

For planning purposes. Details of the assignments and readings are subject to change.

PHIL 240

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PHIL 240: Intro to Epistemology

This course will provide an introduction to epistemology—the study of how and what we know—by focusing on the question of trust. We'll ask to what extent we can trust the world, ourselves, other people, and institutions. We'll draw on materials from Classical South Asian and contemporary analytic epistemology.

This course is **in-person** and attendance is mandatory. Our general plan will be to have a set of readings for each week. On Tuesdays, I'll give a formal lecture on the material. On Thursdays, we'll have about half an hour for open questions or to finish the lecture, and then you'll be given an assignment to complete in-class with a small group (see below for details).

Assignments and Grading Structure:

Our assessment scale follows [UBC's standard grading policy](#). Chat GPT or other AI tools are not permitted for any assignment in this class. Use of these tools will constitute plagiarism (see policy below).

1) Weekly Group Assignments (25%; due Thursdays at the end of class)

On Thursdays, you'll break into random small groups and each group will complete an assignment based on the week's readings and lectures. Each group will submit one copy of the assignment at the end of class. Generally, you'll be given a question to answer or a scenario to respond to.

Unless you are granted a formal Academic Concession (see Missed Work/Late Policy for details), you must be present in class to get credit for this assignment.

2) Short Answer Papers on Parts I, II, III, and IV of the course (15% each)

For each of these papers, I'll give you a prompt and you'll respond in approximately 500 words. Your response will be based on our class readings. You should **NOT** do outside research for these papers. All of our class sources must be properly cited within the text of the paper. You must give page numbers in your citations.

3) Final Paper (15%)

You'll be given a prompt about the course as a whole and you'll respond in approximately 750 words. Your response will be based on our class readings. You should **NOT** do outside research

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for these papers. All of our class sources must be properly cited within the text of the paper. You must give page numbers in your citations.

UBC's [Academic Integrity Policies](#) are in effect at all times in this class. AI tools such as Chat GPT are **NOT PERMITTED** for ANY assignments in this course. I take plagiarism very seriously and there will be consequences, ranging from failing the assignment to being reported to UBC's Academic Misconduct Committee, if you do not properly cite any and all sources you use in your assignments.

Statement of UBC Values and Resources

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available at <https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>

Missed Work/Late Policy

For the independent short-answer papers, you may request an extension of up to 48 hours. If you would like an extension of up to 48 hours, *just ask*. To get this extension, email BOTH me AND our TA requesting a specific amount of additional time (for example, you could ask for an additional 24 hours). You can ask for the extension at 11:58pm the day the assignment is due if you need to; as long as you email BOTH me AND our TA a request for a specific amount of additional time up to 48 hours, the request will be granted. **You do not need to give me an excuse or a justification. Please DO NOT send medical documentation or pictures.** I trust you, and I trust that if you're asking for an extension it's because you just need a little more time to produce your best work. If you do not request an extension in line with this procedure, I will deduct 5% from the assignment grade for each day that the assignment is late.

I will not grant any extension of more than 48 hours unless you file for a formal Academic Concession with the appropriate UBC office. Here's a link to UBC's guide to Academic Concessions for Arts Students: <https://www.arts.ubc.ca/degree-planning/academic-performance/academic-concession/>, and here's the link for Sciences Students: <https://science.ubc.ca/students/advising/concession>

The idea behind this two-tiered late policy (automatically granting short extensions if they're requested before the assignment is due but requiring long extensions to go through UBC's formal process) is that I know that there are many reasons why it might take longer than planned to produce high-quality intellectual work. An extension of 48 hours is unlikely to significantly affect your ability to keep up with the new work in the course, but if something longer than that is needed, there is a good chance that your ongoing work will be impacted. UBC has excellent

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resources for academic advising, and they can help you figure out a plan if there's a significant disruption. Please take advantage of these resources knowing that I will always follow whatever formal guidance they give us.

The weekly group assignments must be completed in-class and submitted at the end of class. If you are unable to be in class on a particular Thursday, you must file for a formal Academic Concession with the appropriate UBC office (see links above). If the concession is granted, I will send you the prompt and you will be allowed to complete it on your own.

The idea behind this policy is that it matters for your learning to be part of a community that regularly dedicates time to working through unfamiliar ideas. The Academic Concessions office is supposed to be able to handle small requests for accommodations based on illness, etc., in addition to larger requests. It's important for someone in these offices to know, and for you to have a record, if you end up having to request multiple accommodations. This policy is designed to make sure that you have access to the resources you need if something impacts your week-by-week ability to engage the course.

There are no required texts for you to buy. All of our readings will be accessible via Canvas.

Course Schedule

Part I: Trusting the world

Week 1 (Sept. 5th): talk about why we're talking about trust; read key passages from Nguyen, "Trust as an Unquestioning Attitude" together

Week 2 (Sept. 10th and 12th): Nāgārjuna and Nyāya Realism

Week 3 (Sept. 17th and Sept. 19th): Advaita anti-realism; first paper due at the end of this week

Part II: Trusting ourselves

Week 4 (Oct. 1st and Oct. 3rd): Descartes and deception

Week 5 (Oct. 8th and 10th): Pratyabhijñā on the selves we know through self-awareness

Week 6 (Oct. 15th and 17th): continue with Pratyabhijñā and Descartes; second paper due at the end of this week

Part III: Trusting others

Week 7 (Oct. 22nd and 24th): Testimony (Fricker)

Week 8 (Oct. 29th and 31st): Expertise (Goldman and podcast with Sean and Anand)

Week 9 (Nov. 5th and Nov. 7th): Trust and love; third paper due at the end of this week

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Part IV: Trusting institutions

Week 10 (**Nov. 14th ONLY**): Dharmakīrti on the Vedas

Week 11 (Nov. 19th and Nov. 21st): Trusting democratic institutions (Susanna Siegel in *Salience*)

Week 12 (Nov. 26th and Nov. 28th): Trusting algorithms

Week 13: (Dec. 3rd and 5th): No new readings; in-class activities related to your final paper

*****Final paper due at 11:59pm via Canvas on our exam day*****