

PH148-15 Philosophy for the Real World: Knowledge, Ignorance and Bullshit

20/21

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Quassim Cassam

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

Multiple

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

PH148 - Philosophy for the Real World: Knowledge, Ignorance and Bullshit

Module aims

The aim of this module is to introduce students to fundamental concepts in epistemology by examining their application to real world (as distinct from imagined) issues and problems.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

1. Harry Frankfurt's notion of bullshit.
2. Relativism, 'post-truth' and 'alternative facts'.
3. The manufacturing and spreading of doubt about science.

4. Fact checking
5. Which experts (if any) should we trust?
6. Holocaust denial and Kripke's dogmatism paradox.
7. Charles Mills on 'white ignorance'.
8. The philosophy of conspiracy theories.
9. Epistemic vice.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- At the end of this course, students should have (i) acquired an understanding of some fundamental concepts and debates in epistemology; (ii) grasped the possibility and value of applying abstract philosophical concepts to contemporary issues, and (iii) become familiar with the relevant philosophical literature; (iv) developed the capacity to engage effectively with a range of epistemological ideas, themes and arguments in their written work.

Indicative reading list

1. Harry Frankfurt, On Bullshit
2. David Coady, What to Believe Now: Applying Epistemology to Contemporary Issues.
3. Maria Baghramian, Relativism
4. Naomi Oreskes & Erik Conway, Merchants of Doubt
5. Robert Proctor & Londa Schiebinger (eds.) Agnotology
6. Lee McIntyre, Post-Truth
7. Quassim Cassam, Vices of the Mind
8. Charles Mills, 'White Ignorance' in Robert Proctor & Londa Schiebinger (eds.) Agnotology
9. Saul Kripke, 'Two Paradoxes of Knowledge'.
10. Quassim Cassam, Conspiracy Theories
11. Brian Keeley, 'Of Conspiracy Theories', Journal of Philosophy 1999.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

The ability to understand, analyse and criticise philosophical ideas and arguments. The ability to apply philosophical ideas to real world problems and issues.

Transferable skills

The ability to argue, analyse complex ideas, and write clearly. The ability to grasp complex ideas and arguments, identify their strengths and weaknesses and write about them in a structured manner.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
2500 word essay	80%	
1000 word essay	20%	

Assessment group R

	Weighting	Study time
Resit Assignment (2500 words)	100%	

Feedback on assessment

Detailed written feedback will be provided on summative essay, including advice on how to improve written work.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- UIPA-V5L8 Undergraduate Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 1 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 1 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 1 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
 - Year 1 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 1 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 1 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 1 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 1 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 1 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)

This module is Option list B for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 1 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 1 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 1 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy