

PHIL 4203/5203: Theory of Knowledge

Fall 2006

MWF 2:30–3:20

MAIN 327

Jack Lyons

MAIN 312; MWF 10:30–11:30 or by appointment

575-5825

jclyons@uark.edu

Introduction: In this course, we will look at a number of competing contemporary answers to the central questions in epistemology: What if anything, do we really know? What is the difference between knowledge and lucky guessing? Under what conditions is it reasonable, responsible, or justifiable to believe something? Special attention will be given to the major theories: foundationalism, coherentism, and reliabilism.

Required Books: Sosa and Kim, *Epistemology: an anthology*
Feldman, *Epistemology*

Requirements: Grades will be assigned on the basis of two in-class written exams, a paper, and a final exam, each worth 25% of your grade. The paper will be an argument/position paper, 5–8 pages for undergraduates; 8–12 for grad students. Thoughtful contribution to class discussions is expected, though it won't be explicitly enforced by way of grades. There will be additional readings and meetings (roughly every two weeks) for the graduate students.

Policies: Lectures will sometimes introduce material that is not in the readings. You are responsible for finding out what transpired in any class that you have missed. All submitted work must be your own. Plagiarism will be punished to the full extent of university policy. Any sources outside of the ones assigned for the class must be cleared with me beforehand. Make-ups will be granted only under dire, documented circumstances and when requests are made ahead of time. I do strongly encourage you to talk to me outside of class. My scheduled office hours are listed above, but I'm around most of the time and am happy to have you drop in or make an appointment.

Schedule of Events: The readings listed should be read before the dates given below. I've arranged the readings in an approximate order in which they should be read, but I will often discuss several readings from a given section concurrently. The following is subject to change. Readings from the Feldman book are listed by chapter; readings from the anthology are listed by author and title.

Introduction

Aug. 21–23 Feldman Ch. 1

Knowledge

Aug. 25–Sep. 18 Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”; Feldman Ch. 2, 3, 5 (except pp. 90–99); Klein, “A Proposed Definition of Propositional Knowledge”; Harman, selections from *Thought*; Nozick “Knowledge” (pp. 79–86); Plantinga, “Warrant: a First Approximation”

Skepticism

Sep. 22–Oct. 11 Stroud, “Problem of the External World”; Unger, “An Argument for Skepticism”; Feldman Ch. 6–7; van Cleve, “Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle”; Nozick, “Skepticism” (pp. 86–95); Derose, “Solving the Skeptical Problem”

Evidentialist theories

Oct. 16–Nov. 6 Feldman Ch. 4; Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism”; Chisholm, “The Myth of the Given”; Bonjour, “Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?”; Davidson, “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge”; probability handout; Haack, “A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification

Nonevidentialist Theories

Nov. 8–29 Feldman Ch. 5 (pp. 90–99); Goldman, “What Is Justified Belief?”; Goldman, “Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology”; Conee and Feldman, “The Generality Problem for Reliabilism”; Alston, “How to Think About Reliability”

Naturalized Epistemology

Dec. 1–4 Feldman Ch. 8; Putnam, “Why Reason Can’t Be Naturalized”

Important Dates: There will be exams at the end of the first two sections; the paper will be due the Friday before Thanksgiving break. These dates are again subject to change.

Exam 1	Sep. 20
Exam 2	Oct. 13
Paper	Nov. 17
Final	Dec. 7