

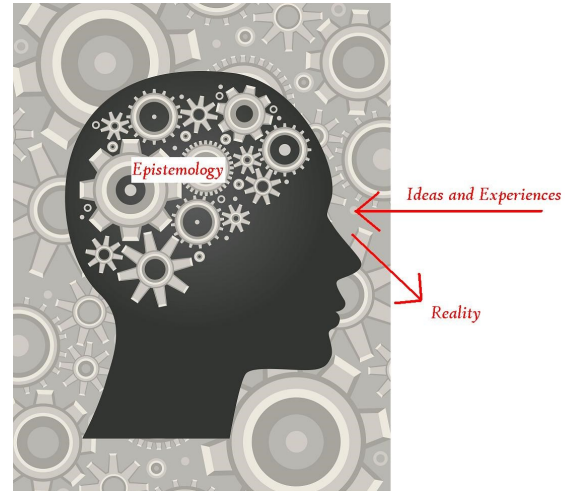
THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

SYLLABUS | PHIL 3341 | CRN #24440 | T/TH, 10:50AM-12:03PM | IRBY 311

Course Description

This course gives students a broad yet detailed introduction to contemporary epistemology, the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge and related topics such as truth, belief, rationality, expertise, ignorance, and testimony. Our focus will be almost entirely on new developments in epistemology; the goal will be to get a sense of where action is happening right now in this field. Our inquiry will include these questions:

- What is knowledge? Is knowledge possible? Is knowledge valuable?
- Is it possible to have knowledge despite the subjectivity of one's own perspective? Is there objective truth?
- What are beliefs? What does it mean to say that a belief is true? Do I have control over what I believe?
- What is expertise? How can one tell when another person has expertise? Can expertise be trusted and, if so, when?
- How is knowledge transmitted from one person to another? What social conditions influence the transmission of knowledge? In what ways do knowledge and ethics intersect?
- What can be learned about knowledge through the study of ignorance?
- How can one act well (virtuously) as an individual knower and also as a participant of a knowledge community?



Contact Info:

- **Office Location:** Irby 118d
- **Online Office Hours:** MW 2-2:30pm, Th. 10-10:45am (Discord, Zoom, & email) AND by appointment
- **Office Phone:** 501-450-5590
- **Email:** smason@uca.edu

This course fulfills one 3-credit hour elective in the Epistemology and Metaphysics distribution area. Students who take this course should be well-prepared to enter into a variety of epistemological conversations and enabled to pursue their own further study.



The word 'epistemology' comes from the Greek words *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (account or reason). Epistemologists study the theory of knowledge.

Course Texts

- Blackburn, Simon. *On Truth*. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Medina, José. *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Additional course readings will be available on Blackboard in the Online Classroom under "Required Readings."

Grading Scheme

Participation & Learning Cohorts	280 points (20 each week)
Short Essays (2)	120 (60/60) points
Term Paper & Online Conference	150 points



Active Participation (280 points)

In an ordinary semester, I would have an attendance policy with a limit for how many classes you can miss without receiving a grade reduction because students who attend class regularly and participate actively will learn more than those who do not. However, this is not an ordinary semester.

As a result, my **attendance policy** will be as follows:

- I am going to assume that you are interested in this subject matter and that your goal is to learn. This assumption is well-supported by the fact that a) this is an elective class, and b) being here is costing you something (time, money, opportunity cost, etc.) I have done my best to prepare content for you that is important, relevant, accessible, and, quite frankly, that I hope will blow your mind. I think you will miss out if you don't attend.
- I will be tracking attendance in order to comply with UCA guidelines and to have data for contact tracing, financial aid, etc. In case a student needs to quarantine or cannot attend in person, participation points may be earned by being present onsite in class, attending a virtual class.
- **If you stop actively participating in the course (defined as: no attendance, no assignment submissions, no contact for 1 week), I will send you an email to see if you need support. You will have one week to respond. If you do not respond (2 weeks no contact), I will administratively withdraw you from the course for non-attendance.**

Active participation is an essential part of the course. Each class day's content provides the opportunity for you to earn up to 10 participation points. These points will be allocated for:

- Actively participating in small group and large group discussions (in class/virtual, or equivalent online)
- Contributing to your group's notes and assignments on Google Docs
- Asking and answering good questions
- Using Perusall (when applicable) for active reading, annotations, and conversations.

Your attendance/participation score is the result of your total involvement in the course. If you cannot attend class for some reason (say, because you are sick), but you contact me as soon as possible, participate in online activities, and complete the required assignments, then this will count as your active participation for that week. Unless an extension has been given, all material should be completed during the week it is assigned. **It is important to let me know right away if there is a problem so that we can solve it together.**

Classroom Culture Statement

This course will involve thinking deeply about controversial issues and you should expect to encounter viewpoints that challenge your own beliefs. I encourage you to view these challenges as opportunities to learn about perspectives that may differ widely from your own and to practice the skill of interacting respectfully and sympathetically with someone, despite the fact that you may strongly disagree with their point of view. Although debate and critical analysis are encouraged, discrimination against any members of this classroom community based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or religion is absolutely unacceptable.

Everyone is welcome here.

