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Office Hours: Thursdays, 15–16h
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Knowledge and Its Problems

Lecture

Wednesdays, 12–14h

Max-Kade-Auditorium 1 (Old University Building)

Syllabus from 15 November 2022

This course offers an overview of contemporary epistemology and introduces the basics of philosophical logic (propositional and predicate logic). At the same time, it introduces non-philosophy students to philosophy in the sense of working on conceptual problems, questions and arguments. Students of all disciplines will profit from the introduction to conceptual thinking and logic in the first three sessions.

The primer on propositional and first-order logic is based on standard textbooks for logic in philosophy. The overview of epistemology is structured according to Michel Williams (2001: 1–12) five systematic problems of epistemology:

- (i) *The Analytical Problem*. What is knowledge and how can we define it? The course introduces the so-called “standard analysis of knowledge” as justified true belief (JTB) and the famous counterexamples by E. Gettier. We then discuss the most important contemporary theories of knowledge (internalism, externalism, virtue epistemology, knowledge-first epistemology etc.) with a focus on their core ideas and arguments.
- (ii) *The Problem of Scepticism*. Can we know anything at all? How can we know that we do (not)? The course outlines the most common sceptical positions and arguments (Agrippa’s trilemma, Cartesian scepticism) as well as the attempts to refute them.
- (iii) *The Problem of Boundaries*. What different kinds (know-how, know-that) and sources (perception, testimony, memory) of knowledge are there? How do we explain and distinguish them? The course focuses on testimony as a source of knowledge and the resulting recognition of the social aspects of epistemology.
- (iv) *The Problem of Value*. Why do we aspire to gain knowledge? Why does true belief not suffice? The course discusses the intertwinement of values and knowledge by considering contributions from feminist epistemology.
- (v) *The Problem of Method*. How do we gain knowledge? What role do rationality and reason play in epistemology? How should we do epistemology? The course concentrates on the last question and considers different traditions in epistemology.

General Reading

Nagel, Jennifer (2014): *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pritchard, Duncan (2014): *What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?* Third ed. London: Routledge.

Tanesini, Alessandra (1999): *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Williams, Michael (2001): *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Graded Examination I (30%): Students must give a short (10min) presentation of one core text in the workgroups to be eligible for the final written exam. These presentations can be held by two students, but not by larger groups. They are intended to open up the discussion in class and should answer three questions:

- (a) What is the main argument in the text? How can we express its main thesis?
- (b) How does the argument work?

- (c) Where do you see problems? Identify where you find an argument hard to understand and where you think an argument is inconclusive.

Please be aware that you should *reconstruct* the argument, not just summarise all of the text. Since you will not have time to include every detail, you must decide what is important and what is not. It is far better if we discover in the discussion that we do need some of the left-out passages than if you try to cramp everything into the presentation.

Graded Examination II (70%): The final exam will be a written exam on **8th of February 2023**. The Re-sit date is **8th of March 2023**. The exam consists of two parts: A first part with knowledge questions that require short answers about material covered in the lecture (including logic), and a second part with essay question to choose from. Further information about the exam will be given in the lecture.

Guiding Questions: To help you with the reading, we will upload guiding questions on ILIAS every week. You can use them to orient your text or write an answer in order to practice for the exam. You can also get feedback for your answers from your workgroup tutor but please talk to them before handing anything in.

Attendance & Punctuality: The attendance of the lecture and the workgroup is mandatory for LAS students. The UCF standard policy applies (see ILIAS LAS Info Board --> Study Organisation --> Handbooks and Policies). Note that you are expected to arrive punctually for workgroups and the lecture. Presuming that your time is more valuable than everybody else's time is simply arrogant, if not rude.

Philosophy students can earn 3 ECTS by attending the lecture and writing a short essay (2-3 pages) at the end of the term (due by **10th of February 2022**). They are free to join the workgroups, if they are not filled to capacity. A list of essay questions will be provided two weeks before the due date; if you want to write about a topic of your own choosing, please contact me before you start.

All core texts will be made available via ILIAS.

Sessions

#	Date	Topic	Core Texts	Further Reading (optional)
1	19.10.2022	What Is Epistemology and Why Should We Care?	Michael Williams (2001 PK), <i>Problems of Knowledge</i> , 1–12.	Catherine Z. Elgin (1998), "Epistemology's End."
2	26.10.2022	Statements, Arguments and Inferences (Logic I)	Virginia Klenk (2007 [1983]), <i>Understanding Symbolic Logic</i> , 1–20.	Susanne K. Langer (1967), <i>An Introduction to Symbolic Logic</i> , 45–81.
3	2.11.2022	Evaluating Truth-Values (Logic II)	Virginia Klenk (2007 [1983]), <i>Understanding Symbolic Logic</i> , 33–50.	Graham Priest (2017 [2000]), <i>Logic</i> , 7–23 and 45–52.
4	9.11.2022	Quantifiers: Existence and Universality (Logic III)	Virginia Klenk (2007 [1983]), <i>Understanding Symbolic Logic</i> , 201–224.	Ernest Lepore (2009 [2000]): <i>Meaning and Argument</i> , 129–154.
5	16.11.2022	What is Knowledge? (The Analytical Problem I)	Edmund L. Gettier (1963), "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"	Plato (1997), <i>Theaitetos</i> , 146c–147c, 151d–152b, 187b–187e, 237c/d.
6	23.11.2022	Knowledge after Gettier (The Analytical Problem II)	Linda Zagzebski (1994), "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems."	Alvin I. Goldman (1967), "A Causal Theory of Knowing."

