

TEACHING DOSSIER

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Table of Contents

Teaching statement.....	1
Diversity statement.....	2
Notes on Syllabi	3
Syllabi.....	4-32
Previously Used	
PHIL 4040—Varieties of Skepticism (Fall 2018).....	4-9
Sample Syllabi.....	10-31
Sample Syllabus—Knowledge, Mind and Reality (200-Level).....	10-13
Sample Syllabus—Introduction to Formal Logic (200-Level).....	14-16
Sample Syllabus—Information Ethics (200-Level).....	17-19
Sample Syllabus—Epistemology (300-Level).....	20-23
Sample Syllabus—Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics (300-Level).....	24-27
Sample Syllabus—Trust in the Digital Age (400-Level).....	28-30
Sample Syllabus—The Epistemology of Self-Knowledge (Graduate).....	31-32
Teaching Evaluations.....	33-36
As Course Director	
PHIL 4040—Seminar in Contemporary Philosophy (Fall 2018).....	33
As Tutorial Instructor	
PHIL 1100—The Meaning of Life (Fall 2014, Fall 2016)	34
PHIL 2100—Introduction to Formal Logic (Winter 2016, Fall 2017).....	35
Solicited Anonymous Feedback	
For PHIL 4040.....	36

Teaching Statement

New students of philosophy often express unease about how *abstract* philosophical inquiry and argumentation can be. Sympathetic as I sometimes am to these worries, I prefer to emphasize philosophy's *universality*. In doing so I take a page from Wilfrid Sellars, who once wrote that the project of philosophy "is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term" (1962, p. 35). So understood, the philosopher's penchant for abstraction can be better appreciated as a desire for far-reaching syntheses of knowledge and understanding. My syllabi are designed with this in mind, even as I acknowledge that philosophical progress is made slowly and in small increments.

A recent example comes from my *Varieties of Skepticism* seminar, which I conducted at York University in the fall of 2018. In the first leg of the seminar I brought my students up to speed with classic Pyrrhonian and Cartesian skeptical problems in epistemology. The discussions that I had with my students, though immensely gratifying in their own right, became far more enriching once we turned to a discussion of moral skepticism in the latter half of the seminar. Many of the theories of epistemic justification discussed earlier in the seminar seemed to run into problems in the moral case, where it has been a prevailing issue whether and how we can know objective moral truths, if not by common epistemic routes like perception or testimony. Epistemological issues that initially struck some of my students as hopelessly abstract were eventually shown to bear in important ways on their flesh and blood moral lives.

Sometimes, of course, the connections between highly theoretical philosophy and everyday life really are hard to ascertain. I am, for this reason, conscious of the anxieties my students may face when confronting dense philosophical material. New students of formal logic provide a perfect case study. Having served as a tutorial instructor and lecturer to over two hundred students on the subject, I have learned how important it is to emphasize the fact that, despite the alien-looking syntax of derivations and truth tables, these are simply formal representations of reasoning capacities that my students already possess. Here, more than elsewhere, I find it useful to utilize pop-cultural examples that tie arguments—and hence argument forms—to recognizable human faces. This is especially fun to do with the ubiquitously bad reasoning of iconic characters like Homer Simpson and Mac McDonald.

I am also cognizant of philosophy's need to constantly envision new entry points into the discipline for young students. I believe that current issues in social and digital epistemology provide this opportunity. Two examples come from my aforementioned seminar. First, my students and I discussed how social media platforms and content-recommending algorithms can ensnare internet users in epistemic echo chambers. Second, we discussed how norms of testimony can be bent by features of our online environments, taking "retweets" as a key example. Retweets, it has been observed, are acts of information-sharing that are *not quite* assertoric in nature, as evidenced by the common refrain "retweets are not endorsements". The ambiguity of the retweet and the pervasive role of content-recommending algorithms in our everyday lives show how our information channels are being influenced—not always for the better—by rapidly evolving technologies. In more recently developed syllabi, I have begun to include materials that address nearby issues like fake news, anonymity, and privacy online.

My teaching experiences have prepared me to teach across broad range of philosophical subjects, including core and social epistemology, formal and informal logic, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics and metaethics. I have also received a Senior Record of Completion in Pedagogical Research from York University.

Diversity Statement

Educators in the modern university must explicitly defend diversity in the face of rising fascist, populist movements across the world. Perhaps the most central feature of a commitment to diversity is a commitment to equality, understood as a commitment to the equal moral significance of all persons. But what it is to uphold such a commitment is no simple matter, for it is not enough to append calls for respectful participation to the last page of a syllabus. A commitment to *proactively* foster conditions for equal participation among diverse bodies of moral equals is essential. One must call out injustice where one sees it. One must create spaces for the shy and the anxious. Equality must emerge as a substantive fact about our relationships to one another both inside and outside the classroom.

No doubt, fostering diversity is morally obligatory. But it is also epistemically indispensable. I am guided here by my belief that minority and marginalized persons are often in the best position to acquire certain knowledges or exercise certain agencies, precisely in virtue of their minority or marginalized personhood. They are often in the best position, for instance, to navigate environments structured by unjust power differentials, or to analyze our concepts of class, gender, and race in the service of ameliorative conceptual engineering. None of this means embracing a pernicious relativism about truth or knowledge. Rather, my view is that an educator who acknowledges irreducible differences of epistemic standpoint is better able to honor and enhance the moral and epistemic agency of his or her students. For it is only once we acknowledge differences of standpoint that we can proactively seek out the unique epistemic resources that different participants can bring to philosophical discourse. In saying this, I do not commit myself to the view that *every* area of philosophical discourse can *always* be made sensitive to the epistemic particularities of its participants. Nevertheless, I believe that appreciating this basic insight encourages greater epistemic humility for all involved, and that *this much* is of universal discursive importance.

These lessons are especially worth heeding for educators—like myself—who engage chiefly with the Western philosophical tradition. The canon of Western philosophy, as most now freely acknowledge, has been scaffolded atop a history of affluent white education, and so presents a legacy of systematic exclusion. Granted, there have been major improvements to the diversification of syllabi—and to the philosophy departments that teach them—in recent years. Still, our history is our history, and it is liable to impose itself on us whenever we are not careful to reflect, from time to time, on its influence. A commitment to diversity in what one teaches, and to the worthiness of differently bodied and socially situated persons, is a form of protection against Western philosophy's relapse into its exclusionary past. More than this, it is a commitment to improving the richness and depth of philosophical discourse. Discourse that consists of an insufficiently wide range of perspectives is discourse that quickly grows insular and stale. One looks to the history of Western philosophy and finds, for all its richness, plenty of insularity and staleness that is worth combatting.

While completing my dissertation, I have been routinely encouraged by the fact that the majority (in my view) of top-tier epistemologists writing about self-knowledge are brilliant women. I am also finding that the task of diversification in philosophy is being made easier for all of us on a number of fronts, especially as epistemology increasingly embraces its social turn, and as increasingly diverse kinds of people begin to contribute to contemporary debates in metaethics, the philosophy of mind, and beyond. I will continue to include these voices in philosophical conversation. With any luck, my students will do the same.

Notes on Syllabi

- 1) No two syllabi of mine replicate the exact same assignment structure. I tailor my assignments to my perception of each course's difficulty.
- 2) To save space within this dossier, only the first syllabus listed contains standard sections on academic policy, reading access, inclusivity/respectful participation, etc.
- 3) The reader can assume that syllabi with reading schedules spread across 24 lectures are modeled on the assumption that these courses will consist of two weekly meetings of ~90 minutes each, while syllabi with reading schedules spread across 12 lectures are modeled on the assumption that these courses will consist of one weekly seminar-style meeting of ~180 minutes each. Each syllabus can be modified depending on whether a host institution's semesters are longer or shorter than 12 weeks.

