



1. Module Information

Webpage for this module available through Moodle: <https://moodle.nottingham.ac.uk/>

Level: 2

Credits: 20

Module Convenor: Dr. Michael Hannon

Drop in Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm and Wednesdays 2-3pm in Humanities C03

Email: Michael.Hannon@nottingham.ac.uk

Note. I should reply to emails within 2 working days. If I am very busy you will be sent an acknowledgement email within 2 working days informing you of when I can reply more fully. I also encourage students to post questions on the discussion forums on the module's Moodle page.

2. Module Description

Module Outline

Aristotle's declaration that "All men by nature desire to know" might seem naive, given that we now apparently live in a 'post-truth era'. Fake news, alternative facts, and open scorn for expertise are major dangers for our way of life and dealing with them requires epistemology – the study of such topics as knowledge, evidence, justification, and so on. We will explore issues such as: the nature and value of knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and justification, the threat of skepticism, the role of testimony in acquiring knowledge, and various intellectual virtues and vices. Some questions we will tackle include: What is knowledge? Why should we care about it? What is our justification for believing things? Do we know that we're not brains in vats? Do we know anything at all?

Module Objectives

1. To familiarize you with some central concepts, ideas, and arguments in epistemology.
2. To help you cultivate a critical understanding of some of the central arguments and views in contemporary epistemology, as well as to enhance your abilities to clearly and concisely explain, criticize, and defend philosophical positions.
4. To improve the skills needed in any career, such as critical thinking, researching, writing, analyzing arguments, and problem solving. More broadly, to cultivate the capacities and desire for reflection and self-expression, for sharing ideas, and for dealing with problems to which there are no easy answers.

3. Structure of Teaching

Each week (except for the Directed Studies week) there will be one two-hour lecture and a one-hour seminar.

The lecture will be devoted to presenting more advanced material and to discussions of that material. I will expect you to study this carefully in advance of each lecture.

Seminars will be used for a mixture of activities including discussion of the seminar readings and how it connects to the lecture material, as well as preparation for writing your essay and tackling the exam. Discussion is a crucial part of this seminar; you should come each week armed with questions and comments of your own. I will also provide weekly questions for each seminar.

4. Module Content

4.1 Lecture Schedule

Lectures will take place at **3-5pm on Tuesdays in Law and Social Sciences Building A4**, starting on **29th January 2019**. Each lecture has some required reading as well as some optional supplementary readings (see Reading List below).

Lecture 1	Introduction: What Is Knowledge?	29 January
Lecture 2	Knowledge After Gettier	5 February
Lecture 3	Skepticism	12 February
Lecture 4	How Much Justification to Know?	19 February
Lecture 5	Contextualism	26 February
	Directed Studies Week	
Lecture 6	Norms of Knowledge and Justification	12 March
Lecture 7	Virtue and Vice Epistemology	19 March
Lecture 8	Disagreement	26 March
Lecture 9	Testimony and Fake News	2 April
Lecture 10	Epistemic Injustice	9 April

4.2 Seminar Schedule

Readings and questions for each seminar will be available on Moodle. Before the seminar you must have read, thought about, and made notes on the listed reading and answered the set reading questions. Below I provide some initial questions that capture the main topic of each seminar, but the list of set reading questions will be provided on Moodle.

Seminar 1: What Is Knowledge? (Week of Jan 28)

What is the difference between knowing and not knowing? Is knowledge justified true belief, or something more? We will also discuss the way the module will be organized.

Seminar 2: Knowledge after Gettier (Week of Feb 4)

There are plausible cases of justified true beliefs that are not knowledge. Should we conclude that knowledge is not justified true belief? Or should we reject our intuitive judgments in favor of the traditional theory of knowledge?

Seminar 3: Skepticism (Week of Feb 11)

Is there hardly anything, if anything at all, that we know? Does knowledge require us to be absolutely sure? If so, is there anything we are absolutely sure about?

Seminar 4: How Much Justification to Know? (Week of Feb 18)

How much justification is required for knowledge? What sort of basis is there for fixing the level of justification needed for knowledge? Is it related to our practical interests?

Seminar 5: Contextualism (Week of Feb 25)

Does whether you know depend on how much is at stake? Does it depend on the interests or concerns of other people? Can someone prevent you from knowing something just by mentioning the possibility of skepticism?

Seminar 6: Norms of Knowledge and Justification (Week of Mar 11)

Must we assert only what we know? Or must we say only what is true or reasonably believed? Knowledge also seems intimately connected to reasons for action. Is knowledge required for us to appropriately act on our beliefs?

Seminar 7: Virtue and Vice Epistemology (Week of Mar 18)

Is the aim of epistemology to promote intellectual well-being? What sorts of virtues and vices are distinctively epistemic? What is the relationship between epistemic virtue, knowledge, and justification?

Seminar 8: Disagreement (Week of Mar 25)

Should we be confident in our beliefs when reasonable people disagree with us? Can we gain insight into the rationality of our beliefs by thinking about deep disagreements with other people?

Seminar 9: Testimony and Fake News (Week of April 1)

What is 'fake news'? What are the epistemic features of social media testimony? Is it epistemically problematic to receive testimony from people who already share our views?

