PHIL 4203/5203: Theory of Knowledge
Fall 2006
MWF 2:30–3:20
MAIN 327

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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

Evidentialist theories

Nonevidentialist Theories

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