



PHIL 3140: Epistemology  
Winter 2017  
Thursdays 2:35—5:25 p.m.  
Canal Building 2202

*Instructor information*

Dr. David Matheson  
Department of Philosophy  
3A48 Paterson Hall  
613-520-2600 ext. 1928  
[david.matheson@carleton.ca](mailto:david.matheson@carleton.ca)

Office hours: Mondays 1:00—3:00 p.m., Fridays 3:00—4:30 p.m. (Note that my administrative obligations as chair of the department will occasionally require me to cancel my regularly scheduled office hours. If you don't find me in my office during these hours, feel free to email me for an alternative appointment.)

*Description & objectives*

This course is an advanced introduction to epistemology—the branch of philosophy devoted to exploring the nature, varieties, and sources of knowledge. We will begin by looking at a standard view of the varieties and sources of knowledge, and a traditional conception of the nature of knowledge consonant with that view. We will then turn our attention to various contemporary theories of something that knowledge distinctively entails on the standard view and traditional conception, viz. epistemic justification (or justified belief). Finally, we will consider skeptical, naturalist, experimentalist, and relativist challenges to the standard view.

There are two main objectives to this course. The first, most obvious objective is to provide you with a satisfactory understanding of existing answers to epistemology's core questions. The second is to encourage you to develop your skill at assessing these answers, with a view to settling on answers of your own.

*Text & readings*

The following required text will guide the content and structure of our class discussions, and is available for purchase at the Carleton University Bookstore:

Feldman, R. (2003). *Epistemology (Prentice-Hall foundations of philosophy series)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall

The following supplementary readings are contained in the PHIL 3140 coursepack, also available for purchase at the Bookstore:

- Annis, D. (1978). A contextualist theory of epistemic justification. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15  
Ayer, A.J. (1956). Excerpt from *The problem of knowledge*. Penguin Books  
Boghossian, P. (2006). Excerpt from *Fear of knowledge*. Oxford University Press  
BonJour [1], L. (1978). Can empirical knowledge have a foundation? *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15  
BonJour [2], L. (2000). Excerpt from *In defense of pure reason*. Cambridge University Press  
Chisholm, R. (1977). Excerpt from *Theory of knowledge*. Prentice-Hall  
Clark, M. (1963). Knowledge and grounds: A comment on Mr. Gettier's paper. *Analysis* 24  
Cohen, L. J. (1983). Can human irrationality be experimentally demonstrated? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 6  
Descartes, R. ([1640] 1988). First meditation. Descartes, *Selected philosophical writings*, trans. J. Cottingham et al. Cambridge University Press  
Gettier, E. (1963). Is justified true belief knowledge? *Analysis* 23

- Goldman, A. (1979). What is justified belief? G.S. Pappas, ed., *Justification and knowledge*. D. Reidel
- Hume, D. ([1777] 1995). Excerpt from *Enquiries concerning human understanding and concerning the principles of morals*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., P.H. Nidditch, ed. Oxford University Press
- Lehrer, K. (1974). Excerpt from *Knowledge*. Oxford University Press
- Moore, G.E. (1939). Proof of an external world. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25
- Nozick, R. (1981). Excerpt from *Philosophical explanations*. Harvard University Press
- Plantinga, A. (1993). Excerpt from *Warrant and proper function*. Oxford University Press
- Plato. ([c. 400 BCE] 1987). Excerpt from *Theaetetus*, trans. R. Waterfield. Penguin Books
- Quine, W.V.O. (1969). Epistemology naturalized. Quine, *Ontological relativity and other essays*. Columbia University Press
- Stroud, B. (1984). Excerpt from *The significance of philosophical scepticism*. Oxford University Press

### *Evaluation*

Midterm examinations (2x30% = 60% of overall grade). There will be two in-class midterm examinations in the course, each consisting of short answer and brief essay questions. The first will be on February 2, the second on March 23. The point of these is to ensure that you are keeping up with the course lectures and readings.