PHIL4040–Contemporary Philosophy: Varieties of Skepticism (Fall 2018)

Instructor: Benjamin Winokur
Office hours / location: by appointment //
Ross South 414d

Contact e-mail: ben.i.winokur@gmail.com
Class time / location: Wednesdays, 2:30-
5:30PM, Ross South 421

Course Description: Philosophical skeptics argue that we lack knowledge, and perhaps cannot possibly have it, of various phenomena. This course offers a survey of skeptical positions within contemporary epistemology. We begin with skeptical views about the very possibility of knowledge generally. We then turn to skeptical arguments concerning knowledge of the external world, knowledge of other minds, and knowledge of our own minds. Next we examine skeptical views about normative reality, such as the view that we cannot know whether there are moral truths. Finally, we conclude with an exploration of skepticism about testimony in the so-called fake news era. Throughout the seminar, we will think about the skeptic’s place in philosophy. Can we really be expected to believe the conclusions of skeptical arguments? Are skeptical theories just ‘abstract’ puzzles that are of no consequence to our daily lives?

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- 1) Understand and engage with contemporary skeptical arguments in epistemology
- 2) Compose arguments for or against contemporary skeptical views in epistemology

Assignments

In-Class / Appointment Participation & Attendance—(10%)

You must make a concerted effort to participate in class discussions frequently throughout the seminar. Participation can take a variety of forms, so long as you are actively engaged with your peers, myself, and the course materials. Meeting by appointment also counts toward participation. Your grade is evaluated based on participation quality and frequency.

Online Participation—(10%):

You will be asked to participate in weekly Moodle discussions, where you must produce comments or ask questions regarding the readings prior to class. These will be addressed in class discussion / online. *Each week, discussion questions and comments must be posted no later than three hours prior to class.* You must participate in at least 7 Moodle discussions. This portion of the grade is evaluated holistically: factors such as post frequency, quality, punctuality, and civility are all considered.

Two Short Essays / One Long Essay—(45%)

You have two options for submitting essay work toward your final grade. On the first option, you will write two short essays near the middle and end of the semester. The first short essay will be between 1500-1800 words (excluding bibliography); it is worth 20% of your final grade. The second short essay will be between 1800-2100 words (excluding bibliography); it is worth 25% of your final grade. Possible topics will be suggested for both essays, and you must speak with me in advance if you desire to write on a different topic.

On the second option, you will write one long essay to be submitted near the end of the course. The long essay will be between 3500-4200 words (excluding bibliography) and will be worth 45% of your final grade. Possible topics for the long essay will be suggested, and you must speak with me in advance if you desire to write on a different topic.

Essay Proposal(s)—(5%)

If you elect to write two short essays, you must provide me with a 300-word proposal for each essay. Each Proposal must include (A) a thesis statement, and (B) a brief description of a central argument you are critiquing / defending. Each proposal is due one week before the corresponding paper is due. Each proposal is worth 2.5% of your final grade.

If you elect to write one long essay, you must submit a 600-word proposal which includes (A) a thesis statement, and (B) a brief description of a central argument you are critiquing / defending. This proposal is due two weeks before the essay is due. It is worth 5% of your final grade.

Reflection Pieces—(10%):

Twice throughout the term, you must submit to me a 300-600 word reflection piece on a course reading. Your reflection can offer a criticism of the reading, or you can ask questions relating to possible further research on a relevant theme. So long as the contents of your reflections are philosophical and go beyond mere exegesis, the particulars are for you to decide. Each reflection is worth 5% of your final grade.

You can submit a reflection piece in one of two ways: the first way is to submit it to me at the *beginning* of the seminar where the reading you have reflected on is being discussed. If you do this, I grade the assignment with the understanding that your thoughts have been developed without the benefit of class discussion. Alternatively, you can submit the piece to me any time before the *subsequent* seminar begins. If you submit this way, I grade your piece with the understanding that you have had additional time / intellectual resources with which to write it.

In-Class Quizzes—(20%):

Five times throughout the term, you will be given ten minutes to answer one or two short questions related to that day's readings. Quizzes are aimed at testing content comprehension. Four of your five best quiz grades will each be worth up to 5% of your final grade.

Seminar Schedule

All course readings will be available via Moodle unless otherwise indicated

September 5th

Seminar 1: Introduction

***Suggested Readings*:** §1 of “Skepticism” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) entry by Peter Klein; “Characterizing Skepticism’s Import” by Jill Rusin

September 12th

Seminar 2: Knowledge Skepticism

Readings: “Contemporary Responses to Agrippa’s Trilemma” by Peter Klein; “The Pyrrhonian Problematic” by Markus Lammenranta

September 19th

Seminar 3: External World Skepticism (1)

Readings: “Meditations” I-II by René Descartes (public domain); Chapters 1&2 of “The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism” by Barry Stroud (available as an e-book through the York library website)

September 26th

Seminar 4: External World Skepticism (2)

Readings: “Skepticism and Realism” by John Heil; “Wittgenstein on Knowledge and Certainty” by Danièle Moyal-Sharrock

October 3rd

Seminar 5: External World Skepticism (3)

Readings: “Brains in a Vat” by Hilary Putnam; “Epistemology Externalized” by Donald Davidson

October 10th

Reading week (no class!): ***FIRST SHORT ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE***

October 17th

FIRST SHORT ESSAY DUE

Seminar 6: Other Minds Skepticism (1)

Readings: “Other Minds” SEP entry by Alec Hyslop, §1 & §3.1; “The Analogical Inference to Other Minds” by Alec Hyslop & Frank Jackson; “The Scientific Inference to Other Minds” by Robert Pargetter

October 24th

Seminar 7: Other Minds Skepticism (2)

Readings: “Perception and Other Minds” by Fred Dretske; “Testimony and Other Minds” by Anil Gomes

October 31st

Seminar 8: Self-Knowledge Skepticism (1)

Readings: “Telling More than We Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes.” By Richard Nisbett and Timothy Decamp Wilson; “The Unreliability of Naïve Introspection” by Eric Schwitzgebel

November 7th

Seminar 9: Self-Knowledge Skepticism (2)

Readings: “Confabulation Does Not Undermine Introspection” by Adam Andreotta

November 14th

Seminar 11: Normative Skepticism (1)

Readings: Chapter 1 (abridged) of “Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong” by John Mackie

November 21st

Seminar 11: Normative Skepticism (2)

Readings: “Pain for the Moral Error Theory? A New Companions in Guilt Argument” by Guy Fletcher;
“Evolutionary Debunking of Moral Realism” by Katia Vavova

November 28th

LAST CLASS: *SECOND SHORT ESSAY PROPOSAL & LONG ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE *****

Seminar 12: Skepticism in the Digital Age

Readings: “Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles” by C. Thi. Nguyen; “Fake News and Partisan Epistemology”
by Regina Rini

December 5th

*****SECOND SHORT ESSAY DUE*****

December 12th

*****LONG ESSAY DUE*****

Lateness and Extension Policy

All late assignments will receive a penalty of 5% per day unless an extension has been granted or you produce exculpatory documentation (such as medical documentation or other information of sufficient personal significance). If you require an extension on a deadline for any assignment, your request must be made *at least 3 days* before it is due.

