

PHL232H1 – KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

Summer 2016

Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto (St. George campus)

1. CONTACT

INSTRUCTOR

Name: Aaron Henry

Office: Jackman Humanities Building 422

Office Hours: Mon. 12-2pm or by appoint.

Email: aaron.henry@mail.utoronto.ca

LECTURE

Lecture Location: SS 1085

Lecture Times: Mon. 3-6pm & Wed. 3-5pm

E-mail policy: E-mails must be sent from your UTORmail e-mail address and must include the course code (PHL232) in the subject line. E-mails are for administrative purposes *only* – questions about course material will be addressed during office hours. I reply to e-mails within one or two business days. If you haven't heard from me within two days, please do not hesitate to write again.

TUTORIAL

Tutorial Time and Location:

TUT (1) Wed. 2-3 pm/SS 2111

TUT (2) Wed. 5-6 pm/SS 2111

2. COURSE

OVERVIEW

This is an introduction to central topics in contemporary epistemology (the study of the nature of *knowledge*) and metaphysics (the study of *the structure of reality*). Our discussion of epistemology will begin with examining a powerful argument for *skepticism* about the external world: the view that we cannot know anything at all about the world outside the mind. We will then consider some prominent theories of knowledge, each with its own distinctive strategy for resisting the skeptic's challenge. Our discussion of metaphysics will focus on three inter-related phenomena: the nature of causation, the nature of persistence across time, and the nature of time itself. Questions to be considered include: is there causation in the world, and, if so, what is it for one event to cause another? Objects (including people) change over time, but what makes it the case that we still have the same object rather than an entirely new one? Can an object split into two without being destroyed? Is time travel logically possible? Might the future be pre-determined?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of any philosophy course is skill development. Some of the skills you will be developing in this course include:

- grasp of the distinctive problems and controversies in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology;
- ability to read, analyze, and critically evaluate a philosophical text;
- ability to write a well-argued paper;
- ability to defend your views in conversation.

EXPECTATIONS

What I expect from you:

- to attend lectures and tutorials;
- to come to lecture and tutorial on time, prepared to discuss assigned readings;
- to complete assignments on time and according to the instructions;

- to treat your peers, TA, and instructor with respect;
- to ask questions and seek help when you don't understand something;
- to take responsibility for your own learning.

What you can expect from your TA and me:

- to come prepared for each lecture/tutorial;
- to promote a positive and stimulating learning environment;
- to provide academic support throughout the term;
- to give constructive feedback on your written work;
- to treat you with respect;
- to think carefully about your questions and make a serious effort to answer them.

TEXTS

All readings will be available through the course website (see §4 for details)

3. ASSESSMENT

Weekly responses	(5% of final)	Due: Mondays
Short paper (3-4 pages)	(20% of final)	Due: May 25th
Long paper (4-6 pages)	(30% of final)	Due: June 15th
Final Exam	(35% of final)	TBD
Tutorial Participation	(10% of final)	

Weekly responses should be submitted in lecture. Short and long papers should be submitted to your TA in tutorial.

4. POLICIES

COURSE WEBSITE

All announcements and course documents will be posted on Blackboard. To access this site, go to portal.utoronto.ca and login with your UTORid and password. PHL232H will appear on the top right hand portion of the welcome page. Click on the link to access our site. You should check this site as well as your UTOR e-mail account regularly for updates.

LATENESS

Assignments will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for each day that they are late. Extensions may be granted if extraordinary circumstances are documented, but students should contact me to request an extension before the due date. Any assignment that is more than 5 days late will not be accepted. If you are submitting your paper late, please also send it electronically so that its submission can be dated.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences [...] All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources. (taken from <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>)

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom, or course materials, do not hesitate to speak to me and please make sure to contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible (at disability.services@utoronto.ca).

Other helpful support resources at St. George campus include:

- Students for Barrier-Free Access (<http://www.uoftsba.com>)
- Health & Wellness (<http://healthandwellness.utoronto.ca>)
- The Hart House Accessibility Fund (<http://harthouse.ca/accessibility>)
- Library Services for People with Disabilities (<http://onereach.library.utoronto.ca/services-for-people-with-disabilities>)

5. SUPPORT

ADVICE

The summer term goes *very* quickly! It's therefore important to keep up with the readings and to attend all lectures and tutorials. If you feel you need additional help with any of the course material, please don't wait to contact me.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Here is a link to information about the University of Toronto's many writing resources:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>

Here are links to information about how to write a good philosophy paper:

<http://undergraduate.philosophy.utoronto.ca/advice-for-writing-in-philosophy/>

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>

<http://catpages.nwmissouri.edu/m/rfield/guide.html>

6. SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
PART 1—EPISTEMOLOGY		
05/09	An argument for skepticism from a skeptical hypothesis; some traditional responses	Haack, "Foundationalism versus Coherentism: A Dichotomy Disclaimed"; Fumerton, "Foundationalist theories of Epistemic Justification" (§§1-2)
05/11	Gettier's challenge to tradition; epistemic externalism	Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"; Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?" Recommended: Goldman "A Causal Theory of Knowing"
05/16	Knowledge as tracking: Denying closure under known entailment	Nozick, excerpts from <i>Philosophical Explanations</i>
05/18	The semantic externalist response to skepticism	Putnam, "Brains in a Vat"
05/23	Victoria Day (no lecture)	
05/25	The contextualist response to skepticism	Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge" (1st PAPER DUE)
PART 2—METAPHYSICS		
05/30	Causation: Hume's problem, anti-realism, and the regularity theory	Hume, excerpts from <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> (parts of §I, iii, 2; §I, iii, 6; §I, iii, 14) and <i>An Enquiry</i>

		<i>Concerning Human Understanding</i> (part of §VII, ii); Mackie, “Causes and Conditions” (§§1-2)
06/01	Causation: the counterfactual theory and a primitivist theory	Lewis, “Causation”; Strawson, “Causation and Explanation”
06/06	Identity: The puzzles of identity and a 4-dimensionalist solution	Sider, excerpts from <i>Four-Dimensionalism</i> ; Lewis, “Survival and Identity” (1st PAPER RETURNED; Drop Date)
06/08	Identity: Problems for 4-dimensionalism; endurantism	Haslanger, “Persistence Through Time” (§§1-6); Optional: Ayers, “Substance: Prolegomena to a Realist Theory of Identity”
06/13	Time: The possibility of time travel	Lewis, “The Paradoxes of Time Travel”, Prior, “Some Free-thinking about Time”
06/15	Time: Arguments for the non-existence of time and for fatalism	McTaggart, excerpt from <i>The Nature of Existence</i> (2nd PAPER DUE)