

**Department of Philosophy
University of British Columbia**

**PHIL 101 001 Introduction to Philosophy
Winter 2021 – Summer Term 2 (July-August 2021)**

Instructor: Professor Alison Wylie

Class meetings: T/Th 10:00-1:00, Canvas Zoom link

Office hours: TBD and by appointment

Teaching assistants: Nathan Cockram, office hours TBA | Zoom link

Servan Dragulin, office hours TBA | Zoom link

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land on which it is situated has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

COURSE OVERVIEW

NOTE: this outline is tentative; the readings and topics listed may shift as we finalize the course schedule.

This course is about knowledge we can trust. We'll explore historical and contemporary philosophical accounts of evidence, truth, objectivity, and critical reasoning with the aim of introducing you to core philosophical problems in epistemology (philosophical theories of knowledge), and building a set of skills and resources for evaluating knowledge claims. We'll use these philosophical tools and resources to make sense of the massive overload of knowledge – including misinformation, “alternate facts,” deliberately misleading claims – that confront us on a daily basis. Focal topics and a tentative list of readings include the following:

- **Systematic doubt and skepticism:** selections from Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*; Descartes *Meditations*; Augustine (*Cogito* argument); Hume, *Enquiry* (“Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy”)
- **Logical self-defense – decoding arguments and identifying fallacies:** selections from Manley, *Reason Better: An Interdisciplinary Guide to Critical Thinking* (“Reasoning”)
- **Assessing evidence – observational and testimonial:** selections from Toulmin, *Uses of Argument*; Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery*; Popper, “Science: Conjectures & Refutations”
- **Epistemic ideals – truth and objectivity:** Williams, “Truth and Truthfulness”; Bok, [Lying: Moral Choice in Public & Private Life](#) (“Truthfulness, Deceit, and Trust”); Chapman & Wylie, *Evidential Reasoning* (“Objectivity Reconceptualized”)
- **Putting philosophical tools to work:**
 - Syme, “The Battle Between Fact and Feeling in ‘You’re Wrong About’”;
 - O’Connor and Weatherall, [Misinformation Age](#) (“Polarization and conformity”)
 - Frankfurt, “[Bullshit](#)”; selections from Bergstrom and West, [Calling Bullshit](#) (“The Nature of Bullshit”)
- **Epistemic virtues and the value of a diversity of perspectives:** selections from Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (testimonial and hermeneutical injustice); selections from Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Course goals: The hallmark of philosophical inquiry is a commitment to clarity and critical appraisal of the beliefs and values that guide our actions, that shape who we are, how we understand ourselves, our interactions with others, and the world we live in. The goals of this course include both content and skills:

- Critical thinking and argument analysis;
- Clarity of thought and expression in essays that are expository, analytic, and thesis-driven;
- An understanding of epistemic norms and ideals and an ability to apply them to concrete cases.

Requirements: Weekly posts and quizzes, two short essays, and a take-home exam.

Texts: All assigned readings will be available through library reserves and web links on Canvas.

Format: Synchronous class meetings will include short lectures and in-class discussion.