Academic Integrity

All students must be aware of and comply with York University's academic integrity policy: <https://www.library.yorku.ca/web/research-learn/academic-integrity>

Here are some additional notes about academic integrity in PHIL 4040:

- 1) Plagiarism refers to any case where an author takes material from a source without citing it. Even if you *accidentally* fail to cite a source, doing so counts as plagiarism. Likewise, if you accidentally send me a plagiarized paper, you have plagiarized.
- 2) *Self-plagiarism is plagiarism*. If you have past work of your own that you wish to draw from while working on an assignment, speak with me first.
- 3) Footnotes, endnotes, and in-text citations are all legitimate ways of citing a source. Whenever possible, please provide page numbers for the cited passage(s).
- 4) Please also include bibliographies at the end of your essays. You may use any humanities-specific format as long as you use only one per assignment.
- 5) In general, acceptable *primary research sources* are scholarly works from academic journals, books, and anthologies. Student essays that do not engage sufficiently with primary sources *will* be downgraded accordingly on relevant assignments.
- 6) Sparknotes is not a scholarly source and should not be consulted in your research.
- 7) Wikipedia and Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) entries, while generally high quality, are considered *secondary sources* that do not excuse you from also consulting primary sources in your research.
- 8) Alongside Wikipedia and SEP, there are other legitimate secondary sources that you may consult for your course work, such as uploaded presentation slides from authors whose work has since been published in scholarly venues, or whose reputation as a published author legitimates (to some extent) their unpublished work. Please consult me if you are unsure about the integrity of any such source.
- 9) I will never adjust grades upwards just because you ask nicely.

Email / Appointment Policies

E-mails may take me up to 24 hours to respond to. If I do not respond within 24 hours, please send me another e-mail. Please include the course code PHIL4040 in the subject line of all emails. Please note your name at the beginning of the body of all e-mails.

Please book appointments at least 2 days in advance to meet by appointment. Meeting by appointment is the best way for you to have your philosophical inquiries answered in detail.

Moodle

All students enrolled in this course are automatically added to a Moodle page (<https://moodle.yorku.ca>). All announcements related to the course will be posted there. It is imperative that you check Moodle often. To login, use your York ID and password.

Useful Resources

Students with disabilities or other issues are strongly encouraged to discuss their issues with me and/or to use the services provided by York University's counseling and disability services:

- 1) York's Learning Disability Services: <http://lds.info.yorku.ca>
- 2) York's Personal Counselling Services: <http://pcs.info.yorku.ca>
- 3) York's Crisis Intervention Services: <http://pcs.info.yorku.ca/in-case-of-crisis/>

For additional help:

- 1) On Writing Philosophy: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- 2) On Reading Philosophy: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Inclusivity and Participation Policies:

In seminar, you are expected to act courteously toward your peers. This, I hope, is obvious, but it is worth stressing some particulars:

- 1) You are expected to pay attention to people when they speak. It is my view that using electronics while others are talking clearly indicates disinterest and disrespect. I reserve the right to ban electronic interfaces from use in class if students become serially distracted by their presence. Exceptions may be made for students who have *demonstrable need* of said devices for educational purposes, but note that there is ample research to suggest that the use of electronics in class actively harms yours and others learning *even when used for educational purposes* (see the following link):

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vmQ548UJ0WnoSwkfREU3iR-m2Co1xTWzGkhcv6bFbY8/edit#slide=id.g23ec572590_0_9

- 2) If you enter into conflict with me or another student, I ask that you bring it to my attention before allowing things to escalate. I encourage you not to worry about accusing me of problematic behaviour. You will not offend me, and I will not penalize you for challenging my authority. I am unwaveringly committed to reflecting on my conduct as an educator and human being. Nobody is perfect. Let us try to learn from each other.

Sample Syllabus—Knowledge, Mind, and Reality (200-Level)

Course Description: this is an introduction to epistemology, philosophy of mind, and metaphysics. Epistemology is, roughly, the study of the nature of knowledge and surrounding questions, such as when and how we can have justified beliefs about the world around us. The philosophy of mind is, roughly, the study of the nature and capacities of mentality and the relationship of the mental to the physical. Metaphysics is, roughly, the study of the structure of reality and surrounding questions, such as what aspects of reality are ‘fundamental’, if any. In this course we will survey various issues in these philosophical domains, using both contemporary and historical sources.

Assignments

(1) Attendance—(10%)

An attendance sheet will be passed around during each lecture. You will fill in your student number and sign the sheet when it is passed to you. You are entitled to three unexcused absences throughout the semester, though please note that excuses *are* required for missed test dates.

(1) Reflection Pieces—(15%):

Three times throughout the term, you must submit a 200-300 word reflection piece on a course reading. Your reflection can, for example, offer a criticism of an argument in the reading, or an interpretation of a cryptic passage. So long as the contents of your reflections are philosophical and go beyond mere summary of the text, the particulars are for you to decide. Each reflection is worth 5% of your final grade.

You can submit a reflection piece in one of two ways: the first way is to submit it at the *beginning* of the lecture where the reading you have reflected on is being discussed. If you do this, your piece is graded with the understanding that your thoughts have been developed without the benefit of the lecture. Alternatively, you can submit the piece to me any time before the *subsequent* lecture begins. If you submit this way, your piece is graded with the understanding that you have had additional time and resources with which to write it.

(4) Tests—(40%):

There will be two tests, one at the end of our readings on epistemology and one at the end of our readings on philosophy of mind and metaphysics. These tests will contain some mixture of true or false questions, matching questions, multiple choice questions, and short answer questions. Each test is worth 20% of your final grade. Each test will be preceded by a brief review session. You can ask me any question you like during this time, though the tests are closed-book.

(5) Exam—(35%):

Your final exam will consist of a combination of true or false questions, matching questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and long answer questions.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

Week 1

Lecture 1: Introduction

Suggested Reading—chapter 13 “The Value of Philosophy” from Bertrand Russell’s *The Problems of Philosophy*

Lecture 2: On Knowledge (1)

Selections from Plato’s *Theaetetus*; “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” by Edmund Gettier

Week 2

Lecture 3: On Knowledge (2)

“The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” by Linda Zagzebski

Lecture 4: External World Skepticism (1)

René Descartes Meditations 1-3

Week 3

Lecture 5: External World Skepticism (2)

Excerpts from J. L. Austin’s *Sense & Sensibilia*; Hilary Putnam’s “Brains in a Vat”

Lecture 6: Inductive Skepticism (1)

§2&4 of Hume’s *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Week 4

Lecture 7: Inductive Skepticism (2)

“The ‘justification’ of Induction” by Sydney Shoemaker

Lecture 8: Feminist Epistemology (1)

“Women’s Experience as a Radical Critique of Sociology” by Dorothy Smith

Week 5

Lecture 9: Feminist Epistemology (2)

“Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?” by Lorraine Code

Lecture 10: Philosophy and the Knower (1)

“White Ignorance” by Charles W. Mills

Week 6

Lecture 11: Philosophy and the Knower (2)

“White Ignorance” (continued); “Inheriting Patricia Hill Collins’s *Black Feminist Epistemology*” by Kristie Dotson

Lecture 12: Brief review period and epistemology test

Week 7

Lecture 13: Metaphysics and Ontology (1)

“On What There Is” by W.V.O Quine

Lecture 14: Metaphysics and Ontology (2)

“On What There Is” by W.V.O Quine (cont.); “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” by Donald Davidson