Essays (120 points)

These two sets of short essays will ask you to reflect and take a position on content from the course. They are not research papers, but will be more like essay exams. Prompts will be provided at least one week before the due date, and should be uploaded to Blackboard.

Term Paper and Online Symposium (150 points)

Your essay provides the opportunity for you to do in-depth research on one of the course topics.

Expect your paper to undergo several rounds of revision, including peer reviews, an online conference presentation, and additional feedback from your instructor. Points will be divided in the following way:

- 10 points: on-time proposal
- 20 points: presentation at Theories of Knowledge Online Symposium
- 20 points: 2 peer reviews @ 10 points each
- 100 points: final draft

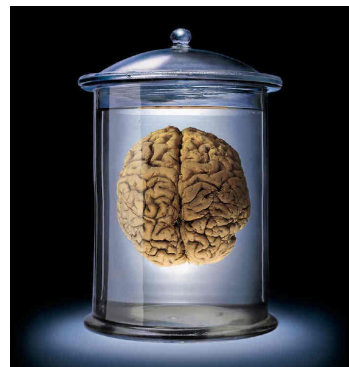
All essays should be typed, 11 or 12 point font (Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman), 1-inch margins. You should use APA, MLA, or Chicago for citations. All essays must be submitted electronically on Blackboard (email and hard copy will not be accepted). Further instructions are available on Blackboard.

Late Work Policy

It is helpful to have strict deadlines for assignments so that everyone can plan accordingly. I have provided due dates in the course schedule. Please note them carefully.

However, flexibility is also important. I am generally willing to give extensions to a deadline if there is some reason you need one.

Note, however, that in order to be eligible for an exemption it is your responsibility to notify me right away, in advance of the deadline if possible. If you do not promptly contact me to arrange an extension, late work will receive one letter-grade reduction per day late up to 5 calendar days after the assignment is due.



Course Schedule

The instructor may modify the schedule as necessary. All modifications will be announced on Blackboard.

(BB) = available for download on Blackboard under Course Resources, Supplementary Readings

R, 8/20: Course introduction, syllabus review, opening discussion

T, 8/25: Blackburn, *On Truth*, Introduction and Ch. 1-3

R, 8/27: Blackburn, *On Truth*, Ch. 4-6

T, 9/1: Blackburn, *On Truth*, Ch. 7-8

R, 9/3: Blackburn, *On Truth*, Ch. 9 & excerpt from Mercier & Sperber, *The Enigma of Reason*

T, 9/8: Blackburn, *On Truth*, Ch. 10-11

R, 9/10: Nguyen, "Epistemic Bubbles and Echo Chambers" (BB)

T, 9/15: Nichols, *The Death of Expertise*, Intro & Ch. 1 (BB)

R, 9/17: Zagzebski, "What is Knowledge?" (BB) AND Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (BB)

T, 9/22: Williams, "Skepticism" (BB) - Focus on Sections 1-5 **FIRST ESSAY DUE**

R, 9/24: Ungar, "Ignorance as an under-identified social problem" (BB)

T, 9/29: Sullivan, "White Ignorance and Colonial Oppression: Or, Why I Know So Little about Puerto Rico" (BB)

R, 10/1: Medina, "Ignorance and Racial Insensitivity" (BB)

T, 10/6: Alcoff, "How is Epistemology Political" (BB)

R, 10/8: Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Intro and Chapter 1, "Testimonial Injustice"

T, 10/13: Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Chapter 2, "Prejudice in the Credibility Economy"

R, 10/15: Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Chapter 3, "Towards a Virtue Epistemological Account of Testimony" (BB) AND Robertson, Testimonial Virtue (BB)

T, 10/20: Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, Chapter 7, Hermeneutical Injustice (BB)

R, 10/22: Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing" (BB)

T, 10/27: Abramson, Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting (BB)

R, 10/29: Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology" (BB) **SECOND ESSAY DUE**

T, 11/3: Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, Foreword, Introduction, and Chapter 1

R, 11/5: Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, Chapter 2

T, 11/10: Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, Chapter 3

R, 11/12: Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, Chapter 4

T, 11/17: Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, Chapter 5

R, 11/19: Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, Chapter 6 **PAPER PROPOSALS DUE**

T, 11/24 & R, 11/26: Thanksgiving Break; Course Transitions to Online

T, 12/1: **Online Symposium, Day 1: ROUGH DRAFTS DUE FOR PRESENTERS**

R, 12/3: **Online Symposium, Day 2: ROUGH DRAFTS DUE FOR PRESENTERS**

R, 12/10: **FINAL PAPERS DUE ON BLACKBOARD** (no class meeting)

Important Information

Please read the following information carefully. These notifications are required by the UCA administration to appear on all UCA course syllabi.

- ◇ **Face Coverings Statement:** All students are expected to comply with the University policy regarding face coverings (see <https://uca.edu/coronavirus/students/>).
- ◇ **Academic Integrity Statement:**

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.
- ◇ **Americans with Disabilities Act:**

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.
- ◇ **Building Emergency Plan:**

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.
- ◇ **Title IX Disclosure:**

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.
- ◇ **Student Handbook:**

Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with all policies in the [Student Handbook](#), especially the Academic Policies and the Sexual Harassment Policy.