

PHIL 240: Epistemology**Professor Christopher Mole (cmole@mail.ubc.ca)****Office Hours: Tuesdays 9am, Iona B155, and by appointment at other times.**

In this course we will be thinking philosophically about knowledge. The course will have three parts.

In the first part we will consider some questions about knowledge that philosophers in the Anglophone tradition have been concerned with since the sixteenth century. These include questions about when and how knowledge is possible, and about what it means to claim that something is known, rather than being an object only of belief, or of opinion.

In the second part of the course, we will be thinking about some of the special questions that arise when we consider the knowledge that we have of our own minds, and about the minds of other people.

In the third part we will be thinking about knowledge as a social phenomenon, and about the ways in which social and political factors influence the ways in which knowledge is produced and shared.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course you will:

- Be familiar with a number of classic and contemporary readings concerning knowledge
- Be able to explain philosophical ideas in a concise and cogent fashion.
- Be able to criticise and defend philosophical ideas in your own original writing.

Assessments:

Each of the three modules will involve a short writing assignment, each of which will be worth 15% of the final grade.

There will be a final exam, which will test your understanding of the readings, worth 35% of your final grade.

The remaining marks will be given for in-class exercises, and for participation in the process of providing peer review of preliminary drafts of the writing assignments.

Attendance:

Philosophy is best done through thinking and talking, so the discussions that will take place during the scheduled class hours are the main medium for instruction. It will

not be possible to do well in the course without attending these. The class meets three times each week, at 1pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in room 104 of the Frederic Lasserre Building.

Work Load:

You should expect to put in 9-10 hours of work for this course each week, including the time spent in class. One of the readings each week is designated as required. The questions in the final exam will pertain directly to these readings. Other readings are optional, and may help you to understand the material.

Policy on the Use of AI:

Students with poor language skill sometimes find that AI tools help them to write clearer prose, but such tools can easily cause their users to have a shallower understanding than they would otherwise have, so their use as anything other than a writing-tool is discouraged. The final exam will require you to have a detailed knowledge of the required readings, so it would be a bad mistake to suppose that a knowledge of those readings based on artificially generated summaries is sufficient.

Class recordings:

Canadian law permits recording conversations without the consent or knowledge of some parties, so you should be aware that, in this course as elsewhere, others may be recording the things that you say. If you make any recording of the class then you are not permitted to share it in any format, during or after the semester. This includes the uploading of recordings to online tools that may harvest data from them. Any sharing of recordings or other course materials is a breach of copyright, and may lead to academic discipline.

Learning Materials:

All readings will be made available through the courses Canvas site.

Office Hours:

Office hours may be used to discuss any aspect of the course. My office is in Room B155 of the Iona Building. I am available to students in this course on a drop-in basis on Tuesday mornings at 9am, and by appointment at other times. If you wish to make an appointment, send me an email.

Topics:

A detailed list of topics and readings is available on the course's Canvas site. The following is a tentative outline of the topics to be covered.

Module One – Classic Questions

Week One: Cartesian Scepticism and the *Cogito*

Week Two: Coherence vs. Foundations

Week Three: Induction and Abduction

Week Four: Moral Knowledge, Mathematical Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge

Module Two – Knowing the Mind

Week Five: Dreaming and the Limits of Introspection

Week Six: Attributing Mental States to Others

Week Seven: Knowing What You are Doing

Week Eight: Self-Knowledge, Self Deception, and Mental Health

Module Three – Knowledge at 21st Century Society

Week Nine: Group Knowledge

Week Ten: Marxist and Feminist Standpoint Theories

Week Eleven: Testimony

Week Twelve: AI and the Epistemology of Machine Learning

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 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 on the UBC Senate website.

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