Week 8

FIRST PAPER DUE

Lecture 15: Mind-Body Dualism (1)

René Descartes’ Meditation 6; refresh yourself on Meditations 1-3

Lecture 16: Mind-Body Dualism (2)

Selections of Elisabeth of Bohemia’s correspondences with Descartes

Week 9

Lecture 17: Idealism (1)

§1-33, Part I of George Berkeley’s *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*

Lecture 18: Idealism (2)

Chapters 3 and 4 of Bertrand Russell’s *The Problems of Philosophy*

Week 10

Lecture 19: Physicalism

“Sensations and Brain Processes” by J.J.C Smart; “The Content of Physicalism” by J.J.C Smart

Lecture 20: Personal Identity (1)

“Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons” by Derek Parfit

Week 11

Lecture 21: Personal Identity (2)

“Personal Identity in African Metaphysics” by Leke Adeole

<p>Lecture 22: Metaphysics of the Social (1)</p> <p>“Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” By Sally Haslanger</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Week 12</p> <p>Lecture 23: Metaphysics of the Social (2)</p> <p>“The Metaphysics of Social Kinds” by Rebecca Mason</p> <p>Lecture 24: Brief review session and metaphysics test</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DATE TBA [1 week after end of semester]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">***SECOND PAPER DUE***</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DATE TBA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">***FINAL EXAM***</p> <p>Time: TBA</p> <p>Place: TBA</p>

Some advice on reading philosophy: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Sample Syllabus—Introduction to Formal Logic (200-Level)

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the study of formal logic, which is the study of the formal features of arguments (as structure) and argumentation (as activity). We will focus on the basic features of so-called *deductive* arguments and argumentation, and on the various ways in which these can go wrong.

Assignments

(1) Weekly Assignments—(25%)¹:

You will be asked to complete an assignment which you will submit to me [or to a tutorial leader] at the beginning of the first lecture [or tutorial] of each week, with the exception of the first week. 8 of your 11 best grades will contribute to your final grade, with a maximum grade of 3% being awarded per assignment. Because this only totals up to 24%, a final 25th mark will be granted to students who complete 10 or more of these assignments. The grading scheme is as follows: 0/3 for incomplete, 1/3 for insufficient effort, 2.5/3 for sufficient effort with any number of mistakes, and 3/3 for sufficient effort with no mistakes.

(2) Test #1—(15%):

During lecture 12 you will take a test on all the materials learned from lecture 1 to lecture 11. You will have 90 minutes to complete the test.

(3) Test #2—(20%):

During lecture 24 you will take a test on all the materials learned from lecture 13 to lecture 23. You will have 90 minutes to complete the test.

(4) Final Exam—(40%):

You will have to take a final exam during the final exam period at the end of the semester. The exam will consist of a combination of questions of the sorts encountered on tests #1 and #2. Thus, **it is cumulative**, which is to say that it will feature materials from the entire course.

If you score below 60% on either or both of tests 1 and 2, you may opt to have your final exam grade count for 50% rather than 40% of your final grade. Correspondingly, your lowest grade from among tests 1 and 2 be worth 10% less of your final grade.

¹ This grade will be adjusted to 15% (10x 1.5%) to accommodate a 10% tutorial attendance requirement in the event that tutorials are available at the host institution.

Lectures and Readings	Assignments
Lecture 1: no assigned readings	<i>No assignments</i>
Lecture 2: <i>Logic</i> §1.1-1.5	
Lecture 3: <i>Logic</i> chapter 1 §VI-VIII Lecture 4: <i>Logic</i> chapter 2 §I-III	Due Lecture 3: <i>Identifying valid arguments</i> exercise, to be handed out in lecture.
Lecture 5: <i>Logic</i> chapter 2 §I-V Lecture 6: <i>Logic</i> chapter 2 §VI-VII	Due Lecture 5: from <i>Logic</i> 2.1 #1— (i)-(v) 2.2 #1— 1, 2 2.1 #3— 1, 2, 4
Lecture 7: <i>Logic</i> chapter 2 §VIII-X *§XI optional Lecture 8: <i>Logic</i> chapter 3 §I-III	Due Lecture 7: from <i>Logic</i> 2.4 #1—1, 2 2.4 #2— (i)-(ii) 2.7 #1— 1, 2
Lecture 9: <i>Logic</i> chapter 3 §IV-VI Lecture 10: <i>Logic</i> chapter 3§VII-VIII	Due Lecture 9: from <i>Logic</i> 3.1 #1— 1 3.2 #1— 2 3.3 #1— 1 3.4 #2— 1 3.6 #1— 1
Lecture 11: ***review session*** Lecture 12: ***Test #1***	Due Lecture 11: <i>Formalizing arguments from ‘It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia’</i> : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRNO1LFQBWI
Lecture 13: <i>Logic</i> chapter 4 §I-V Lecture 14: <i>Logic</i> chapter 4 §VI-IX	Due Lecture 13: from <i>Logic</i> 4.1 #1— 1, 4, 9 <i>*save picture of your truth tables for next week’s exercise!</i>
Lecture 15: <i>Logic</i> chapter 5 §I-III Lecture 16: <i>Logic</i> chapter 5 §IV-V	Due Lecture 15: from <i>Logic</i> 4.4 #1— 2 4.2 #1— <i>only check</i> 1, 4, 9 from 4.1 4.3 #1— 4 4.4 #4— 1
Lecture 17: <i>Logic</i> chapter 5 §VI-VIII Lecture 18: <i>Logic</i> chapter 5 §IX-XII	Due Lecture 17: from <i>Logic</i> 5.3 #1— (i), (iii), (viii) 5.5 #1— (i), (ii)
Lecture 19: <i>Logic</i> chapter 5 §XIII Lecture 20: <i>Logic</i> chapter 6 §I-II	Due Lecture 19: from <i>Logic</i> 5.10 #1—(i)-(v)
Lecture 21: <i>Logic</i> chapter 6 §III-V Lecture 22: <i>Logic</i> chapter 6 §VI	Due Lecture 21: from <i>Logic</i> 6.1 #1— 1 6.2 #1— 3 6.3 #1— 4

Lecture 23: *** <i>review session</i> *** Lecture 24: *** <i>Test #2</i> ***	Due Lecture 23: from <i>Logic</i> Chapter 6 revision exercise #1— 1, 2 Chapter 6 revision exercise #2— 3 Chapter 6 revision exercise #3— 3
Final Exam Date: TBA Place: TBA	

Sample Syllabus—Information Ethics (200-Level)

Course Description: In this course we explore various issues within the field of information ethics. Many of these issues are also issues in the philosophical subdiscipline known as epistemology. Our primary guides will be two recent books: *The Internet of Us* by Michael Lynch, and *The Misinformation Age* by Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall. Questions to be pursued include: in what ways do our intellectual lives improve or suffer through the use of information-gathering resources like Google and Youtube? How do we know who to trust online? Is social media making it harder for us to sort out good from bad information? Who should be accountable for stopping the spread of fake news online: individuals, corporations, governments, or some combination of these? Is fake news a threat to democracy? Is the internet a danger to our privacy? If it is, should we care?

Assignments

(1) Weekly Reflections—(30%):

Each week I will assign you a 150 to 200-word reflection assignment. I will describe these at the end of the first lecture of each week (though you can get a brief sense of what they are like by looking at the reading/assignment schedule below), and you will submit them to our online discussion board no later than two hours before the second lecture of each week. You are required to complete 10 out of 12 reflections. Each reflection is worth up to 3% of your final grade. The grading scheme is as follows: 0/3 for no submission, 1/3 for a poor submission, 2.5/3 for a good quality submission, and 3/3 for an exceptional submission.

