

Theory of Knowledge---Fall 2013---Aron Edidin

HCL 7, Tuesdays and Fridays 1:00 - 2:20

My office is ACE 234.

Office hours: 2:30-3:30 Tuesdays and Fridays, or by appointment

edidin@ncf.edu

x4248 (or call me at home, 11AM - 11PM only, please)

Text (anthology): Bernecker and Dretske, eds. *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology*

Readings from outside of this anthology are linked-to in the syllabus below. Links to articles should work anywhere just by clicking. Links to e-journals will work just by clicking on campus; from off campus you'll need first to go through the library's "connect from home" procedure (following links on the library web and portal pages) in another tab or window.

Written assignments for the course are described in Sec. 9, below.

The **attendance policy** for the course is described in Sec. 10, below.

A **description of New College's policy on disability accommodation** is in Sec. 11, below.

The information shown on this page can also be found as a Word document here. Note: the Word syllabus will not be updated during the semester. For up-to-date information, use the syllabus in Newdle.

Here's a link to the [Florida Student Philosophy Blog](#).

Here's a link to [the New College booklet on plagiarism](#), which explains the concept and has a variety of advice about ways of citing sources.

Here are three links to philosophical glossaries, one a real glossary and the other two full of philosophical inside jokes:

[A Philosophical Glossary for Beginners](#) (A real glossary. Good to look at for paper-writing; warns against several common mistakes of usage)

[The Philosophical Lexicon](#) (Puns on philosophers' names)

[A Non-Philosopher's Guide to Philosophical Terms](#) (Jokes that contrast non-philosophers' and philosophers' use of terms)

Introduction and Historical Sketch

Tuesday, 8/27: General introduction

Friday, 8/30: On Studying Philosophy, and Historical Background to Recent Epistemology
[Douglas Soccio, "Philosophy Courses"](#) (link to article)

The Analysis of Knowledge: the Gettier Problem

Tuesday, Sept. 3: The Gettier Problem

A.J. Ayer, "Knowing as Having the Right to be Sure" (#1 in anthology)
Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (#2 in anthology)
(After reading the Gettier article, take a look at [this](#).)

Friday, Sept. 5: Two Kinds of Response

Alvin Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing" (#4 in anthology)
Keith Lehrer and Thomas Paxson, "Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief" (#5 in anthology)

Tuesday, Sept. 10: Methodological Directions

[Sally Haslanger, "What Knowledge Is and What it Ought to Be"](#) (link to e-journal)

Justification I: Foundationalism, or What?

Friday, Sept. 13: Phenomenalistic Foundationalism

Roderick Chisholm, "The Directly Evident" (#18 in anthology)

Tuesday, Sept. 17: Problems for Foundationalism

[Jane Duran, "Two Arguments Against Foundationalism"](#) (link to e-journal)
[Laurence Bonjour, "Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?"](#) (link to e-journal)

Friday, Sept. 20: Coherentism

Laurence BonJour, "The Elements of Coherentism" (#11 in anthology)

Tuesday, Sept. 24: The Best of Both Worlds?

[Susan Haack, "Double-Aspect Foundherentism"](#) (link to e-journal)

Friday, Sept. 27: Virtue Epistemology

[Lorraine Code, "Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology"](#) (link to e-journal)

Justification II: Internalism and Externalism

Tuesday, Oct. 1: An Externalist Perspective

Alvin Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge" (#8 in anthology)

Friday, Oct. 4: Problems for Externalism

Laurence BonJour, "Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge" (#14 in anthology)

Tuesday, Oct. 8: *A Social Dimension*

[Miranda Fricker, "Scepticism and the Genealogy of Knowledge"](#) (link to e-journal)

Friday, Oct. 11: *Another Externalist Approach*

[Ruth Millikan, "Naturalist Reflections on Knowledge"](#) (link to article)

