

# PHI 4300 Theories of Knowledge

University of Central Florida  
College of Arts and Humanities  
Department of Philosophy  
Spring 2024

*Instructor* Prof. Jonathan Barker  
*Email* Jonathan.Barker@ucf.edu  
*Phone* (919) 358-3414  
*Office* PSY 232  
*Office Hours* Monday 2:30pm—3:30pm; Friday 2:30pm—4:30pm

## Course Description

Classical and contemporary theories of knowledge. A critical examination of various forms of, and reasons for, skepticism, criteria for truth and justification for belief. Questions include: What makes knowledge more valuable than mere true belief? Do I know I'm not a brain in a vat? Can I know something without having any evidence for it? Can it be morally wrong to believe something? When is it rational to rely on the testimony of other people? How can I avoid getting trapped in an online echo chamber? When and why does learning about the genealogical origins of my religious, moral, or political beliefs undermine their rationality?

## Texts

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings will be provided electronically.

## Assessment

- Participation (10%)  
Active participation is essential to your success in this course. Please speak up during class as often as you can. Here are some ways to do that: respond to a question, raise an objection, follow-up on another student's comment, or ask a simple clarification question (ex. "Can you explain X again?" or "What does X mean?").
- 2 Tests (50% total)  
Two in-class exams, worth 25% each. Questions will be a combination of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short essay questions. I will provide more information about format and content a couple of weeks before the first exam.
- 3 Papers (40% total)  
Three medium-length (4—6 pp. double-spaced) argument analysis papers.
  - Paper 1 (5%)
    - Topics: the value problem *or* epistemic normativity
    - Due date: Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm via Webcourses
  - Paper 2 (15%)
    - Topics: echo chambers *or* testimonial injustice
    - Due date: TBD
  - Paper 3 (20%)
    - Topics: final TBD course topic *or* a topic of your choice
    - Due date: TBD

## Attendance Policy

You are allotted **four** penalty-free absences throughout the semester, which you can take whenever you want, for whatever reason, and without notifying me ahead of time. However, every subsequent unexcused absence will adversely affect your final course grade in the following manner: the first additional unexcused absence lowers your course grade by 1 percentage point, the next absence lowers your course grade by 2 percentage points, the third by 3 percentage points, the fourth by 4 percentage points, and so on. I will use the UCF Here app to take attendance at the beginning of every class.

## Make Up Policy

Please let me know if you must miss an exam due to an official university activity or a religious holiday. We will find an alternative date and time that fits your schedule. Unfortunately, I cannot accept late or make up papers except in extraordinary circumstances.

## Accessibility Policy

I am committed to providing accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are eligible for accommodations, please contact UCF's Student Accessibility Services by phone at (407) 823-2371, by email at [sas@ucf.edu](mailto:sas@ucf.edu), or in Ferrell Commons 185. Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

## Academic Integrity Statement

Academic misconduct of any sort will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with Section I of UCF's Rules of Conduct. Here is the University's description of the potential consequences of academic misconduct: "Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a "Z" designation on one's transcript. Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc."

## Schedule of Readings<sup>1</sup>

### Week 1: The Value of Knowledge

M 1/8	W 1/10	F 1/12
<b>Course Overview</b>	<b>The Value Problem</b>	<b>The Value Problem</b>
N/A	Plato, <i>Meno</i> 96d—98b (pp. 88—90)	Plato, <i>Meno</i> 96d—98b (pp. 88—90)

### Week 2: The Extent of Knowledge

M 1/15	W 1/17	F 1/19
<b>MLK Day</b>	<b>APA Eastern</b>	<b>Cartesian Infallibilism</b>
No Class	No Class	Descartes, <i>First Meditation</i>

### Week 3: The Extent of Knowledge

M 1/22	W 1/24	F 1/26
<b>External World Skepticism</b>	<b>External World Skepticism</b>	<b>Dogmatism</b>
Stroud, “The Problem of the External World”	Stroud, “The Problem of the External World”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moore, “Proof of an External World”</li> <li>• Moore, “Four Forms of Skepticism”</li> </ul>

### Week 4: The Structure of Knowledge

M 1/29	W 1/31	F 2/2
<b>Closure</b>	<b>The Regress Problem</b>	<b>Foundationalism</b>
Dretske, “Epistemic Operators”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sextus Empiricus, “Outlines of Pyrrhonism” (selections)</li> <li>• Chisholm, “The Myth of the Given”</li> </ul>	Chisholm, “The Myth of the Given”

### Week 5: The Analysis of Knowledge

M 2/5	W 2/7	F 2/9
<b>Against Foundationalism</b>	<b>Test #1</b>	<b>Gettier Cases</b>
BonJour, “Does Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?”	N/A	Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

### Week 6: The Analysis of Knowledge

M 2/12	W 2/14	F 2/16
<b>The Causal Theory</b>	<b>Reliabilism</b>	<b>Truth-Tracking</b>
Goldman, “A Causal Theory of Knowing”	Goldman, “Discrimination and Perceptual Experience”	Nozick, “Knowledge and What we Would Believe”

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<sup>1</sup> Note: this schedule is **tentative**. It is subject to change based on student needs, instructor illness, or weather-related disruptions. I will distribute an updated schedule if and when such changes occur.

Week 7: Internalism and Externalism

M 2/19	W 2/21	F 2/23
<b>Internalism</b>	<b>Internalism</b>	<b>Externalism</b>
Feldman & Conee, "Evidentialism"	Feldman & Conee, "Evidentialism"	Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"

Week 8: Epistemic Virtue

M 2/26	W 2/28	F 3/1
<b>Test #2</b>	<b>The Value Problem Again</b>	<b>Virtue Epistemology</b>
N/A	Zagzebski, "The Search for the Source of the Epistemic Good"	Zagzebski, <i>Virtues of the Mind</i> (selections)

Week 9: Epistemic Normativity

M 3/4	W 3/6	F 3/8
<b>Moral vs Pragmatic Norms</b>	<b>Moral vs Pragmatic Norms</b>	<b>Epistemic Norms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"</li> <li>James, "The Will to Believe"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"</li> <li>James, "The Will to Believe"</li> </ul>	Chisholm, "Epistemic Terms"

Week 10: Epistemic Normativity

M 3/11	W 3/13	F 3/15
<b>Encroachment</b>	<b>Encroachment</b>	<b>Conflict</b>
Fantl & McGrath, "Evidence, Pragmatics, and Justification"	Fantl & McGrath, "Evidence, Pragmatics, and Justification"	Basu, "The Wrongs of Racist Belief"
N/A	N/A	Paper #1 due

Week 11: Spring Break

M 3/18	W 3/20	F 3/22
<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
N/A	N/A	N/A

Week 12: The Epistemology of Testimony

M 3/25	W 3/27	F 3/29
<b>Testimony</b>	<b>Echo Chambers</b>	<b>Echo Chambers</b>
E. Fricker, "The Epistemology of Testimony"	Nguyen, "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles"	Nguyen, "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles"

Week 13: The Epistemology of Testimony

M 4/1	W 4/3	F 4/5
<b>Testimonial Injustice</b>	<b>Testimonial Injustice</b>	<b>Hermeneutic Injustice</b>
M. Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> Ch 1	M. Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> Ch 1	M. Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> Ch 2
N/A	N/A	Paper #2 due

Week 14: TBD by Class Vote

M 4/8	W 4/10	F 4/12
<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>
TBD	TBD	TBD

Week 15: TBD by Class Vote

M 4/15	W 4/17	F 4/19
<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>
TBD	TBD	TBD

Week 16: Wrap-up and conclusion

M 4/22
<b>TBD</b>
TBD