(2) Test #1—(15%):

After we discuss the final chapter of *The Internet of Us*, you will take a test where you answer various questions about the book. The questions will consist of a combination of true/false, matching, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

(3) Test #2—(15%):

After we discuss the final chapter of *The Misinformation Age*, you will take a test where you answer various questions about the book. The questions will consist of a combination of true/false, matching, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

(4) Social Media Experiment—(5%):

Are you a Facebook / Instagram user? Do you use your phone too much? Deactivate your account(s) for 72 hours at any point during the semester and write me a 300 to 600-word reflection about your experience. The grading scheme is as follows: 0/5 for incomplete, 3.5/5 for complete, and 5/5 for excellent.

(5) Podcast Project—(5%):

Identify a podcast that addresses themes relevant to some aspect of our course materials. Listen to the podcast and write out your interpretation of its main arguments. Send me a link to the podcast when you submit your assignment. The grading scheme is as follows: 0/5 for incomplete, 3/5/5 for complete, 5/5 for excellent.

(6) Final Paper—(30%):

You must write a 1500 to 2000-word paper. It is due a week after our final lecture. The paper can address a question of your own choosing, so long as it directly relates to course material. Alternatively, you can select from a list of topics that I will provide near the end of the semester.

Lectures and Reading Schedule	Assignments
<p>Lecture 1: no assigned readings</p> <p>Lecture 2: Chapter 1 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p>	<p>Lecture 2 Reflection: big data for good, big data for evil</p>
<p>Lecture 3: Chapter 2 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p> <p>Lecture 4: Chapter 3 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p>	<p>Lecture 4 Reflection: are you convinced that “google-knowing” is a problem?</p>
<p>Lecture 5: Chapter 4 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p> <p>Lecture 6: Selections from “Testimonial Injustice” by Miranda Fricker</p>	<p>Lecture 6 Reflection: “whatever, bot!” – thinking about testimonial injustice online</p>
<p>Lecture 7: Chapter 5 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p> <p>Lecture 8: Chapter 6 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p>	<p>Lecture 8 Reflection: two choices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Online privacy: who cares? 2) Does Google know things?
<p>Lecture 9: Chapter 7 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p> <p>Lecture 10: Chapter 8 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p>	<p>Lecture 10 Reflection: understanding versus knowledge—an important difference?</p>
<p>Lecture 11: Chapter 9 of <i>The Internet of Us</i></p> <p>Lecture 12: Test #1</p>	<p>Lecture 12 Reflection: answering some yes/no questions</p>
<p>Lecture 13: Introduction of <i>The Misinformation Age</i></p> <p>Lecture 14: Chapter One of <i>The Misinformation Age</i></p>	<p>Lecture 14 Reflection: the vegetable lamb—recent examples? <i>Cui Bono?</i></p>

<p>Lecture 15: Chapter Two of <i>The Misinformation Age</i></p> <p>Lecture 16: Chapter Two of <i>The Misinformation Age</i> (continued)</p>	<p>Lecture 16 Reflection: conformity bias—recent examples?</p>
<p>Lecture 17: Chapter Three of <i>The Misinformation Age</i></p> <p>Lecture 18: Chapter Three of <i>The Misinformation Age</i> (continued)</p>	<p>Lecture 18 Reflection: big tobacco—delving further</p>
<p>Lecture 19: Chapter Four of <i>The Misinformation Age</i></p> <p>Lecture 20: Chapter Four of <i>The Misinformation Age</i> (continued)</p>	<p>Lecture 20 Reflection: considering the possibility of grassroots democracy</p>
<p>Lecture 21: “How to Fix Fake News” by Regina Rini; “How do we Pry Apart the True and Compelling from the False and Toxic?” by David V. Johnson</p> <p>Lecture 22: “The Alt-Right Playbook: How to Radicalize a Normie” by <i>Innuendo Studios</i> (youtube channel); “Escape the Echo Chamber” by C. Thi Nguyen</p>	<p>Lecture 22 Reflection: two choices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Individual responsibility and fake news 2) Individual responsibility and echo chambers
<p>Lecture 23: Test #2</p> <p>Lecture 24: grab bag! (choose our topics)</p>	<p>Lecture 24 Reflection: takeaways</p>

Sample Syllabus—Epistemology (300-Level)

Course Description: This is an intermediate course in epistemology, which is the study of theories of knowledge. In this course we will investigate questions such as the following: what is knowledge? Can we know anything? If so, *how* can we know things? How, if at all, can we know *that we know*? How should we think about the similarities and differences between knowing *that something is true* and knowing *how to do something*? How does one's social position affect what one is able to know? When experts disagree, what should they (and us) believe? Can we ever *decide* to believe something? If our beliefs are by and large determined by the times in which we live, how much should we trust our beliefs?

Assignments

(1) Quizzes—(25%):

Five times throughout the semester, you will be asked to take a short, five to ten minute quiz at the end of lecture. The quiz will assess your comprehension of the lecture and reading materials. The questions will be some combination of true/false, fill-in-the-blanks, matching, or multiple choice. Each quiz is worth 5% of your final grade.

(2) Reflection pieces—(20%):

Four times throughout the term, you must submit a 300-word reflection on a course reading. Your reflection can offer a criticism or develop an argument from a course reading. Alternatively, it can do something entirely different, as long as it does not merely summarize the reading or ask lazy-seeming questions like “what does the author mean by X?” (Such questions are not entirely out place, but you should also at least attempt to answer them for yourself!)

You can submit these pieces in one of two ways. First, you can submit it on the day that the reading your piece discusses is being discussed in lecture. Second, you can submit your piece up to one week after we have discussed it in lecture. The grading on the first method is less intense, but it also means that your piece will not benefit from the knowledge you acquire about it from lecture.

(3) Papers #1 and #2—20% each

About halfway through the semester, and at the end of the semester, you will submit a paper of up 1200-1500 words excluding bibliographic materials. Topics will be provided in advance.

(5) Attendance and Participation—(15%):

An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of each lecture. Students are entitled to up to three unexcused absences. Full attendance amounts to 10% of this grade. Regular participation provides the other 5%.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

Lecture 1
Lecture: Introduction – a brief overview
*Recommended Reading: “Epistemology” §1.1 of Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online); “Preface to The Second Edition” in <i>Epistemology: An Anthology</i>
Lecture 2
Lecture: Cartesian Skepticism (1)
Reading: Meditations I-II by René Descartes (public domain); “The Problem of the External World” by Barry Stroud
Lecture 3
Lecture: Cartesian Skepticism (2)
Reading: “Proof of an External World” by G.E. Moore
Lecture 4
Lecture: The Analysis of Knowledge (1)
Reading: “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” by Edmund Gettier
Lecture 5
Lecture: The Analysis of Knowledge (2)
Reading: “A Causal Theory of Knowing” by Nelson Goodman
Lecture 6
Lecture: The Analysis of Knowledge (3)
Reading: “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems” by Linda Zagzebski
Lecture 7
Lecture: Knowledge and Justification (2)
Reading: “The Myth of the Given” by Roderick Chisholm
Lecture 8
Lecture: Knowledge and Justification (3)
Reading: “Can Empirical Knowledge Have a Foundation?” by Laurence Bonjour
Lecture 9
Lecture: Knowledge and Justification (4)
Reading: “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge” by Donald Davidson
Lecture 10
Lecture: The Structure of Knowledge and Justification (5)
Reading: “A Foundherentist Theory of Empirical Justification” by Susan Haack
Lecture 11
Lecture: The Structure of Knowledge and Justification (6)
Reading: “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons” by Peter Klein