Final essay (40% of overall grade). In lieu of sitting a formal final examination, you will also be expected to write a final essay of approximately ten pages (or 3,000 words) in length. The topic options for the essay will be posted on cuLearn the day after the final class. The essay will be due to me (electronically is fine) on or before the final day of the term's examination period, April 25. Warning: unless I have granted you an extension for verifiably exceptional circumstances (or you have applied for an official deferral), I will not accept the final essay from you after April 25.

### *Schedule*

The following schedule is subject to change, depending on how quickly we cover the relevant topics in the class lectures and discussions; some topics will take less time to cover than anticipated, others more.

Date	Topics	Readings
Jan 5	The standard view & traditional conception of knowledge	Varieties of knowledge; sources of knowledge; empiricism vs. rationalism; nonstandard sources; the tripartite analysis
Jan 12		The Gettier problem; the justification-doesn't-transmit response; the infallibilist response; the no-false-lemmas response; the no-defeaters response
Jan 19	Internalist theories of justification	Evidentialism as a form of internalism; the regress argument; Cartesian foundationalism; modest foundationalism
		Feldman, Ch. 1&2; Chisholm; Plato; Ayer
		Feldman, Ch. 3; Gettier; Clark
		Feldman, Ch. 4; Bonjour [1]

Jan 26		The raft vs. the pyramid; coherentism	Lehrer
Feb 2	<i>First midterm</i>		
Feb 9	Externalist theories of justification	The causal theory of knowledge (and justification?); reliabilism	Feldman, Ch. 5; Goldman
Feb 16		Truth-tracking theory; proper functionalism	Nozick; Plantinga
Feb 23	<i>Winter break</i>		
Mar 2		Contextualism—substantive & semantic; contextually basic beliefs; the regress argument revisited	Annis
Mar 9	The challenge of philosophical skepticism	Varieties of philosophical skepticism; skepticism about the external world	Feldman, Ch. 6; Descartes; Moore; Stroud
Mar 16		Skepticism about induction	Feldman, Ch. 7; Hume
Mar 23	<i>Second midterm</i>		
Mar 30	Naturalist & experimentalist challenges	Rationalism & the standard view; naturalist doubts about <i>a priori</i> justification; epistemic competence & the standard view; whether our epistemic incompetence can be experimentally demonstrated	Feldman, Ch. 8; Quine; Cohen; BonJour [2]
Apr 6	The challenge of relativism	Varieties of relativism; epistemic absolutism & the standard view; whether epistemic relativism can be refuted	Feldman, Ch. 9; Boghossian
Apr 25	<i>Final essay due</i>		

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2016-17)

### Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following:
  - student name
  - student number
  - course number and section
  - instructor's name
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

### Deferrals for Term Work:

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations (both formally scheduled and take-homes), you must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of the exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 3 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

### Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulation> <http://theuniversity.ca/acadregsuniv14/>)

### Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Religious obligation:** write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two

weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

### Important Dates:

Sept. 7	Classes start.
Sept. 20	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 10	Thanksgiving Day – University closed.
Oct. 24-28	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 25	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 9	Last day of classes, Fall term. Classes follow a Monday schedule.
Dec. 9	Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
Dec. 9	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 10-22	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses. Exams are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 22	Take-home exams are due.
Jan. 5	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 18	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 20	Family Day – University closed.
Feb. 20-24	Winter Break, no classes.
Mar. 24	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Apr. 7	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for Fall/Winter and Winter term courses.
Apr. 7	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 10-25	Final Examinations. Exams are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 14	Good Friday – University closed.
Apr. 25	Take-home exams are due.

### Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy">www.carleton.ca/philosophy</a> 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/registrar">www.carleton.ca/registrar</a> 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/sasc">www.carleton.ca/sasc</a> 520-7850
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Library <a href="http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/">http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/</a> 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	<a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/">http://www.library.carleton.ca/</a> 520-2735