Seminar 10: Epistemic Injustice (Week of April 8)

Are some types of injustice distinctively epistemic? How does this connect with our epistemic dependence on the testimony of others? Do some injustices threaten the production and transmission of knowledge?

Timetables: Students are able to access their timetables online via

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academicservices/timetabling/view-timetables/viewwebtimetables.aspx>

Personal timetables will be provided for all students. Students will be automatically allocated to seminar groups and will be placed in the group that fits best their timetable.

4.3 Reading List

Below are the essential and suggested further readings for each topic. The suggested readings are optional, but you will be expected to have read all essential readings for both the lecture and seminar.

Recommended Reading

- Greco, John and Ernest Sosa. 1999. *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Blackwell.
- Hannon, Michael. 2019. *What's the Point of Knowledge?* Oxford University Press.
- Nagel, Jennifer. 2014. *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Topic 1. What Is Knowledge?

Lecture

- Gettier, E. 1963. 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?' *Analysis* 23: 121-3.
- Nagel, J. 2014. *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapters 1 and 4.

Seminar

- Foley, R. 2012. *When Is True Belief Knowledge?* Princeton, Chapter 1-5.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Radford, C. 1966. 'Knowledge: By Examples.' *Analysis* 27 (1): 1-11.
- Clark, M. 1963. 'Knowledge and Grounds. A Comment on Mr. Gettier's Paper.' *Analysis*, 24 (2): 46-48.

Topic 2. Knowledge After Gettier

Lecture

- Goldman, A. 1967. 'A Causal Theory of Knowing.' *Journal of Philosophy* 64: 357-372.

Seminar

- Kaplan, M. 1985. 'It's Not What You Know that Counts.' *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (7): 350-363.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Klein, P. 1971. 'A Proposed Definition of Propositional Knowledge.' *Journal of Philosophy* 68: 471-482.
- Zagzebski, L. 1994. 'The Inescapability of Gettier Problems.' *Philosophical Quarterly* 44: 65-73.

Topic 3. Skepticism

Lecture

- Stroud, B. 1984. *The Significance of Philosophical Skepticism*. Oxford, Chapter 1.

Seminar:

- Unger, P. 1971. 'A Defense of Skepticism.' *Philosophical Review* 90 (2): 198-219.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Nagel, J. 2014. *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 2.
- Williams, M. 1999. 'Skepticism.' In J. Greco & E. Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Blackwell.

Topic 4. How Much Justification to Know?

Lecture

- Bonjour, L. 2010. 'The Myth of Knowledge.' *Philosophical Perspectives* 24: 57-83.

Seminar

- Hannon, M. 2015. 'Fallibilism and the Value of Knowledge.' *Synthese* 191 (6): 1119-1146.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Grimm, S. 2015. 'Knowledge, Practical Interests, and Rising Tides.' In J. Greco & D. Henderson (eds.), *Epistemic Evaluation*. Oxford.
- Hetherington, S. 2006. 'Knowledge's Boundary Problem.' *Synthese* 150 (1): 41-56.

Topic 5. Contextualism

Lecture

- DeRose, K. 1992. 'Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions.' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52 (4): 913-929.

Seminar

- Lewis, D. 1996. 'Elusive Knowledge.' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74: 549-67.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Cohen, S. 1999. 'Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reasons.' *Philosophical Perspectives* 13: 57-89.
- Nagel, J. 2014. *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Chapter 7.

Topic 6. Norms of Knowledge and Justification

Lecture

- Lackey, J. 2007. 'Norms of Assertion.' *Noûs* 41 (4): 594-626

Seminar

- Gerken, M. 2011. 'Warrant and Action.' *Synthese* 178: 529–547.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Brown, J. 2008. 'Knowledge and Practical Reason.' *Philosophy Compass* 3 (6): 1135-1152.
- Weiner, M. 2007. 'Norms of Assertion.' *Philosophy Compass* 2 (2): 187-195.

Topic 7. Virtue and Vice Epistemology

Lecture

- Lynch, M. 2018. 'Arrogance, Truth, and Public Discourse.' *Episteme*, 15 (3): 283-296.

Seminar

- Battaly, H. 2018. 'Can Closed-mindedness be an Intellectual Virtue?' *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 84: 23-45.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Cassam, Q. 2016. 'Vice Epistemology.' *The Monist* 99 (2): 159-180.
- Battaly, H. 2008, 'Virtue Epistemology.' *Philosophy Compass*, 3(4): 639–663.

Topic 8. Disagreement

Lecture

- Lackey, J. 2008. 'What Should We Do When We Disagree?' In T. Szabó Gendler & J. Hawthorne (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*. Oxford.

Seminar

- Van Inwagen, P. 2010. 'We're Right, They're Wrong.' In R. Feldman & T. Warfield (Eds.) *Disagreement*. Oxford.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Christensen, D. 2007. 'Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News.' *Philosophical Review* 116: 187-217.
- Kelly, T. 2006. 'The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement.' In J. Hawthorne & T. Gendler (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology, Volume 1*. Oxford.