Lecture 12
Lecture: Theories of Justification (1)
Reading: “Evidentialism” by Richard Feldman and Earl Conee
Lecture 13
Lecture: Theories of Justification (2)
Reading: “What is Justified Belief?” by Alvin I. Goldman
Lecture 14
Lecture: Theories of Justification (3)
Readings: “Reliabilism Levelled” by Jonathan Vogel
Lecture 15
Lecture: Theories of Justification (4)
Readings: “Internalism Exposed” by Alvin I. Goldman
Lecture 16
Lecture: Theories of Justification (5)
Readings: “Internalism Defended” by Richard Feldman and Earl Conee
Lecture 17
Lecture: Knowledge-How
Readings: “Success and Knowledge-How” by Katherine Hawley (pdf)
Lecture 18
Lecture: The Situated Knower (1)
Readings: “Indoctrination Anxiety and the Etiology of Belief” by Joshua Dipaolo and Robert Mark Simpson (pdf)
Lecture 19
Lecture: The Situated Knower (2)
Readings: “The Virtues of Relativism” by Maria Baghramian (pdf)
Lecture 20
Lecture: The Situated Knower (3)
Readings: “Testimony, Epistemic Difference, and Privilege: How Feminist Epistemology Can Improve Our Understanding of the Communication of Knowledge” by Lisa Bergin
Lecture 21
Lecture: Social Epistemology (1)
Readings: “Rational Authority and Social Power: Toward a Truly Social Epistemology” by Miranda Fricker
Lecture 22
Lecture: Social Epistemology (2)
Readings: “Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge From Others” by Jennifer Lackey

Lecture 23

Lecture: Social Epistemology (3)

Readings: “Social Media, Trust, and The Epistemology of Prejudice” by Karen Arnold-Frost

Lecture 24

Lecture: Epistemic Virtue and Vice

Reading: “Epistemic Trespassing” by Nathan Ballantyne

Sample Syllabus—Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics (300-Level)

Course Description: This course is an introduction to contemporary work in the philosophical sub-discipline known as metaethics. Whereas ‘first-order’ ethics is the study of, e.g., what we should do and what is morally good, metaethical inquiry is *meta* because it takes a ‘second-order’ perspective on first-order ethics. Paradigmatic metaethical questions include: what exactly *are* moral truths—are they ‘objective’, ‘subjective’, or something else entirely? Are there any such truths? If there are moral truths, why should we care about them? If there are moral truths, and we should care about them, how can we know them? Does the term ‘ought’ in moral sentences like ‘you ought not to murder people’ have the same meaning in non-moral sentences like ‘you ought to study hard to pass your test’ and ‘you ought to pay attention to good sources of information’?

Assignments

(1) Reflection Pieces—(10%):

Twice throughout the term, you must submit a 300-600 word reflection piece on a course reading. Your reflection can, for example, offer a criticism of an argument in the reading or an interpretation of a cryptic passage. So long as the contents of your reflections are philosophical and go beyond mere summary of the text, the particulars are for you to decide. Each reflection is worth 5% of your final grade.

You can submit a reflection piece in one of two ways: the first way is to submit it at the *beginning* of the lecture where the reading you have reflected on is being discussed. If you do this, your piece is graded with the understanding that your thoughts have been developed without the benefit of the lecture. Alternatively, you can submit the piece to me any time before the *subsequent* lecture begins. If you submit this way, your piece is graded with the understanding that you have had additional time / resources with which to write it.

(2) Quizzes—(25%):

There will be six quizzes throughout the course. These quizzes will contain some mixture of true or false questions, matching questions, short answer questions, and multiple choice questions. Five of the quizzes will be worth 4% of your final grade. They will only take about ten minutes to complete. One quiz will include a bonus mark (1%) opportunity: you will have to (1) answer a metaethics riddle that I provide, or (2) write an original metaethics joke.

(3) Final Paper—(25%):

On a date to be determined you will submit a paper to me that addresses a question or set of questions of my choosing. If you are interested in writing on a topic of your own choosing you must clear it with me before the end of our final lecture. Your paper must be no more than 2100 words and no fewer than 1500 words, excluding bibliographic materials. Your paper must conform to a style guide that I will provide.

(4) Exam—(30%):

You will have to take a final exam during the final exam period at the end of the semester. The exam will consist of a combination of true or false questions, matching questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and long answer questions. In addition, you will be asked to analyse passages in literary works and assess whether you think the authors are expressing a commitment to a particular metaethical theory.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

Week 1
Lecture 1: Syllabus
Suggested Reading: §1 of “Metaethics” SEP Entry by Geoff Sayre-McCord; “Euthyphro” by Plato
Lecture 2: The beginning of 20 th Century Metaethics
“The Subject Matter of Ethics” by G. E. Moore
Week 2
Lecture 3: Naturalist Realism (1)
“The Right and the Good” §1-4 by Judith Jarvis Thomson
Lecture 4: Naturalist Realism (2)
“The Right and the Good” §5-9 by Judith Jarvis Thomson
Week 3
Lecture 5: Robust Realism (1)
“An Outline of an Argument for Robust Metanormative Realism” §1-6 by David Enoch
Lecture 6: Robust Realism (2)
“An Outline of an Argument for Robust Metanormative Realism” §7-10 by David Enoch;
Week 4
Lecture 7: Evolutionary Debunking (1)
“A Darwinian Dilemma for Moral Realism” §1-4 by Sharon Street
Lecture 8: Evolutionary Debunking (2)
“A Darwinian Dilemma for Moral Realism” §5-8 by Sharon Street (no §9 required)

Week 5

Lecture 9: Moral Disagreement (1)

“Moral Disagreement and Moral Expertise” by Sarah McGrath

Lecture 10: Moral Disagreement (2)

“Skepticism About Moral Expertise as a Puzzle for Moral Realism” by Sarah McGrath

Week 6

Lecture 11: Moral Relativism (1)

“Moral Relativism” by Phillipa Foot

Lecture 12: Moral Relativism (2)

“Moral Relativism Defended” by Gilbert Harman

Week 7

Lecture 13: Expressivism (1)

Chapter 6 of “Language, Truth, and Logic” by A. J. Ayer

Lecture 14: Expressivism (2)

“How to Be an Ethical Anti-realist” by Simon Blackburn

Week 8

Lecture 15: Against Expressivism (1)

“Assertion” by P. T. Geach

Lecture 16: Against Expressivism (2)

“Moral Mind-Independence” by Nick Zangwill

Week 9

Lecture 15: Moral Error Theory (1)

Chapter 1 (abridged) of “Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong” by John Mackie

Lecture 16: Moral Error Theory (2)

“Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong” by John Mackie (cont.); “Moral Fictionalism” by Richard Joyce

Week 10

Lecture 17: Against Moral Error Theory (1)

“Ethical Disagreement, Ethical Objectivism and Moral Indeterminacy” by Russ Shafer-Landau

Lecture 18: Against Error Moral Theory (2)

“Might All Normativity Be Queer?” by Matthew Bedke

Week 11

Lecture 19: Moral Motivation

“Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives” by Phillipa Foot

Lecture 20:

“Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?” By John McDowell and I. G. McFetridge

Week 12

Lecture 23: What’s New in Metaethics?