#	Date	Topic	Core Texts	Further Reading (optional)
7	30.11.2022	Justifications Inside Out (The Analytical Problem III)	Duncan Pritchard (2014), <i>What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?</i> , 31–41.	Alessandra Tanesini (1998), “The Practices of Justification.”
8	7.12.2022	What is Truth? (The Analytical Problem IV)	Bertrand Russell (2001), “Truth and Falsehood.” John L. Austin (2001), “Truth.” We read only pp. 25–31!	Linda Martín Alcoff (1997), “Immanent Truth.” Michael Williams (1986), “Do We (Epistemologists) Need A Theory of Truth?”
9	14.12.2022	All in Vain? (The Problem of Scepticism)	René Descartes (2008 [1641]): <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , 13–24.	Michael Williams (1999), “Skepticism.”
10	21.12.2022	Sources of Knowledge (The Problem of Boundaries I)	Jennifer Nagel (2014), <i>Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction</i> , 72–86.	William Alston (1999), “Perceptual Knowledge.”
11	11.01.2023	Social Epistemology (The Problem of Boundaries II)	Miranda Fricker (2011), “Authority and Social Power: Towards a Truly Social Epistemology.”	Frederick F. Schmitt (1994), “Socializing Epistemology: An Introduction through Two Sample Issues.”
12	18.01.2023	Who Knows? (The Problem of Boundaries III)	Linda Alcoff (2007), “Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types.”	Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1993), “Epistemological Communities.”
13	25.01.2023	Why Do We Want Knowledge? What Kind of Knowledge Do We Want? (The Problem of Value)	Charles W. Mills (1998), “Alternative Epistemologies.”	Sally Haslanger (1999), “What Knowledge Is and What It Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology.”
14	01.02.2023	Knowledge in a Different Key (The Problem of Method)	Friedrich Nietzsche (1999 [1873]), “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense.”	Linda Martín Alcoff (2010), “Continental Epistemology.”
15	08.02.2023	Written Examination		

Full Biography

- Alcoff, Linda Martín (1997): Immanent Truth. In: *Science in Context* 10 (1), 97–112.
- (2007): Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types. In: Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*. Albany: SUNY Press, 39–57.
- (2010): Continental Epistemology. In: Jonathan Dancy, Ernest Sosa and Matthias Steup (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 287–292.
- Alston, William P. (1999): Perceptual Knowledge. In: John Greco and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 223–242.
- Austin, John L. (2001): Truth. In: Michael P. Lynch (ed.), *The Nature of Truth. Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 25–40.
- Descartes, René (2008 [1641]): *Meditations on First Philosophy. With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Translated by Michael Moriarty. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elgin, Catherine Z. (1998): Epistemology's End. In: Linda Martín Alcoff (ed.), *Epistemology: The Big Questions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 26–40.

- Fricker, Miranda (2011 [1998]): Rational Authority and Social Power. Towards a Truly Social Epistemology. In: Alvin I. Goldman and Dennis Whitcomb (eds.), *Social Epistemology. Essential Readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 54–68.
- Gettier, Edmund L. (1963): Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? In: *Analysis* 23 (6), 121–123.
- Goldman, Alvin I. (1967): A Causal Theory of Knowing. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 64 (12), 357–372.
- Haslanger, Sally (1999): What Knowledge Is and What It Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology. In: *Philosophical Perspectives* 13, 459–480.
- Klenk, Virginia (2007 [1983]): *Understanding Symbolic Logic*. 5. ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Langer, Susanne K. (1967): *An Introduction to Symbolic Logic*. 3., revised ed. New York: Dover Publications.
- Lepore, Ernest (2009 [2000]): *Meaning and Argument. An Introduction to Logic Through Language*. 2. ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mills, Charles W. (1998): Alternative Epistemologies. In: Linda Martín Alcoff (ed.), *Epistemology. The Big Questions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 392–410.
- Nagel, Jennifer (2014): *Knowledge. A very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, Lynn Hankinson (1993): Epistemological Communities. In: Linda Martín Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies*. London/New York: Routledge, 121–160.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich (1999 [1873]): On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense. In: idem, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Eds. by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 139–153.
- Plato (1997): *Complete Works*. Ed. by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis, IN: Hachette.
- Priest, Graham (2017 [2000]): *Logic. A Very Short Introduction*. 2. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pritchard, Duncan (2014): *What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?* 3. ed. London: Routledge.
- Russell, Bertrand (2001): Truth and Falsehood. In: Michael P. Lynch (ed.), *The Nature of Truth. Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 17–24.
- Schmitt, Frederick F. (1994): Socializing Epistemology. An Introduction through Two Sample Issues. In: Frederick F. Schmitt (ed.), *Socializing Epistemology. The Social Dimensions of Knowledge*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1–27.
- Tanesini, Alessandra (1998): The Practices of Justification. In: Linda Martín Alcoff (ed.), *Epistemology. The Big Questions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 152–164.
- Williams, Michael (1986): Do We (Epistemologists) Need A Theory of Truth? In: *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1), 223–242.
- (1999): Skepticism. In: John Greco and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 35–69.
- (2001): *Problems of Knowledge. A Critical Introduction to Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, Linda (1994): The Inescapability of Gettier Problems. In: *The Philosophical Quarterly* 44, 65–73.