

PH252-15 Epistemology

24/25

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

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 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 it to know that something is the case? Is knowledge true belief plus some extra ingredient? If so, what? Is knowledge true belief which is justified, for example, or a true belief which is caused by the facts? Or a true belief which you've formed skilfully or competently, as opposed to clumsily or out of luck? Or perhaps knowledge is something completely different from true belief. If so what could it be? 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 writing in the Western contemporary tradition as ways of understanding knowledge. In the first half of term we will assess some of these ways of thinking about the general category of knowledge. And after reading week, we will zoom in to closely investigate one very important and particularly fascinating variety of knowledge - the knowledge we each have about other people's thoughts and feelings, so-called 'knowledge of other minds'.

Module aims

The aim of the course is to introduce students to some of the main concepts, topics, and positions in contemporary Western 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? True Belief + X?
3. What is Knowledge? A State of Mind?
4. What is Knowledge? Knowledge-that as knowledge-how?
5. What is Knowledge? A Rational Ability?

READING WEEK

1. Knowledge of Other Minds 1: Introduction and Analogy Theory
2. Knowledge of Other Minds 2: Theory Theory
3. Knowledge of Other Minds 3: Perceptualism
4. Knowledge of Other Minds 4: Perception, Expression, and (combatting) Scepticism

Learning outcomes

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

- distinguish distinctively epistemological concerns from (e.g.) psychological and metaphysical concerns.
- display a good understanding of technical epistemological notions, making appropriate use of these both in discussion and written work,
- engage carefully, critically, and charitably with the academic literature on a) propositional knowledge and b) knowledge of other minds
- clearly and concisely state, construct, and/or reconstruct epistemological arguments and positions, especially as these pertain to a) propositional knowledge, and b) knowledge of other minds
- structure a philosophical essay around a single, clear, and compelling line of argument which demonstrates independent engagement with aspects of the epistemology literature
- accurately describe the main aims and arguments of key texts in epistemology
- demonstrate understanding of the motivations and challenges for a) key theories of propositional knowledge, and b) key theories of knowledge of other minds.

Indicative reading list

- Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"
- John Greco, "Knowledge as Credit for True Belief"
- Jennifer Lackey, "Why we don't Deserve Credit for Everything we Know"
- 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/

- Alex Hyslop and Frank Jackson, "The Analogical Inference to Other Minds"
- Robert Pargetter, "The Scientific Inference to Other Minds"
- Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes"
- Jane Heal, "What are Psychological Concepts For?"
- W.E.S. McNeill, "On Seeing that Someone is Angry"
- Anita Avramides, "Perception, Reliability, and Other Minds"
- Anil Gomes, "Perception, Evidence, and our Expressive Knowledge of Others' Minds"
- Asa Wikforss, "Knowledge, Belief, and the Asymmetry Thesis"

[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.

Interdisciplinary

The material on 'theory-theoretical' knowledge of other minds, covered in the second half of the course, connects up with some issues in developmental psychology and in cognitive neuroscience.

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, answering weekly test questions (to be submitted as two sets in weeks 6 and 11), and researching and writing the 2,500 word assessed essay.

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 A4

Weighting

Study time

Close reading exercise (1000 words)

20%

Students answer a structured question on one of the essential readings. This will involve at least three of the following elements:

- comprehension,
- summary,
- analysis,
- argumentation.

They should aim to write around 1,000 words in total.

2,500 word essay

80%

An essay on a topic from a list of questions.

Feedback on assessment

Marks will be given for the close reading exercise, along with comments on each element of the task. Where appropriate I will explicitly signal how successful/less successful elements of the short exercise would make a difference in the context of an essay, and will give advice for improving skills when writing the essay. Students will be able (and encouraged) to make use of lecturer's office hours for more detailed in-person discussion of their exercise marks.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)
- UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V1V5 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
 - 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 4 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-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 2 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 3 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of all
 - Year 3 of all