

PH252-15 Epistemology

21/22

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Lucy Campbell

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

We tend to think that knowing things is important. Knowing things is better than being ignorant of them, and it's also better than merely having true beliefs about things. For example it's better than having a belief which is true by coincidence, or as the result of a lucky guess. But what is the difference between knowing something and not knowing it? Is knowledge true belief plus some extra ingredient? If so what is this extra ingredient? Is knowledge true belief which is justified? Which has been caused by the facts? Which couldn't easily have been false? Or perhaps knowledge is something completely different from true belief. If so what? Some sui generis kind of mental state? Some kind of ability, for example to make rational use of facts or truths? All of these have been suggested by different philosophers as general accounts of knowledge. We will assess these various accounts of knowledge. And we will look at some more specific issues too. We will consider how we get knowledge from what other people tell us, and how we are able to know the contents of other people's minds.

Module aims

The aim of the course is to introduce students to some of the main concepts, topics, and positions in contemporary epistemology. It will give students the opportunity to develop both their understanding of key aspects of the epistemology literature, and their skills of philosophical analysis and argumentation.

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. What is Knowledge? Justified True Belief?
2. What is Knowledge? Reliably Caused True Belief?
3. What is Knowledge? Sensitive and/or Safe Belief?
4. What is Knowledge? A State of Mind?
5. What is Knowledge? A Rational Ability?
6. Knowledge of Other Minds 1
7. Knowledge of Other Minds 2
8. Knowledge by Testimony 1
9. Knowledge by Testimony 2

Learning outcomes

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

- clearly identify the particular philosophical questions with which the module is concerned
- demonstrate knowledge of some of the main theoretical approaches in epistemology, along with some of their motivations and challenges
- appreciate and engage critically with some of the methodological presuppositions underlying different approaches
- clearly state key arguments, problems, and positions, and engage with them critically, both in class and in written work
- display a good understanding of technical epistemological notions, making appropriate use of these both in discussion and written work

Indicative reading list

- Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
- Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"
- Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"
- Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism"
- Timothy Williamson, "Is Knowing a State of Mind?"
- Elizabeth Fricker, "Is Knowing a State of Mind? The Case Against"
- John Hyman, "Knowledge as an Ability", Ch. 7 in *Action, Knowledge, and Will*
- John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*
- Alex Hyslop and Frank Jackson, "The Analogical Inference to Other Minds"
- Robert Pargetter, "The Scientific Inference to Other Minds"
- W.E.S. McNeill, "On Seeing that Someone is Angry"
- David Hume *On Miracles*/ section X
- C.A.J. Coady, "Testimony and Observation"
- Richard Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed"
- Elizabeth Fricker, "Against Gullibility"

- Jennifer Lackey, "It Takes Two to Tango: Beyond Reductionism and Non-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony"

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Research element

The students' main assessment is a 2,500 word essay (80%). They will be expected to contribute their own research to this essay rather than to rely simply on the lecture material. Research may include sourcing additional reading material, developing one's own line of argument, discussion with peers.

Subject specific skills

Distinguishing distinctively epistemological concerns from (e.g.) psychological and metaphysical concerns.

Understanding key concepts, problems, positions, and arguments in philosophical epistemology.

Stating, constructing, and reconstructing epistemological arguments and positions.

Critically engaging with epistemological arguments and positions.

Engaging charitably with philosophical material, from lectures, peers, and the academic literature.

Jointly discussing, debating, understanding, and critiquing epistemological positions and issues in conversation with peers.

Developing a confident yet critical attitude to one's own philosophical thinking, and using this in developing one's own philosophical ideas and understanding.

Structuring a philosophical essay around a single, clear, and compelling line of argument.

Transferable skills

Pinpointing crucial distinctions and presuppositions which make a difference to the cogency of an argument or point of view.

Identifying the main points in a piece of argumentative writing or speech, understanding how these are intended to relate to one another, and what they are aimed at achieving. Careful listening and/or reading, and note-taking in order to achieve this.

Explaining others' arguments and points of view, including when these are complex and/or challenging.

Critically assessing others' points of view, carefully, open-mindedly, and respectfully.

Assessing the cogency of one's own thinking, and developing one's clarity of thought.

Organisational, presentational, and time management skills.

Research skills: sourcing materials, note-taking, writing essay plans etc.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Private study includes reading the weekly reading material, taking notes to further understanding, working with peers on a presentation, researching and writing assessed essays.

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
1000 word essay	20%	
Short essay on topic from a list of questions.		
2500 word essay	80%	
Long essay on a topic from a list of questions.		

Feedback on assessment

Detailed written feedback will be provided on both essays, including advice on how to improve written work.

Advice on first shorter essay will be given with a view to feeding into preparation of the second longer essay.

Students will be encouraged to make use of lecturer's office hours for in-person discussion of written work (esp. first essay).

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)

This module is Core option list A for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- Year 3 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy

- Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Option list A for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 3 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 4 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 2 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 2 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ73 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature with Intercalated Year

This module is Option list E for:

- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law

- Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law