

Philosophy 330: Knowledge and Reality
Winter 2008 -- MWF 11-12:20 -- Towers Hall Rm. 119
Course Syllabus

Course Overview and Objectives

This course is an introduction to metaphysics (“reality”) and epistemology (“knowledge”). The course is centered not on particular philosophers from history, but rather on various key issues in metaphysics and epistemology. An exposure to the central issues of metaphysics and epistemology is crucial to a philosophical education, and moreover is, to my mind, valuable for its own sake. We shall spend the first half of the course on metaphysics, and the second half of the course on epistemology.

The content of the course will be largely up to the students in it. Students will select the metaphysical and epistemological problems to be investigated and will, in each half of the course, be responsible for leading class sessions on their chosen problems. As a result of taking this course, students will

- Develop an understanding of the nature of metaphysical and epistemological problems.
- Hone their philosophical skills by attempting to resolve metaphysical and epistemological problems with the philosophical method of argumentation
- Develop their research abilities by identifying appropriate text and sources relevant to selected metaphysical and epistemological problems.
- Develop their oral communication skills by leading a class in which they teach others about selected metaphysical and epistemological problems.

Instructor Information

Professor Andrew P. Mills

Office: Towers Hall 323

Office Phone: 823-1368 (leave voicemail if I’m not there)

Winter Quarter Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11-12, and by appointment.

E-mail: amills@otterbein.edu

Texts

All of the metaphysics and epistemology readings will be available on Blackboard, but there is one text about philosophical writing that is required for this course. It is:

- Hugo Bedau, *Thinking and Writing about Philosophy*. Boston: Bedford and St. Martin’s Press, 1996. ISBN 9780312100827

Course Requirements

This is a text-based course, and it is imperative that you do the assigned reading (preferably twice) before coming to class each day. If you don’t do the reading, you will not learn the material, and you will find the class sessions much more difficult to follow. It is also imperative that you bring your readings with you to class, as there will be many times when we need to consult the text in the course of our investigation of it.

The second imperative is that you have an email account, and regular, reliable access to the internet. All of the course materials will be on the Blackboard site, and e-mail is the best and quickest way I know of to communicate with all of you, and for you all to communicate with each other. I will make regular updates to the course website, and you should get in the habit of checking it daily. If you do not have an email account, visit the Information Technology department, and get

set up. It is easy to do, and it is free.

There is a lot of writing in this class, but much of it is short, and it is intended to work together to enable you to grow as a philosophical thinker. The assignments for the first half of the course mirror the assignments for the second half. Due dates for the assignments is on the Reading and Assignment Schedule below.

Metaphysics

Assignment 1: 20 pts.	Writing Assignment based on “Whose Ship Is It, Anyway?” (2 pages)
Assignment 2: 50 pts.	Two problem statements (200 words each)
Assignment 3: 50 pts.	Revision of “Whose Ship Is It, Anyway?” paper (3 pages)
Assignment 4: 40 pts.	Progress Update on Researching your Metaphysical Problem (in teams)
Assignment 5: 100 pts.	Leading the class on your Metaphysical Problem (in teams)
Assignment 6: 190 pts.	Argumentative Essay on your Metaphysical Problem (1500 words)

Epistemology

Assignment 7: 20 pts.	Writing Assignment based on “What Does that Dog Look Like?”
Assignment 8: 50 pts.	Two problem statements (200 words each)
Assignment 9: 50 pts.	“How Can Perception Provide Knowledge?” paper (3 pages)
Assignment 10: 40 pts.	Progress Update on Researching your Epistemological Problem (in teams)
Assignment 11: 100 pts.	Leading the class on your Epistemological Problem (in teams)
Assignment 12: 190 pts.	Argumentative Essay on your Epistemological Problem (1500 words)

Course Portfolio

Assignment 13 100 pts	Portfolio with Reflective Essay
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Total: 1000 pts.

