

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Epistemology
Course Code	: PHI3231
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 hours Lecture/week; 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	: Core Philosophy Elective
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

The course will address the four central questions in the theory of knowledge: (1) What does it mean to say that we know something? (2) Is there a satisfactory answer to radical scepticism? (3) What are the most interesting problems connected with different sources of knowledge? (4) What is the structure of our whole system of beliefs about the world?

Aims

The aim is to get students acquainted with traditional and contemporary philosophical discussions of knowledge, justification and scepticism.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. be aware of certain central issues concerning the notion of knowledge.
2. be capable of applying certain relevant concepts to understanding or resolving knowledge-related problems.

Indicative Content

1. The concept of knowledge
According to the so-called classical definition of knowledge (first formulated in Plato's *Theaetetus*) knowledge is "justified true belief". Some problems with this definition will be discussed, especially the examples invented by Edmund Gettier, showing that some justified true beliefs actually do not count as knowledge.
2. Scepticism
Do we know anything? Traditional sceptical arguments will be considered, both those defended by ancient sceptics and by Descartes. Several attempts to meet the sceptical challenge will be evaluated (e.g. ideas developed by Ludwig Wittgenstien, Fred Dretske, Robert Nozick, Barry Stroud, etc).

3. Sources of knowledge
Philosophical problems dealing with different possible sources of knowledge (perception, memory, testimony, reason) will be analyzed.
4. The architecture of knowledge
The opposition between “foundationalism” and “coherentism” will be explained and evaluated, together with some other views that cannot be easily subsumed under these two labels.

Teaching Method

Lectures and seminar discussions.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

1. The final exam will test students’ basic understanding of the course materials. (LO’s 1&2)
2. The mid-term short paper will give students a chance to engage a smaller or local issue with learnt concepts. (LO’s 1&2)
3. The term paper will measure students’ ability to investigate and write on a major issue related to a certain theory or position. (LO’s 1&2)
4. Tutorial presentation and performance in free discussion will be used to measure the daily involvement of students in understanding and articulating learnt content. (LO’s 1&2)

Assessment

60% Continuous Assessment (midterm paper 15%; term paper 25%; tutorial presentation & participation 20%)

40% Final Examination

Required Readings

J. Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

J·丹西著，周文彰、何包鋼譯，《當代認識論》，北京：中國人民大學出版社，1990。

R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

笛卡爾著，龐景仁譯，《第一哲學沉思》，北京：商務印書館，1986。

D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

休謨著，關文運譯，《人類理解研究》，北京：商務，1972。

I. Kant, *Prolegomena for Any Future Metaphysics*.

康德著，龐景仁譯，《任何一种能夠作為科學出現的未來形而上學導論》，北京：商務印書館，1978。

Supplementary Readings

R. Audi, *Epistemology*. London: Routledge, 1998.

J. Dancy & E. Sosa (eds.), *Companion to Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

I. Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*

伊·康德著，韋卓民譯，《純粹理性批判》，武昌：華中師範大學出版社，2000。

C. McGinn, *Problems in Philosophy: The Limits of Inquiry*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

R. Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P., 1981.

A. Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

B. Stroud, *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Important Notes

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>