

PH4210 Topics in Western Philosophy/PH6211 Advanced Epistemology

Naturalism in Epistemology

Meeting time: Monday, 10:00am-1pm

Venue: AS3-0523 (Seminar Room)

Modular Credits: 5

Instructor: Bob Beddor

Email: rbeddor@gmail.com

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2pm, Wednesdays 3-4pm

Course Description

This course will explore the topic of naturalism in epistemology. We will examine what it means to develop a naturalistic epistemology and consider whether the project of developing such an epistemology is well-motivated. We will also explore in depth some specific examples of naturalistically oriented accounts of knowledge and justification, with particular emphasis on reliabilist theories. Other topics include the role of the experimental methods in epistemology, epistemic expressivism as a form of naturalism, and the viability of the naturalistic program in philosophy more generally.

Format and Reading Availability:

Since this is a small class, it will be largely discussion-based. Each week we will focus on a particular topic. You will be expected to have read the assigned texts in advance. Readings will be made available on IVLE.

Grading

The grade will consist of four components, summarized below.

Attendance/Participation (15%)

Participation is vital for a small honors level seminar – I certainly don't want to have to lecture for three hours every meeting! In order to encourage participation, part of the participation grade is to email me at least one short question/comment on the reading before each class. (To get credit, please email me your question at least 1 hour before class starts.)

Two Short Written Responses (20% total, 10% each)

You will also be expected to write two short responses to a specific aspect of one of the readings. The response should be focused on a particular argument in one of the papers – you should briefly summarize the argument, and then engage with it critically, by either offering an original criticism of it, or extending the argument in some way. These responses should only be 500 words (750 words max).

Presentation (20%)

You will also be expected to pick a topic from the syllabus to present on. Presentations can be devoted to a single reading on the topic, or they can be devoted to multiple readings relating to a topic. You should aim to present for about 10-15 minutes, and then field questions from the class for another 5-10 minutes. *You are expected to prepare a short handout to accompany your presentation, and you should email the handout to me at least three days (72 hours) before the presentation.* (Completing the handout and sending it in advance is part of the presentation grade.) You are encouraged to think of the presentations as warm up for the final paper: they're an opportunity to read papers on a topic with particular care, and develop original questions and objections in response to those papers.

Final Paper (45%)

The largest component of the grade is the final paper. Your final paper gives you the opportunity to research a particular topic in depth, culminating in a paper that develops a sustained argument and demonstrates a mastery of the relevant literature. The final paper is due **Monday, April 9th**.

Week 1 – Monday, Jan 15th

Intro

Week 2 – Monday, Jan 22nd

What is Naturalized Epistemology?

Required Reading:

- Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized"
- Kim, "What is Naturalized Epistemology?"

Week 3 – Monday, Jan 29th

Reliabilism, Part I: Introducing Reliabilism

Required Reading:

- Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"
- Conee and Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism"

Recommended Reading:

- Goldman and Beddor, "Reliabilist Epistemology" (SEP)

Week 4 – Monday, Feb 5th

Reliabilism, Part II: Challenges to Reliabilism

Required Reading:

- Vogel, "Reliabilism Leveled"

Recommended Reading:

- Weisberg, "The Bootstrapping Problem"
- Cohen, "Justification and Truth"

Week 5 – Monday, Feb 12th (First short response due)

Reliabilism and evidentialism: enemies or friends?

Required Reading:

- Comesana, "Evidentialist Reliabilism"
- Goldman, "Towards a Synthesis of Reliabilism and Evidentialism"

Recommended Reading:

- Nagel, "Knowledge and Reliability"

Week 6 – Monday, Feb 19th

Reliabilism and Defeat

Required Reading:

- Beddor, "Process Reliabilism's Troubles with Defeat"

Recommended Reading:

- Tang, "Reliability Theories of Justified Credence"

RECESS WEEK – Feb 24th – March 4th

Week 7 – Monday, March 5th

Causal and modal theories of knowledge

Required Reading:

- Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing"
- Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (selections)

Week 8 – Monday, March 12th (Second Short Response Due)

Epistemic Expressivism, Part I: Introducing Epistemic Expressivism

Required readings:

- Field, "Epistemology without Metaphysics"

Recommended Reading:

- Chrisman, "Epistemic Expressivism"

Week 9 – Monday, March 19th

Epistemic Expressivism, Part II: Arguments Pro and Con

Required Reading:

- Greco, "Epistemological Open Questions"
- Lynch, "Truth, Value, and Epistemic Expressivism"

Recommended Reading:

- Greco, "A Puzzle About Epistemic Akrasia"
- Carter and Chrisman, "Is Epistemic Expressivism Incompatible with Inquiry?"

Week 10 – Monday, March 26th

Epistemic Expressivism, Part III: General Problems for Expressivism

Required Reading:

- Schroeder, "What is the Frege-Geach Problem?"
- Dorr, "Non-cognitivism and Wishful Thinking"

Week 11 – Monday, April 2nd

Empirical Methods in Philosophy, Part I: Exploring Intuitional Variation

Required Reading:

- Weinberg et al., "Normativity and Intuitions"
- Nagel et al., "Lay Denial of Knowledge for Justified True Beliefs"
- Machery et al., "Gettier Across Cultures"

Recommended Reading:

- Swain et al., "the Instability of Philosophical Intuitions: Running Hot and Cold on Truetemp"

Week 12 – Monday April 9th FINAL PAPER DUE

Empirical Methods in Philosophy, Part II: What Good are Intuitions?

Required Reading:

- Nado, "Why Intuition?"
- Goldman, "Philosophical Naturalism and Intuitional Methodology"

Recommended Reading:

- Nagel, "Epistemic Intuitions"
- Sosa, "Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Intuition"

Week 13 – Monday, April 16th

Empirical Methods in Philosophy, Part III: What Good are Intuitions? (Continued)

Required Reading:

- Nagel, "Intuitions and Experiments: A Defense of the Case Method in Epistemology"
- Williamson, "Philosophical 'Intuition' and Scepticism about Judgement"