Participation

Because of the small size of this class and the collaborative nature of our enterprise, participation will be crucially important in this course—more so than in many other courses. I will expect all of you to attend class every day and be active participants in the discussion. Being a participant in class requires more than doing the reading and being in your seat. It requires engaging with me and the rest of the class as we struggle to work through these difficult topics.

Here is how participation will be evaluated. Twice during the course you will be asked to evaluate the participation of yourself and your colleagues. Based on these evaluations points either will be added to or subtracted from your course grade. The details of this are explained on the Participation Handout.

Grades

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

935+	A	800-834	B-	666-699	D+
900-934	A-	766-799	C+	635-665	D
866-899	B+	735-765	C	600-634	D-
835-865	B	700-734	C-	0-599	F

Late Work

Work turned in late without prior approval from me will be penalized 10% for each day it is late. Read that sentence again. If you foresee the impossibility of getting your assignments in on time *you must see me before the relevant due date*, so we can make an arrangement. Do not come to me afterwards with an excuse for why you missed the assignment. I will, of course, respect doctor's notes, and absences due to college-sponsored activities (such as theater performances and athletic events) but I will deduct 10% per day from late work if you haven't informed me ahead of time of your absence.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

I strongly recommend that you review the College policy on plagiarism and cheating. It can be found in the Campus Life Handbook on pp. 61-2. Plagiarized work, or work which is the product of academic dishonesty, will receive a grade of 0 (zero) and will be reported to the Academic Dean's office. I have caught plagiarists in the past, and I can tell you that it is an unpleasant experience for me as well as for the students involved. Please don't do it. You should review the college policy on academic dishonesty, as well as the discussion of plagiarism in *The Everyday Writer*.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Otterbein College is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities have access to an education. In order to receive appropriate accommodations in my class, you must first be registered with the Office for Disability Services (x1618 or Lmonaghan@otterbein.edu). I strongly encourage you to schedule an individual meeting with me as early in the quarter as possible to discuss your needs and accommodation requests. If necessary, we can work cooperatively with the Disability Services Coordinator to determine optimal accommodations in this course.

One Last Thing about Reading and Writing Philosophy

You will notice that there is a fair bit of writing in this class. One cannot learn philosophy via multiple choice exams, but one must learn it by writing. If you can write well, you can think well. You should have, or have at your ready disposal, a good dictionary and a writer's aide, such as *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White. You will find these to be invaluable tools not only for this class, but for any class in which you are required to write essays. As you can tell from the above elaboration of the grades, 'grammar counts'. If your writing is sloppy, your reader cannot figure out what it is you are trying to say, and, as a result, you will likely get a low grade. In the age of computers and spell-checkers, there is no excuse for misspellings, but do not rely on spell-checkers alone. Proof-read your papers. You might find it helpful, when proof-reading, to read your paper aloud; often times one's ear can catch awkward prose better than one's eye can. When it comes to the peculiarities of reading philosophy, I cannot stress enough that almost every reading selection needs to be read more than once. And *not* with a highlighter pen. Take notes with a pen or pencil. Don't simply underline. This will be of almost no help to you. If you don't understand what you are reading, write down what obstacle you are confronting. Be an *active reader*. Talk back to the text. Ask it (and me!) questions. If there is a word you don't know, look it up in a dictionary. You will become better at reading philosophy once you start writing philosophy, so start writing as soon as you can.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Note: All Readings on Blackboard Course Page unless otherwise noted.