Topic 9. Testimony and Fake News

Lecture

- Hardwig, J. 1985. 'Epistemic Dependence.' *Journal of Philosophy* 82: 335-49.

Seminar

- Rini, R. 2017. 'Fake News and Partisan Epistemology.' *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 27: 43-64.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Adler, J. 1994. 'Testimony, Trust, Knowing.' *Journal of Philosophy* 9: 264-75.
- Lackey, J. 2006. 'Knowing from Testimony.' *Philosophy Compass* 1: 432-448.

Topic 10. Epistemic Injustice

Lecture

- Fricker, M. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice*. Oxford, Chapters 1 and 2.

Seminar

- Medina, J. 2011. 'The Relevance of Credibility Excess in a Proportional View of Epistemic Injustice: Differential Epistemic Authority and the Social Imaginary.' *Social Epistemology* 25 (1): 15-35.

Additional Resources (Optional)

- Coady, D. 2010. 'Two Concepts of Epistemic Injustice.' *Episteme* 7 (2): 101-113.
- Dotson, K. 2014. 'Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression.' *Social Epistemology* 28 (2): 115-138.

4.4 Some Tips

At no stage in one's life is reading philosophy easy. In order to make your reading efficient and rewarding, you must maintain a sympathetic but critical attitude to the text. This can often be best achieved by approaching the text with a number of general questions in mind:

- What conclusion does the author wish to reach?
- Why is that conclusion interesting?
- What is the argument, and is it valid?
- Should the premises of the argument be accepted?
- If we accept the argument and conclusion, what else follows?

5. Assessment

The information below is specific to this module and may not apply to other Philosophy modules you are taking.

Further information on assessment—including marking criteria, how to submit work, and information on plagiarism—is contained in the *Philosophy Assessment Handbook*.

5.1 Assessment Method

This module carries 20 credits. The assessment consists of **one 2000-word essay** (worth 50% of the module mark) and **one 1.5 hour exam** at the end (worth 50% of the module mark).

All coursework is submitted online via the submission inboxes on Moodle.

When you submit your essay, you will be required to sign a declaration saying that you have read and understood the information about plagiarism that we have provided you with. So it is **essential that, before you submit your essay, you read carefully the information on plagiarism** in your *Philosophy Assessment Handbook*, and that you ask either the module convenor or (if you are a Philosophy student) your Philosophy personal tutor or Joint Honours liaison tutor, if there is anything that you do not understand about what you are required to do to acknowledge your sources properly and avoid plagiarism.

Please note that the word limits applied to coursework are **strict**. **If you go over the word limit, you will get a 5 percentage point penalty**, and your work that is beyond the limit will not be considered by the marker. There is no penalty for underlength pieces, but underlength work may not cover the question adequately. Word counts include footnotes/endnotes but not bibliography or title. Students are responsible for stating word counts on the work they submit.

5.2 Essay Questions

These will be posted on Moodle by February 15th and will be based on the required readings.

5.3 Exam

The exam will be **unseen** (that is, you will not be able to see the questions in advance of the exam). The exam lasts 1.5 hours and has two sections: short answers and essay. There will be **five short answer questions** testing knowledge of definitions, ability to state common objections accurately, etc. Students are expected to **answer all five** questions, which are worth 40% of the exam mark. There will also be four essay questions and students will be expected to **answer one** of them, which is worth 60% of your exam mark. All exam questions will be built around the required readings.

Further advice on tackling the exam will be given nearer the time.

5.4 Coursework Deadlines

(Note that the following deadline structure applies to all students taking any philosophy module, even subsidiary students.)

The coursework deadlines (and return dates) for 2018/19 will be available through the Moodle Philosophy Community Page. Please see also the submission inboxes in the module's Moodle page.

To work out when you need to submit your philosophy essays, you first need to work out how many coursework essays you must submit **for philosophy** in a given **semester**. Then find that figure in the left-hand column of the following table, and find your submission profile.

Note: If you have more than one philosophy essay to submit, then **it is entirely up to you which one(s) you submit at each deadline**.

How many philosophy coursework essays must you submit in total in this semester?	Number of essays to submit at first deadline	Number of essays to submit at second deadline	Number of essays to submit at third deadline
1	0	1	0
2	1	0	1
3	1	1	1
4	1	1	2
5	1	2	2
6	2	2	2

5.5 Feedback on your coursework

Your essay will be returned electronically with comments attached. Essays submitted by the deadline will be returned with feedback within 15 working days of that deadline. (Working days exclude weekends, bank holidays and University holidays.)

If (unavoidably) we cannot meet this timescale, we will let you know by email.

You will get two kinds of comments on your essay: comments on the qualities of that particular essay and how it could have been improved, and suggestions for how to approach Philosophy essays in future. Note that you are welcome to discuss these comments with the module convenor in person in a further feedback session. To arrange this, please email your convenor within two weeks of receiving the essay back.

5.6 Generic Exam feedback for the last time the module ran

Please see relevant section in this module's Moodle page.

5.7 Staff Response to SET/SEM feedback for the last time the module ran

Please see relevant section in this module's Moodle page.