“Taking Prudence Seriously” by Guy Fletcher

Lecture 24: Review Session

DATE TBA [1 week after end of semester]

*****FINAL PAPER DUE*****

DATE TBA

*****FINAL EXAM*****

Time: TBA

Place: TBA

Sample Syllabus—Trust in the Digital Age (400-Level)

Course Description: the online landscape poses increasingly varied and potent threats to our abilities, both individually and collectively, to evaluate the trustworthiness of one another's testimony. In this course we tackle these threats in a philosophical way. The first half of the course equips us with some core concepts in the epistemology of testimony. In the second half of the course, we engage in some applied epistemology. Questions to be asked include: how can we evaluate the trustworthiness of testimony on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter? How can we better understand and deal with so-called 'online echo-chambers'? Does the ongoing development of 'deepfake technology' pose a threat to the trustworthiness of videographic testimony?

Course Assignments:

Participation—20%:

You are expected to actively participate in class discussion, both by engaging with your peers and the course readings. You are expected to attend seminar as regularly as possible, and to take the initiative to meet with me to discuss your progress if necessary. You are entitled to two unexcused absences throughout the semester. Meeting with me during office hours or by appointment is a form of participation.

Weekly Investigation Exercises—30%:

Each week, you will be asked a question or posed a problem that is inspired by the week's readings. Typically, this will take the form of a case study or a 'hunt' in which you either examine a recent case, chosen by me, where a certain injustice has occurred in online space, or where there is a question of the epistemic harmfulness of a certain online information-providing medium, or where you are asked to find a case that meets certain criteria that are chosen by me. You will have eleven opportunities to write weekly investigations exercises. Only the Student's best 8 grades will be counted (this means that you can either abstain from writing up to three, or write any number between 9 and 11, and drop your lowest grades). Because of this policy, *no additional exceptions* will be made for missed submissions (which will receive grades of 0), barring extraordinary circumstances.

Quizzes—20%

Six times throughout the semester, you will be quizzed *either at the beginning or the end of class* on concepts related to that week's readings. These quizzes are designed merely to gauge reading comprehension. They will usually consist of a mix of true/false, fill in the blanks, or multiple choice questions. Occasionally, there will be opportunities for reflection. Each quiz will be weighted equally. Only four of your best six quiz grades will be counted toward your final grade. Because of this policy, *no additional exceptions* will be made for missed quizzes, barring extraordinary circumstances.

Final Paper—30%

Near the end of the semester, I will provide a list of topics for a final paper. These might invite you to expand on your weekly investigation exercises, or they might challenge you to evaluate various course concepts and arguments in a more systematic way. You are encouraged to get in touch with me as soon as possible if you wish to write on a topic of your own choosing.

Your paper must not exceed, or fall below, 2100-2400 words. Exceptions to this word limit will be accommodated only if discussed in (sufficient) advance of the deadline. Your paper must have a title that is not merely something like <course code—final paper>. Your paper must include all relevant identifying information at the top of page one (no title page is necessary). Your paper must be written in Times New Roman, font size 12, and be double spaced. Paragraphs must contain one-inch indentations, with no additional spaces between paragraphs. Page numbers are required. Section headings are encouraged if and where appropriate.

Reading Schedule

Week 1: Syllabus & Orientation
Reading: N/A
Week 2: Testimonial Injustice
Reading: Introduction & Chapter 1 of “Epistemic Injustice” by Miranda Fricker
Week 3: The Mechanisms of Testimonial Injustice
Reading: Chapter 2 of “Epistemic Injustice” by Miranda Fricker
Week 4: The Epistemology of Testimony
Reading: Chapter 3 of “Epistemic Injustice” by Miranda Fricker
Week 5: On Virtuous Listening
Reading: Chapter 4 of “Epistemic Injustice” by Miranda Fricker
Week 6: The Psychology and Epistemology of Conspiracy Theorizing
Reading: Chapter 3 of “Vices of the Mind” by Quassim Cassam
Week 7: Epistemology In the Digital Age – Some Preliminaries
Reading: “The Challenge of Digital Epistemologies” by Colin Lankshear; “Introduction to Special Issue of Social Epistemology Review & Reply Collective: Trust in a Social and Digital World” by J. Adam Carter and Daniella Meehan
Week 8: Fake News (1)
Reading: “Fake News and Partisan Epistemology” by Regina Rini; “Fake News, Conspiracy, and Intellectual Vice” by Marco Meyer
Week 9: Fake News (2)
Reading: “What’s New About Fake News?” by Jessica Pepp, Eliot Michaelson, and Rachel Katharine Sterken; “When Online Information Sharing is Not Testimony” by Emily Sullivan

Week 10: Echo Chambers (1)

Reading: “Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles” by C. Thi Nguyen; “Trust in a Social and Digital World” by Mark Alfano

Week 11: Echo Chambers (2)

Reading: “Trustworthiness and Truth—The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability” by Karen Frost-Arnold

Week 12: Deepfakes

Reading: “Deepfakes and the Epistemic Backstop” by Regina Rini; possible second reading TBA

Sample Syllabus—The Epistemology of Self-Knowledge (Graduate Level)

Course Description: When we know our own current mental states—our fears, desires, beliefs, tickles, pains, and so on—we often seem to know them *effortlessly* and *authoritatively*. In other words, we often seem to know our own minds rather well, and we do not ordinarily gain this knowledge by observing ourselves or by soliciting testimony from other people about what we must be thinking or feeling. This makes self-knowledge stand apart from many other kinds of knowledge, such as knowledge of our external environment and knowledge of *other* minds. Why is self-knowledge distinctive in these respects? In this course we tackle this question, using Annalisa Coliva’s *Varieties of Self-Knowledge* as our primary guide. In the final stretch of the course we examine certain philosophical puzzles about self-knowledge in greater detail.

Assignments:

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Seminar Participation—20%

Weekly Reflections—20%

Paper #1 Proposal—5%

Paper #1—25%

Paper #2 Proposal—5%

Paper #2—25%

Alternative to papers #1 and #2: one longer paper—60% (10% for proposal)

Your weekly reflections will be 300-600 words, to be submitted no later than three hours before seminar. Your reflection can ask questions about or offer criticisms of that week’s reading(s), though note that—all else being equal—I will grade critical reflections more favourably.

Your paper proposal(s) will be due one week before the corresponding paper is due. I will provide feedback on your proposal(s) within 24 hours of receipt.

A small list of paper topics will be made available for each paper. However, you are encouraged to consult me in advance of submitting your paper proposal if you are interested in writing on a topic of your own choosing. Deadlines for the papers will be set in the weeks to come.