Week I		DUE
Jan 7	Introduction to Course <u>A Case Study</u> : George, Bertrand, and The Wittgenstein Brothers	
9	Introduction to Metaphysics Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter van Inwagen, “Introduction” from his <i>Metaphysics</i> • Peter van Inwagen, “The Nature of Metaphysics” 	Assgn. 1 (attorneys)
11	Introduction to Metaphysics Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter van Inwagen, “Metaphysics” from <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> • Stephen Laurence and Cynthia MacDonald, “Introduction: Metaphysics and Ontology” 	Assgn. 1 (judges)
Week II		
14	Identity over Time and Change of Composition Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brian Smart, “How to Reidentify the Ship of Theseus” • Lawrence Davis, “Conditions of Identity” • Francis Dauer, “How Not to Reidentify the Parthenon” • Brian Smart, “The Ship of Theseus, the Parthenon, and Disassembled Objects” 	
16	Identity over Time and Change of Composition Read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E. J. Lowe, “Identity over Time and Change of Composition” • Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, “Of Confused Subjects which are Equivalent to Two Subjects: an Excerpt from <i>The Port-Royal Logic</i>” • Roderick Chisholm, “Identity through Time” 	
18	Taking Stock of Metaphysical Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have we learned about what metaphysical problems are and how they get answered? • We will identify the metaphysical problems that each student will pursue over the next three weeks. • We will also arrange the schedule for Weeks IV and V. 	Assgn. 2
Week III		
21	No School Today—Martin Luther King, Jr Day	
Tuesday 22		Assgn. 3
23	No Class Meeting Today: Research Metaphysics Problem	
25	No Class Meeting Today: Research Metaphysics Problem	Assgn. 4

Week IV		
28	Student-selected Metaphysical Problem 1 Read: • TBA	Assgn. 5 (from today's presenters)
30	Student-selected Metaphysical Problem 1 Read: • TBA	
Feb 1	Student-selected Metaphysical Problem 2 Read: • TBA	Assgn. 5 (from today's presenters)
Week V		
4	Student-selected Metaphysical Problem 2 Read: • TBA	Assgn. 6 (from Prob. 1 presenters)
6	Student-selected Metaphysical Problem 3 Read: • TBA	Assgn. 5 (from today's presenters)
8	Student-selected Metaphysical Problem 3 Read: • TBA	Assgn. 6 (from Prob. 2 presenters)
Week VI		
11	Introduction to Epistemology <u>A Case Study</u> : What Does that Dog Look Like?	Assgn. 6 (from Prob. 3 presenters)
13	Introduction to Epistemology Read: • Keith DeRose, "What is Epistemology? A Brief Introduction to the Topic" • Joseph Cruz, "Epistemology" entry from the <i>Nature Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science</i> • Peter Klein, "Epistemology" entry in <i>Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>	Assgn. 7 (applicants)
15	Read: • Matthias Steup, "Epistemology" entry from <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>	Assgn. 7 (accountants)
Week VII		
18	Perception • Bertrand Russell, Chapters 1-2 from <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> • C. D. Broad, "Some Elementary Reflexions on Sense-Perception" • W. H. F. Barnes, "The Myth of Sense Data"	

20	Perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Crane, “The Problem of Perception” entry in <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> • Adam Morton, “Perception”, Chapter 2 of <i>A Guide through the Theory of Knowledge</i> 3rd ed. 	
22	No class meeting.	Assgn. 8
Week VIII		
25	Taking Stock of Epistemological Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have we learned about what epistemological problems are and how they get answered? • We will identify the epistemological problems that each student will pursue over the next three weeks. • We will also arrange the schedule for Weeks IX and X 	
Tuesday 26		Assgn. 9
27	No class meeting—work on your Epistemological Problem	
29	No class meeting—work on your Epistemological Problem	Assgn. 10
Week IX		
Mar 3	Student-selected Epistemological Problem 1 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	Assgn. 11 (from today’s presenter)
5	Student-selected Epistemological Problem 1 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	
7	Student-selected Epistemological Problem 2 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	Assgn. 11 (from today’s presenters)
Week X		
10	Student-selected Epistemological Problem 2 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	Assgn. 12 (from Prob. 1 presenters)
12	Student-selected Epistemological Problem 3 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	Assgn. 11 (from today’s presenters)
14	Student-selected Epistemological Problem 3 Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	Assgn. 12 (from Prob. 2 presenters)
Exam Week		
Monday 17		Assgn. 12 (from Prob. 3 presenters)
Tuesday 18		Assgn. 13