



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
Department of Philosophy

PHIL 561.9

“Advanced Topics in Epistemology – The Role of Context in Contemporary Epistemology”

Fall Term 2020

Th 4:00-6:45

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor: Jeremy Fantl

Email: jfantl@ucalgary.ca

Office: SS 1238

Zoom Office Hours (link to be provided): W, 11-12

Office Phone: 403-220-5022

COURSE DELIVERY INFORMATION

Course to be delivered synchronously. Zoom link to be provided.

PREREQUISITES:

6 units in courses labelled Philosophy, of which, 3 units must be from Philosophy 201, 264, 395, 421, 423, 461, 463, 467, 481, 483 and 3 units must be at the 400 level.

COURSE INFORMATION:

One traditional strain in epistemology has it that certain details of your context are irrelevant to what you or I know and what you or I should believe. What matters in epistemology (according to this strain) is evidence and evidence only. It doesn't matter what is important to you, what sort of inquiry you're engaged in, what you happen to be thinking about, who you're friends with, what commitments you've made, or what is morally important. The standards for knowledge in philosophy classrooms are the same as the standards for knowledge when bird-watching in Kananaskis Country, when casually watching t.v., or as the member of a jury in a courtroom. We will explore various ways that, contrary to this position, those aspects of context can affect epistemological claims, as well as responses on behalf of the traditional strain. In particular, we will look at how and whether your practical stakes, your friendships, the moral consequences of your beliefs, and your promises or other commitments might affect your claims to knowledge and justified belief.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will provide the opportunity to learn

- the outlines of current debate on the epistemological consequences of the internet.
- how to write an extended argumentative paper that takes adequate account of the other side
- how to develop a paper through a draft stage into polished form
- how to take constructive feedback on written work presented in a public setting
- how to engage in respectful dialogue with peers with whom you disagree
- how to present a project in a professional way in an interview setting

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS, READINGS AND MATERIALS

Various philosophical articles, as indicated on the syllabus, below, available via public links or links through the University of Calgary library. Links are listed on D2L.

COURSE WORK AND ASSESSMENT

- 4 **précis** (worth 30%) – detailed analyses of single arguments or passages in the assigned reading – of 1 (single-spaced) page max. Précis must be uploaded to D2L by the beginning of the class devoted to the relevant reading and you may hand in no more than one per week. Missing précis receive a zero. If it's clear you spent two minutes on it, the précis gets a C. Otherwise, all précis get an A.
- A 20 minute, completely stress-free oral **midterm exam** (worth 30%) outside of class. Your exam will be held via Zoom during the week beginning October 19th, at a mutually agreed upon time.
- A final term **paper** (worth 40%) of 10-15 pages. All term papers are preceded by a rough draft to be workshopped publicly in class. Drafts are due Thursday, November 12th. Final papers are due December 10th. Late papers are marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day late, up to 4 letter grades. Papers not turned in receive a zero. Late drafts reduce the grade of the final paper by 1/3 of a grade for each day late, but are themselves ungraded.

Policy on Late Assignments

You get a no-questions-asked extension on one and only one take-home assignment, as long as you clear it with me at least a day in advance of the due date. **All unexcused late assignments lose the equivalent of 1/3 full letter grade for each day the assignment is late, to a maximum of the equivalent of 4 full letter grades. Missing assignments receive a zero.**

Letter Grades translate to numerical values according to the following scheme. Final Grades are computed by rounding to the nearest recognized letter grade.