Reading Schedule

Week 1
Required Readings: n/a, though consider browsing Brie Gertler’s SEP entry: “Self-Knowledge”
Week 2
Required Readings: chapters 1 and 2 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; Chapter 1 of “Self-Knowledge” by Brie Gertler
Week 3
Required Readings: Chapter 3 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; “Introspection, What?” by Eric Schwitzgebel

Week 4
Required Readings: Chapter 4 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; Chapter 1 of “Authority and Estrangement” by Richard Moran
Week 5
Required Readings: Chapter 5 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; “Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge” by Tyler Burge
Week 6
Required Readings: Chapter 6 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; “Speaking my Mind” by Dorit Bar-On
Week 7
Required Readings: Chapter 7 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; “Self-Blindness and Self-Knowledge” by Matthew Parrott
Week 8
Required Readings: Chapter 8 of <i>The Varieties of Self-Knowledge</i> by Annalisa Coliva; “First-Person Authority: Dualism, Constitutivism, and Neo-Expressivism” by Dorit Bar-On
Week 9
Required Readings: “Confabulation Does Not Undermine Introspection” by Adam Andreotta; “Knowing our Reasons: Distinctive Self-Knowledge of Why We Hold Our Attitudes and Perform Actions” by Sophie Keeling
Week 10
Readings: “Introspection” by Alex Byrne; “Introspection Without Judgement” by Anna Giustina
Week 11
Readings: “The Puzzle of Transparency and How to Solve It” by Wolfgang Barz; “Basic Self-Knowledge and Transparency” by Cristina Borgoni
Week 12
Readings: “Deferring to Others About One’s Own Mind” by Casey Doyle; “Changing One’s Mind: Self-Conscious Belief and Rational Endorsement” by Adam Leite

Summary of Course Evaluations

As Course Director

PHIL 4040: Seminar in Contemporary Philosophy (Fall 2018, York University)

- Q1** The instructor taught the course content in a well-organized manner.
- Q2** The instructor used teaching strategies effectively to clarify the course content.
- Q3** The instructor's style of presentation held my interest.
- Q4** The instructor provided reasonable opportunities for responding to student's questions.
- Q5** The assignments in this course stimulated my learning of the material.
- Q6** In this course, I received timely feedback on assignments and assessments.
- Q7** The feedback I received was constructive and helpful for my learning.
- Q8** The instructor helped me understand the importance and significance of the course content.
- Q9** Overall, the instructor of an effective teacher.

Number of Respondents: 3/14

1: strongly disagree 2: somewhat disagree 3: neutral 4: somewhat agree 5: strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean	Dept. Mean
Q1	0	0	0	33.33	66.67	0	4.67	4.42
Q2	0	0	33.33	0	66.67	0	4.33	4.33
Q3	0	0	0	66.67	33.33	0	4.33	4.07
Q4	0	0	0	0	100	0	5.00	4.41
Q5	0	0	0	33.33	66.67	0	4.67	4.23
Q6	0	0	0	33.33	66.67	0	4.67	4.15
Q7	0	0	33.33	0	66.67	0	4.33	4.07
Q8	0	0	0	33.33	66.67	0	4.67	4.23
Q9	0	0	0	0	100	0	5.00	4.35

- 1) What would be your suggestions to improve this course?**
 - No suggestions
 - Get to the point quicker
 - This is a fantastic course!!

- 2) Do you have any additional comments about this course?**
 - Whether learning beside a dumpster or a sewer, the course contents are interesting enough to make me want to attend.
 - No
 - The reading materials planned were intimidating, but the instructor has made many adjustments in accordance with the feedback from students for meeting the students' current level of academic ability.

- 3) Do you have any other observations or comments about the course instructor, teaching assistant or marker/grader that you wish to add?**
 - Due to the contents of the course, the most noticeable trait the instructor had is his listening skills; such trait made the course much more enjoyable.
 - Used good examples that helped to understand the topics and discussion better especially for the more difficult topic

As Teaching Assistant at York University

PHIL 1100: The Meaning of Life (Winter 2014, York University)

Q1 Ability to encourage and guide discussion (e.g., engages all members of the group, promotes respect for all students' opinions, keeps topic discussion focused)

Q2 Ability to explain ideas and concepts clearly (e.g., effectively elaborates on difficult issues)

Q3 Ability to promote critical analysis (e.g., encourages close evaluations of data and arguments, guides students in formulating and defending their own positions)

Q4 Overall, how would you rate this instructor/group leader?

Number of respondents: 16/50

1: strongly disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neutral, 4: somewhat agree, 5: strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean
Q1	0	0	3	4	9	0	4.37
Q2	0	0	3	5	8	0	4.31
Q3	0	0	3	4	9	0	4.37
Q4	0	0	3	4	9	0	4.37

PHIL 1100: The Meaning of Life (Fall 2016, York University)

Q1 The TA kept the topics of discussion focused.

Q2 The TA facilitated student participation.

Q3 The TA provided reasonable opportunities for responding to students' questions.

Q4 The feedback I received from the TA was constructive and helpful for my learning.

Q5 Overall, the TA was an effective tutorial leader in this course.

Number of Respondents: 6/40

1: strongly disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neutral, 4: somewhat agree, 5: strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean
Q1	0	0	1	1	4	0	4.50
Q2	0	0	1	1	4	0	4.50
Q3	0	0	2	0	4	0	4.33
Q4	0	0	2	0	4	0	4.33
Q5	0	0	1	1	4	0	4.50

PHIL 2100: Introduction to Formal Logic (Winter 2016, York University)

- Q1** The TA kept the topics of discussion focused.
- Q2** The TA facilitated student participation.
- Q3** The TA provided reasonable opportunities for responding to students' questions.
- Q4** The feedback I received from the TA was constructive and helpful for my learning.
- Q5** Overall, the TA was an effective tutorial leader in this course.

Number of Respondents: 15/24

1: strongly disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neutral, 4: somewhat agree, 5: strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean
Q1	0	0	1	1	13	0	4.80
Q2	0	0	1	1	13	0	4.80
Q3	0	0	1	0	14	0	4.87
Q4	0	0	0	1	14	0	4.93
Q5	0	0	1	1	13	0	4.80

PHIL 2100 – Introduction to Formal Logic (Fall 2017, York University)

- Q1** The TA kept the topics of discussion focused.
- Q2** The TA facilitated student participation.
- Q3** The TA provided reasonable opportunities for responding to students' questions.
- Q4** The feedback I received from the TA was constructive and helpful for my learning.
- Q5** Overall, the TA was an effective tutorial leader in this course.

Number of Respondents: 10/41

1: strongly disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: neutral, 4: somewhat agree, 5: strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	Mean
Q1	0	0	0	2	8	0	4.80
Q2	0	0	2	3	5	0	4.30
Q3	0	1	1	0	8	0	4.50
Q4	0	1	2	2	5	0	4.10
Q5	0	0	1	0	9	0	4.80

Solicited Anonymous Feedback

-Ben is an excellent professor. He is a great facilitator of the class dialogue of inquiry. He is a wealth of information, provides quality material with substance and is able to break down complex philosophical problems eloquently. His attitude and respect for academics is admirable and his professionalism is undoubtable. As someone who is currently striving to be a teacher, Ben has inspired me and made a positive impact on my view of education.

-Ben is a genuine, knowledgeable, and responsible instructor. He is very capable of explaining complex concepts and theories and thus making them more comprehensible. He is also competent in responding to students' questions and doubts with clear and convincing explanatory arguments. He responds to emails in a very timely fashion and is always available to meet students individually if needed. He is a very good instructor overall. (Thanks again, Ben!)

-Ben Winokur was a fantastic course director and provided one of the most stimulating and educational experiences of my entire undergraduate career. He was incredibly knowledgeable, respectful, and organized in teaching the course. Firstly, it was clear that Ben knew the subject matter of the course inside and out. We dealt with a number of difficult primary sources in the course and Ben was always able to explain sophisticated ideas clearly. Moreover, whenever a student was curious about a related topic, Ben always had a list of authors and papers that he could recommend off the top of his head. It was clear that Ben was passionate about the subject matter, it often felt like he was just sharing some of his favourite ideas with friends in the same manner that one would talk about their favourite movie. I never had a question go unanswered in the course.