

THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

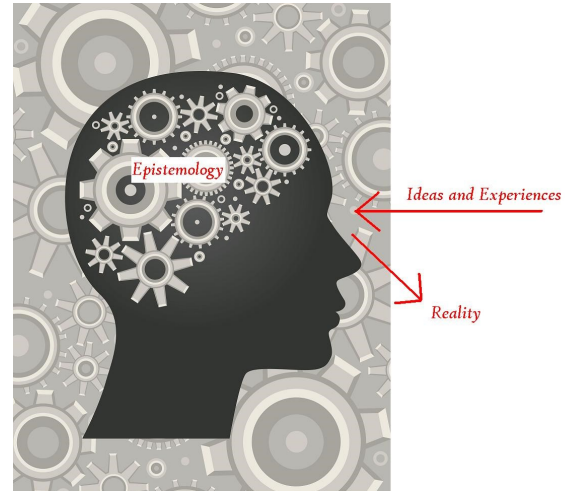
SYLLABUS | PHIL 3341 | CRN #22592 | T/TH, 10:50AM-12:05PM | IRBY 311

Course Description

This course gives students a broad yet detailed introduction to epistemology, the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge and related topics such as belief, justification, perception, and truth. We will consider questions such as:

- What is knowledge?
- What are beliefs?
- What does it mean to say that a belief is true?
- What is justification?
- How are beliefs justified (if they are at all)?
- To what extent do I have control over what I believe?
- Is knowledge possible?
- Is knowledge valuable?
- Is ignorance valuable?
- What is an intellectual virtue?

Students can expect to become familiar with a great many “isms” as we proceed: skepticism, foundationalism, coherentism, reliabilism, evidentialism, internalism, externalism, voluntarism, and more. Our focus will be almost entirely on contemporary epistemology, and the course is guided by two main objectives. First, we will explore many of the key epistemological positions and theories that have shaped the development of present-day epistemology and that are of ongoing philosophical interest. Second, we will be paying close attention to practical questions about how and why epistemology matters in today’s world.



Contact Info:

- **Office Location:** Irby 118c
- **Office Hours:** Book me at smason-uca.youcanbook.me
- **Office Phone:** 501-450-5590
- **Email:** smason@uca.edu

This course fulfills one 3-credit hour elective in the Epistemology and Metaphysics distribution area. Students who take this course should be well-prepared to enter into a variety of epistemological conversations and enabled to pursue their own further study.



The word ‘epistemology’ comes from the Greek words *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (account or reason). Epistemologists study the theory of knowledge.

Course Texts

- Greco, J. and Sosa, E. *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (1999). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. ISBN: 978-0631202912
- All other readings will be available on Blackboard under "Resources."

Grading Scheme

Attendance/Participation	150 points
Writing Assignments	300 points
Exams	450 points



Attendance/Participation (150 points)

Students who do not attend class regularly will learn as much as those who attend regularly. Attendance and active participation in the class are, therefore, required.

Attendance: Each student may take up to 2 absences for any reason. **Absences in excess of 2 will result in a deduction of 1% from your overall grade per absence, with no upper bound.** In cases of an emergency, sickness, death in the family, etc., a student may receive additional excused absences provided that the student notifies me right away and provides appropriate documentation.

Distracting behavior such as eating, chronic tardiness, or sleeping in class may also result in your dismissal from the class for the day, without credit for attendance.

Participation: Participation refers to your active involvement in the class by being prepared for class and engaging in classroom discussion. Participation grades will be given as follows:

A (100%): participates weekly in class; questions and comments demonstrate familiarity with course readings

B (85%): participates more than half of the weeks in class (at least 8 weeks)

C (75%): participates in less than half of the weeks in class (fewer than 8 weeks)

Classroom Culture Statement

This course will involve thinking deeply about controversial issues, and as we go along you will almost certainly encounter viewpoints that challenge your own beliefs. I encourage you to view these challenges as opportunities to learn about perspectives that may differ widely from your own and to practice the skill of interacting respectfully and sympathetically with someone, despite the fact that you may strongly disagree with their point of view. Although debate and critical analysis are encouraged, it should be clear that we will not discriminate against or criticize members of this classroom community based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or religion. Everyone is welcome here.

Assignments (400 points)

This is a writing-intensive class.

One course aim is for you to develop a variety of skills related to philosophical writing. You don't need to already have a lot of experience doing philosophical writing; we will work together on developing your writing skills as we proceed throughout the semester.

You should, however, expect to be writing often and at a fairly high-level.

Writing assignments will include short writing assignments (20 points each) and one 5 page paper (100 points).

All written assignments should be typed with standard academic-style formatting, and should be submitted online via blackboard.

CHALLENGE WEEK: OCTOBER 19-27

This semester our class will be working with the UCA honors college to do a project in applied epistemology that focuses on the ethical implications of knowledge. 100 points of your assignment grade will come from working in groups to create a poster to display during challenge week and attending two challenge week events.

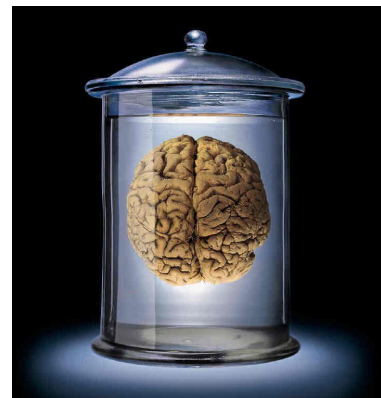
Exams (450 points)

There will be three written, take-home exams (150 points each). The exams will ask you to explain important concepts, compare and contrast some of the theories we will discuss, and to critically engage the course material. Exam questions will be given out one week in advance.

All exams should be typed, standard format, and submitted electronically through Blackboard. I will not accept paper copies or exams submitted through email.

Late Work Policy

Late work will receive one letter-grade reduction per day late up to 5 *calendar* days after the assignment is due. After 5 days, you will not be able to turn in your work for credit. I make exceptions to this policy if you have an emergency, but **to be considered for an exemption it is your responsibility to notify me *in advance*.**



Plagiarism Statement

In the *Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct*, the Indiana University Faculty Council indicates that students may be disciplined for several different kinds of academic misconduct, which include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference, and violation of course rules. The penalty for cheating or plagiarism in this class is automatic failure of the course. Consider yourself warned. For more information about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, go to <https://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/index2.html>

Course Schedule (tentative)

This semester we will cover the following topics, in roughly this order. You can expect to spend around a week on each topic. Specific readings will be announced in class. This schedule is just to give you some idea of how the semester will go.

Weeks 1-5: Analyzing Knowledge: definitions, concepts, and methods

Sources of Knowledge

Structures of Knowledge

Skepticism; **First Exam Due**

Weeks 6-10: Objectivity

The Value of Knowledge

Reasonable Belief

Applied Epistemology; **Second Exam Due**

Weeks 11-15: Ignorance

Self-Knowledge

Social Epistemology

Intellectual Virtues; **Final Exam Due**

Important Information

Please read the following information carefully. These notifications are required by the UCA administration to appear on all UCA course syllabi.

◇ **Academic Integrity Statement:**

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

◇ **Americans with Disabilities Act:**

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

◇ **Building Emergency Plan:**

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

◇ **Title IX Disclosure:**

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.