

**HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
***Philosophy 2500F: Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge***  
**2014-15**

**Fall Term, 2014**

**Prerequisites: none**

**Mondays, 11:30-12:30, W6**

**Wednesdays, 11:30-1:30pm, W6**

**Instructor: Dr. Steve Bland**

**Office: A304**

**Office hours: Mondays, 12:30-2:30pm**

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The study of knowledge, known as epistemology, is of fundamental importance to nearly every philosophical endeavor. All philosophers – all human beings, for that matter – have a vested interest in knowing when and how their claims are justified. In this course we will critically examine various concepts and theories of knowledge. We will be concerned, in particular, with such questions as: what, if anything, can be known? What distinguishes knowledge from mere belief? How much of our knowledge rests on experience? What is the structure of human knowledge? By considering and discussing these issues, it is hoped that students will develop not only many of their own epistemological views, but an important set of skills for evaluating knowledge claims.

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course has the following objectives:

1. To teach students how to think and write clearly and critically. These are important skills not only within academia, but within both personal and professional realms more generally. Developing these skills will crucially involve learning how to identify, formulate, and defend arguments.
2. To give students a basic understanding of some of the most significant issues in epistemology, and an appreciation for why they are important to philosophers and non-philosophers alike.
3. To impart to students many of the skills necessary to properly evaluate the knowledge claims that are important to them.

### **CLASS METHODS**

This course consists of two lectures per week. Although much of the lecture will be delivered by the instructor, students will be expected to attend class having done all of the readings and prepared to contribute to class discussions.

## TEXTS

Lawrence BonJour. *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*, Second Edition. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

This book is available at the *Western Bookstore*.

## METHODS OF EVALUATION

### 10% Class Participation

The bulk of this grade will be determined on the basis of attendance, but a perfect attendance record, by itself, will not earn a perfect participation grade. In addition, you will be expected to make informed contributions to the class by way of asking questions, interpreting texts, and offering arguments.

### 10% Discussion Questions (due at the end of every new lecture)

At every lecture, you will be asked to write down an answer to a topical question and hand it in at the end of lecture. The purpose of this exercise will be to stimulate your interest and involvement by making explicit your intuitions about the topics under discussion. It will also provide you with the opportunity to evaluate the reliability of your philosophical intuitions, and possibly use them to motivate your arguments. All questions must be completed in class, so it is very important that you bring **a pen and paper** with you to every class. All questions will receive a grade of either 0 or 1. As long as you put some thought into your answer, it will receive a grade of 1.

### 20% A Dialogue on Radical Scepticism (to be submitted and performed on October 15th)

Many philosophers have argued for their views by presenting a dialogue between a variety of characters, some of whom agree with the views under consideration while others do not. This mode of exposition is not only entertaining, but critically effective. In groups of three or four, you will be responsible for writing and acting out a five to ten minute dialogue on the subject of radical scepticism. This exercise is meant to develop your abilities to apply philosophical ideas to concrete situations and develop arguments for opposing positions.

### 5% Essay Outline (due November 26<sup>th</sup>)

Two weeks prior to the due date of the essay, you will be required to submit an outline that includes: your thesis, the principal argument for your thesis, possible counter-arguments, replies to the counter-arguments, and an annotated bibliography. These will be graded and handed back as soon as possible, so that you can make any necessary adjustments before writing your paper.

### 25% Essay (2000 words, due December 3<sup>rd</sup>)

You will be given several possible essay topics one month before the due date. In your essay

you will be expected to clearly state and effectively argue for your thesis. You are *strongly* encouraged to make an appointment to have your essay reviewed at the *Writing Center* before submitting it.

30% Final exam (December)

The final exam will cover course material from the entire term. The questions on the exam will be chosen from among the questions that are presented at the end of each lecture. These questions **will not be posted**, so you will have to come to class to see what they are.

LATE PENALTY: the penalty for submitting assignments late is 3% per day, including weekends, up to a maximum of 50%.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Week 1	The Concept of Knowledge	BonJour, Ch. 3
Week 2	The Concept of Knowledge	BonJour, Ch. 3
Week 3	Foundationalism and Coherentism	BonJour, Ch. 9
Week 4	Foundationalism and Coherentism	BonJour, Ch. 9
Week 5	The Problem of Induction	BonJour, Ch. 4
Week 6	A Priori Justification and Knowledge	BonJour, Ch. 5
Week 7	A Priori Justification and Knowledge	BonJour, Ch. 5
Week 8	Immediate Experience	BonJour, Ch. 6
Week 9	Knowledge of the External World	BonJour, Ch. 7
Week 10	Knowledge and Scepticism	BonJour, Ch. 12
Week 11	Internalism and Externalism	BonJour, Ch. 10
Week 12	Quine and Naturalized Epistemology	BonJour, Ch. 11
Week 13	Spill-over	

The schedule is subject to change. Please consult OWL for the latest version.