Tuesday, Oct. 15 and Friday, Oct. 18

Fall Break

Epistemology and the Empirical Investigation of Knowledge

Tuesday, Oct. 22: *Epistemology Naturalized*

W.V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" (#20 in anthology)

Jaegwon Kim, "What is 'Naturalized Epistemology'?" (#21 in anthology)

Friday, Oct. 25: *Normativity, Epistemology, and Psychology*

[Carole Lee, "Applied Cognitive Psychology and the "Strong Replacement" of Epistemology by Normative Psychology"](#) (link to e-journal)

Tuesday, Oct. 29: *Some Complications - The Shifting Scientific Context*

[Phyllis Rooney, "Putting Naturalized Epistemology to Work"](#) (link to article)

Epistemology, Gender, and Politics

Friday, Nov. 1: *Reason: Universal Ideal or Masculine Ideal?*

[Phyllis Rooney, "Gendered Reason"](#) (link to e-journal)

Tuesday, Nov. 5: *Emotion and Knowledge*

[Richmond Campbell, "The Virtues of Feminist Empiricism"](#) (link to e-journal)

[Here's a link to Elizabeth Anderson's Stanford Encyclopedia article on Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science](#)

The End of Epistemology?

Friday, Nov. 8

[Richard Rorty, "From Epistemology to Hermeneutics"](#) (link to article)

[Aron Edidin, "What's An Epistemologist To Do?"](#) (link to e-journal)

Possibly also of interest:

[Aron Edidin, "Eternal Verities: Timeless Truths, Ahistorical Standards, and the One True Story"](#) (link to e-journal)

Topics and Readings Chosen By Class

Tuesday, Nov. 12 --

First part of final projects due! Remember to include a completed [writer review form](#).

Friday, Nov. 15

Veterans' Day. No class meeting. Consider the challenges of thinking well and finding and using information under pressure of combat.

Tuesday, Nov. 19 --

Term paper drafts due! Remember to include a completed [writer review form](#).

Bring two extra copies of your term paper draft or final project part 1 for the other members of your group (for discussion next time)!

Friday, Nov. 22

Discussion of first parts and term paper drafts. Bring **two copies** (*one for me and one for the author*) of completed [peer review forms](#).

Second part of final projects due!

Tuesday, Nov. 26 --

Friday, Nov. 29

Thanksgiving holiday. Contemplate knowledge of cookery and proper digestive function.

Tuesday, Dec. 3 --

Monday, Dec. 9

Third part of final projects due! Term papers due! Remember to include a completed [writer review form for Pt. 3](#) (for 3-part projects) or [writer review form for revisions](#) (for term papers).

Written work for Theory of Knowledge

The following written work is required for this course:

(1) Three discussion questions, typewritten and submitted each day on that day's reading,

(2) Six two- to four-page response/reaction papers,

and

(3) A three-part final project (for less experienced philosophy students) or term paper (for more experienced philosophy students).

Discussion Questions: Three short questions (one sentence each) **on each day's reading, turned in that day** (typewritten).

Five Response/Reaction Papers: Each response/reaction paper must be submitted on the day we discuss the relevant selection in class, and only one paper may be submitted for each class meeting. At least **two must be submitted by September 24, four by the end of Mod 1, and all five by November 8.** The assignment of response/reaction papers is borrowed from Professor Catherine Elliott; the following description is taken from the syllabus for her Seminar on Rationality:

"A response/reaction paper is not a description or summary, and in particular, it is not a "book report". As the name suggests, each paper should represent your response/reaction to some aspect of the reading which interests/intrigues/concerns/engages you. But: analyze; make a point; express an argument or dispute one. Consider these response/reaction papers as opportunities for intellectual creativity and thoughtful experimentation, rather than as exercises to be produced according to some formula for "right" thought or analysis. Think about what you are reading, attempt to explore new implications and connections to previously held beliefs. If you find yourself "stuck", one technique is to grapple with parts of the readings which you find disagreeable or irritating. However, do not simply identify these parts -- if you challenge an idea, propose a counter and defend it. Ideally, each paper should have only one primary focus. The maximum page limit is four -- thus, you should work hardest to provide depth for your response/reaction -- as opposed to free-association of a myriad of things."