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|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| A+: 98.33 | B+: 88.33 | C+: 78.33 | D+: 68.33 | F: 55 |
| A+/A: 96.67 | B+/B: 86.67 | C+/C: 76.67 | D+/D: 66.67 | |
| A: 95 | B: 85 | C: 75 | D: 65 | |
| A/A-: 93.33 | B/B-: 83.33 | C/C-: 73.33 | D/D-: 63.33 | |
| A-: 91.67 | B-: 81.67 | C-: 71.67 | D-: 61.67 | |
| A-/B+: 90 | B-/C+: 80 | C-/D+: 70 | | |

SYLLABUS

| Date and Topic | Class Activity |
|--|---|
| 9/10, : Thurs | Intro |
| 9/17, Thurs: The Skeptical Problem | Barry Stroud, <i>The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism</i> , selections from Chs. 1 and 2 |
| 9/24, Thurs: The Move to Contextualism | David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge" Keith DeRose, <i>The Case for Contextualism</i> , selections from Chs. 1 and 2. |
| 10/1, Thurs: The Move from Contextualism | Jason Stanley, <i>Knowledge and Practical Interests</i> , Chapters 1-3 Jennifer Nagel, "Knowledge Ascriptions and the Psychological Consequences of Changing Stakes" |
| 10/8, Thurs: Pragmatic Encroachment | Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, <i>Knowledge in an Uncertain World</i> , Chapter 3. |
| 10/15, Thurs: Challenges to Pragmatic Encroachment | Charity Anderson, "On the Intimate Relationship of Knowledge and Action" Elizabeth Jackson, "How Belief-Credence Dualism Explains Away Pragmatic Encroachment" |
| 10/22, Thurs: The Epistemic Demands of Commitments | Berislav Marusic, "Belief and Difficult Action" |
| 10/29, Thurs: The Epistemic Demands of Friendship | Sarah Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship" Jason Kawall, "Friendship and Epistemic Norms" |
| 11/5, Thurs: Moral Encroachment | Rima Basu, "Radical moral encroachment: The moral stakes of racist beliefs" Georgi Gardiner, "Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment" |
| 11/12, Thurs: | TERM BREAK |
| 11/19, Thurs: | Draft Workshops |
| 11/26, Thurs: | Draft Workshops |
| 12/3, Thurs: LAST DAY OF CLASS | Draft Workshops |
| 12/10, Tues: | TERM PAPER DUE |

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Academic Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures. The student accommodation policy can be found at ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf. Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

Absence or Missed Course Assessments

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

Student Support and Resources

Full details and information about the following resources can be found at ucalgary.ca/Registrar/registration/course-outlines

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Academic Advising

If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts, you can speak to an academic advisor in the Arts Students' Centre about course planning, course selection, registration, program progression and more. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at arts.ucalgary.ca/advising for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit phil.ucalgary.ca. Further academic guidance is available by contacting David Dick (Undergraduate Program Director dgdick@ucalgary.ca) or Jeremy Fantl (Honours Advisor jfantl@ucalgary.ca). If you have questions regarding registration, please email Rebecca Lesser (Undergraduate Program Administrator phildept@ucalgary.ca).

Writing Assessment and Support

The assessment of all written assignments—and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses—is based in part on writing skills. This includes correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), as well as general clarity and organization. Research papers must include a thorough and accurate citation of sources. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services for assistance. For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit ucalgary.ca/ssc.

Required Technology

In order to successfully engage in their learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote and blended courses are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone.

Responsible Use of D2L

Important information and communication about this course will be posted on D2L (Desire2Learn), UCalgary's online learning management system. Visit ucalgary.service-now.com/it for how-to information and technical assistance.

All users of D2L are bound by the guidelines on the responsible use of D2L posted here: <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/commitment-to-the-responsible-use-of-d2l/>. The instructor may establish additional specific course policies for D2L, Zoom, and any other technologies used to support remote learning. Instructional materials, including audio or video recordings of lectures, may not be posted outside of the course D2L site. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the [University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy](#).

Media Recording

Please refer to the following statement on media recording of students: https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP_FINAL.pdf

Academic Misconduct/Honesty

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html.

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about referencing, please consult your instructor.

University Policies

The Instructor Intellectual Property Policy is available at ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip. The instructor (or TA) must return graded assignments *directly* to the student UNLESS written permission to do otherwise has been provided.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html).