pp. 64-73
	February 2	Bertrand Russell, <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> , continued J. L. Austin, <i>Sense and Sensibilia</i> , pp. 74-84
MEMORY	February 4	Bertrand Russell, “Memory,” pp. 88-90 Norman Malcolm, “A Definition of Factual Memory,” pp. 91-103
	February 9	John Pollock and Joseph Cruz, “Reasoning and Memory,” pp. 104-112 PAPER #1, TOPIC A DUE
	February 11	FURLOUGH DAY
	February 16	Michael Huemer, “The Problem of Memory Knowledge,” pp. 113-123
TESTIMONY	February 18	John Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , pp. 219-220 David Hume, “Of Miracles,” pp. 221-233 PAPER #1, TOPIC B DUE
	February 23	Thomas Reid, <i>Inquiry into the Human Mind</i> , pp. 234-238 C. A. J. Coady, “Testimony and Observation,” pp. 239-249
THE ARCHITECTURE OF KNOWLEDGE	February 25	Sextus Empiricus, “The Five Modes,” pp. 372-374
	March 2	I. T. Oakley, “An Argument for Scepticism Concerning Justified Beliefs,” pp. 375-386
	March 4	Laurence Bonjour, <i>The Structure of Empirical Knowledge</i> , pp. 387-401 PAPER #2, TOPIC A DUE
	March 9	William Alston, “Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?,” pp. 402-416
	March 11	FURLOUGH DAY
	March 16	Susan Haack, “A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification,” pp. 417-431 PAPER #2, TOPIC B DUE
THE ANALYSIS OF “KNOWLEDGE”	March 18	A. J. Ayer, “Knowing as Having the Right to be Sure,” pp. 440-443
	March 23	Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?,” pp. 444-446
	March 25	Alvin Goldman, “A Causal Theory of Knowing,” pp. 450-463 PAPER #3 TOPIC A DUE
	March 30	Keith Lehrer and Thomas Paxson, “Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief,” pp. 464-474
	April 1	Robert Nozick, “Knowledge,” pp. 475-490 PAPER #3, TOPIC B DUE
	April 6	SPRING RECESS

THE ANALYSIS OF “KNOWLEDGE”	April 8	SPRING RECESS
	April 13	Keith DeRose, “Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions,” pp. 491-506
SKEPTICISM	April 15	René Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , pp. 513-523
	April 20	Hilary Putnam, “Brains in a Vat,” pp. 524-538
	April 22	FURLOUGH DAY
	April 27	Fred Dretske, “The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge,” pp. 539-551
	April 29	Peter Klein, “Skepticism and Closure: Why the Evil Genius Argument Fails,” pp. 552-574 PAPER #4, TOPIC A DUE
	May 4	Michael Huemer, “Direct Realism and the Brain-in-a-Vat Argument,” pp. 575-589
	May 6	PAPER #4, TOPIC B DUE

NOTE: Everything in this syllabus, *including the reading assignments, exam dates, and the paper assignments and due dates*, is subject to revision. I will announce any and all revisions in class and, in general, do my best to make sure that everyone knows about revisions. If you miss class, you must nevertheless submit assignments according to any revisions that I make to the Schedule. You should either make sure that you don’t miss class or find a sure way of becoming aware of any revisions that I make to the Schedule or to the syllabus.