Two Perfect Paragraphs: At least **one must be submitted by the end of Mod 1, and both by November 8.** The assignment of perfect paragraphs is borrowed from Professor Robert Zamsky; the following description is taken from his courses:

"Paragraphing is a fundamental component of successful writing, and learning how to consistently write good paragraphs, even when dealing with material that is complex or simply voluminous, also helps to develop focus and organization. You all know the basic fundamentals of a paragraph: a topic sentence, support and evidence, and a conclusion. The trick is to consistently work with this structure, while, at the same time, not turning into a robot.

I will evaluate your paragraphs based upon the following criteria:

Content: does the paragraph make a clear, relevant, and convincing point about the reading?

Structure: do the topic sentence, support, and conclusion cohere? Could any of them be usefully expanded, or, alternately, be trimmed down?

Clarity: Style and mechanics count. You should shoot for content rich sentences that do not include extraneous words. Be both precise and economical with your language.

The paragraph must not exceed 275 words."

Final Project (for less experienced philosophy students): This project will involve writing and then further reflecting (in writing) on what you have written. The project consists of three short (ca. 6 page) papers:

(1) A paper on a topic of your choice. Explain and defend a philosophical conclusion of your own, on an issue discussed in or suggested by course readings or class discussions. The purpose of the paper is to develop your thinking about the issue, though you should also show that you are aware of relevant discussions in the readings. You may, if you so choose, proceed by describing and criticizing, extending, or developing the approach of an author we've read. But you are not required to do so. The focus should be on your own reasoned evaluation of the issue. **This part is due at the start of class on November 12, and should be accompanied by a completed [Writer Review Form](#).**

(2) A paper on the same topic, but taking a position contrary to the one you take in Part 1. You may address Part I directly, or just defend a contrary conclusion in an independent paper. Stick with arguments and positions that you think are plausible, but don't be afraid to adopt for the sake of argument views you don't actually hold. **This part is due at the start of class on November 22.**

(3) A final (for the time being) discussion of the issue you've chosen, in light of (1) and (2). This paper should, like (1), reflect your own actual view of the issue at the time you're writing. It may involve defending the view you developed in (1) against the criticism contained in (2). It may involve further explanation or development of your initial view. Or it may involve modifying or even abandoning your initial view. **This part is due on December 9 (Monday of exam week), and should be accompanied by a completed [Writer Review Form for Part 3](#).**

Term Paper (for more experienced philosophy students): A long (ca. 15-20 page) paper on a topic of your choice. Explain and defend a philosophical conclusion of your own, on an issue discussed in or suggested by course readings or class discussions. The purpose of the paper is to develop your thinking about the issue, though you should also show that you are aware of relevant discussions in the readings. Although you will almost certainly be discussing other authors in the course of the paper, the focus should be on your own reasoned evaluation of the issue. **A complete draft of the paper is due on November 19 (accompanied by a completed [Writer Review Form](#)), and the final version is due on Monday of exam week (December 9), accompanied by a completed [Writer Review Form for Revisions](#).**

Attendance Policy

To complete this course satisfactorily, you may miss no more than 3 class meetings. Very rarely, additional absences may be permitted in cases of genuine emergency.

NCF Statement on Disability Accommodation

Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with the Students with Disabilities Services office (SDS) in order to receive special accommodations and services. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor as soon as possible if a reasonable accommodation for a disability is needed for this course. An official memo of accommodation from the NCF Disability Services Office should be presented

to the instructor. The SDS office is located within the Counseling and Wellness Center (www.ncf.edu/disability-services-ncf). Reasonable notice should be given for accommodations to be arranged with Disability Services (typically 5 business days). Contact information: Jeannette Corredor, Ph.D. [941-487-4254](tel:941-487-4254).