**Appendix to Course Outlines**

**Prerequisite Information**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### **Conduct of Students in Classes, Lectures, and Seminars**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and the University of Western Ontario implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. The academic and social privileges granted to each student are conditional upon the fulfillment of these responsibilities.

In the classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Students can avoid any unnecessary disruption of the class by arriving in sufficient time to be seated and ready for the start of the class, by remaining silent while the professor is speaking or another student has the floor, and by taking care of personal needs prior to the start of class. If a student is late, or knows that he/she will have to leave class early, be courteous: sit in an aisle seat and enter and leave quietly.

Please see the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/StudentLifeandSupportServices/StudentDiscipline>

### **Technology**

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited to, laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

### **Academic Accommodation for Medical/Non-Medical Grounds**

For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable SMC see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

[downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading]

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the instructor.

For non-medical grounds or for medical grounds when work represents less than 10% of the overall grade for the course, the student must submit a request to the instructor in writing

prior to the due date of an assignment, and immediately in the case of a test. (Or as soon as possible following a medical emergency) Students are protected under the Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy and so written requests need only include a broad and general explanation of the situation, and the approximate length of time required. At the discretion of the instructor, the granting of extensions and re-scheduled

tests may require the student to submit supporting either medical or non-medical documentation to the Academic Counsellor, who will then make the determination as to whether accommodation is warranted.

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_und\\_ergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_und_ergrad.pdf) .

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

The International Centre for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action." (CAI Fundamental Values Project, 1999).

A lack of academic integrity is indicated by such behaviours as the following:

- Cheating on tests;
- Fraudulent submissions online;
- Plagiarism in papers submitted (including failure to cite and piecing together unattributed sources);
- Unauthorized resubmission of course work to a different course;
- Helping someone else cheat;
- Unauthorized collaboration;
- Fabrication of results or sources;
- Purchasing work and representing it as one's own.

### **Academic Integrity: Importance and Impact**

Being at university means engaging with a variety of communities in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge and understanding in ways that are clear, respectful, efficient, and productive. University communities have established norms of academic integrity to ensure responsible, honest, and ethical behavior in the academic work of the university, which is best done when sources of ideas are properly and fully acknowledged and when responsibility for ideas is fully and accurately represented.

In the academic sphere, unacknowledged use of another's work or ideas is not only an offence against the community of scholars and an obstacle to academic productivity. It may also be understood as fraud and may constitute an infringement of legal copyright.

A university is a place for fulfilling one's potential and challenging oneself, and this means rising to challenges rather than finding ways around them. The achievements in an individual's university studies can only be fairly evaluated quantitatively through true and honest representation of the actual learning done by the student. Equity in assessment for all students is ensured through fair representation of the efforts by each.

Acting with integrity at university constitutes a good set of practices for maintaining integrity in later life. Offences against academic integrity are therefore taken very seriously as part of the university's work in preparing students to serve, lead, and innovate in the world at large.

A university degree is a significant investment of an individual's, and the public's, time, energies, and resources in the future, and habits of academic integrity protect that investment by preserving the university's reputation and ensuring public confidence in higher education.

**Students found guilty of plagiarism will suffer consequences ranging from a grade reduction to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. In addition, a formal letter documenting the offence will be filed in the Dean's Office, and this record of the offence will be retained in the Dean's Office for the duration of the student's academic career at Huron University College.**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

### **Policy on Special Needs**

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

[http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting\\_acc](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc)

### **Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained,

subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

### **Class Cancellations**

In the event of a cancellation of class, every effort will be made to post that information on the Huron website, <http://www.huronuc.ca/AccessibilityInfo> (“Class Cancellations”).

### **Accessibility**

Huron University College strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place as, and in a similar way to, other customers. We welcome your feedback about accessibility at Huron. Information about how to provide feedback is available at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/AccessibilityInfo>

### **Mental Health @ Western**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Program and Academic Counselling**

Philosophy students registered at Huron who require advice about modules and courses in Philosophy should contact Dr. S. D’Arcy, Chair – [sdarcy@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:sdarcy@huron.uwo.ca) Students should contact Academic Counselling on other academic matters. See the Academic Counselling website for information on services offered.

<http://huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/StudentLifeandSupportServices/CounselorsCounsellingServices>