

## Theory of Knowledge (Phil 220)

Danny Forman

[Forman.danny@rutgers.edu](mailto:Forman.danny@rutgers.edu)

Class: Tuesday & Fridays 9:50 – 11:10

Office Hours: Friday 11:30 - 1:00 & by appointment

### Course Content:

Epistemology is dedicated to questions about knowledge and the norms governing belief-formation. This course will focus primarily on the latter of these two. In particular, we will explore a number of topics that fall broadly under the heading of *ethics of belief*, inquiring into how moral considerations might factor into our assessments of *epistemic rationality* – how well we do by the norms of belief formation itself. Our class goals will be to engage with some big and socially pertinent philosophical questions about the nature of belief, interrogate some deeply held assumptions, and learn some things about constructing logically valid, rigorous arguments along the way.

### Course Requirements:

Reading and responses: Above all else, I expect class members to come prepared to engage in discussion about the readings. Before each session, you'll post a short response to the reading on Canvas. For your responses, raise one issue from the reading that you are confused or uncertain about, or a substantive point of disagreement. These responses should be more than a sentence, but no more than a paragraph. You'll get eight (8) free passes if you forget to or aren't able to write a reflection. Reflections are graded pass/fail. If you make a sincere effort at the assignment, you'll pass. Try to use these reflections to think about issues that you'd like to raise in discussion during class time – hopefully they will serve as a springboard. Reading responses should be posted by 12am the day before class.

Papers: There'll be one (1) 750-1000 word paper, one (1) 1,000 - 1250 word paper, one (1) 1250-1500 word paper. Each paper will require a response to one of a small selection of prompts based on our readings and class discussion. In some instances, your reflection might serve as the starting point for a paper. The papers will be due at 8am on 3/4, 4/8, and 5/13. There may also be a potential rewrite options for the one the papers, which we will discuss as the term goes on. Papers turned in late will be subject to a 3% late penalty per day past the due date.

**Canvas:** All course material will appear on Canvas and all your course work will be submitted through Canvas. Additionally, I will be using Canvas to send you information about the course through email.

Below are the details of the course policies and an outline of the course, including a list (subject to change) of the course readings on a suggested and due dates for assignments. You are responsible for knowing the contents of this syllabus.

**Sessions:** Class sessions will take place online in real time via (the all-too-familiar) Zoom. I will record and post sessions after the fact, so that those cannot attend will be able to access the material. Critically, **each session will run 9:50am – 11:00am EST**. Invitations to each session will be sent out the day of.

**Grading:**

Here’s how grading will work.

Reading responses:	20%
In-class participation:	10%
Papers:	70%

(Your papers will count for 10%, 20%, and 40%, respectively)

**Grade Breakdown**

- A: 90 - 100
- B+: 87 - 89
- B: 80 - 86
- C+: 77 - 79
- C: 65 - 76
- D: 57 - 64

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:**

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe, including an automatic failing grade for the course and worse. This document provides a comprehensive overview of those policies:

[https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wpcontent/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI\\_Policy\\_2013.pdf](https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wpcontent/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf)

**Guidelines for Civil, Inclusive Discourse:**

Productive intellectual inquiry requires respectful, constructive discussion that enables all parties to participate fully. Philosophy has an especially vital role to play in facilitating such inquiry, because philosophers have been developing and honing practices of critical discussion over many centuries: techniques for uncovering, justifying, and assessing assumptions lurking behind any claim, from the most obvious to the most controversial. Philosophy is thus a valuable tool for self-reflection and for communal debate. But like any tool, it must be used well in order to do its job. In our community we expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions and consequences

rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other's views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way. There will be no tolerance for abuse, harassment, and disrespect. Students who have concerns about another student's conduct in class should email me directly at [forman.danny@rutgers.edu](mailto:forman.danny@rutgers.edu), so that we can find a satisfactory solution.

**Accessibility:**

I'd like this class to be a great experience for all of you, and all of you are entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at Rutgers. Disabled students are encouraged to speak with me if that would be helpful and to avail themselves of the services provided by the Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

**Student-Wellness Services**

**Just In Case Web App**

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

**Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS):**

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/

[www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

**Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA):**

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /

[www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

**Some Information on Implicit Bias:**

<https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/climate-v2/climate-issues-in-academic-philosophy/implicit-bias>

**Schedule:**

Here's a tentative schedule for our class, subject to revision throughout the semester depending on what you find interesting, what you want to explore more of, and how fast

we end up progressing. New versions will be posted to Canvas as we make changes, and I'll email you with any such updates.

### **Part I: Philosophy and Argumentation**

Friday 1/22: Class Introduction

Tuesday 1/26: *The Ethics of Belief* – Barislav Marusic

Friday 1/29: *Ethics of Belief* (SEP) – Andrew Chignell

### **Practical Reason for Belief**

Tuesday 2/2: Contemporary Epistemology (pp. 29-44)

Friday 2/5: Contemporary Epistemology (pp. 44-58)

Tuesday 2/9: *A New Argument for Evidentialism* – Nishi Shah

Friday 2/12: *Against the New Evidentialists* – Susana Rinard

Tuesday 2/16: *In Defense of Pragmatic Reasons for Belief* – Stephanie Leary

### **Pragmatic Encroachment**

Friday 2/19: *Pragmatic Encroachment in Epistemology* – Brian Kim

Tuesday 2/23: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology (pp. 84-95)

Friday 2/26: Contemporary Debates in Epistemology (pp. 95-106)

Tuesday 3/2: *Knowledge and Practical Reason* – Jessica Brown

Friday 3/5: *Knowledge and Action* – John Hawthorn and Jason Stanley

### **FIRST PAPER DUE – 3/7**

### **Doxastic Wronging**

Tuesday 3/9: *Doxastic Wronging* – Rima Basu and Mark Schroeder

Friday 3/12: *Doxastic Morality: a Moderately Skeptical Perspective* – Endre

Begby

**SPRING BREAK**

Tuesday 3/23: *The Rational Impermissibility of Accepting (some) Racial Generalizations* – Renee Bollinger

Friday 3/26: *Evidentialism and Moral Encroachment* – Georgi Gardiner

**Epistemic Injustice**

Tuesday 3/30: Epistemic Injustice (ch. 1) – Miranda Fricker

Friday 4/2: Epistemic Injustice (ch. 2) – Miranda Fricker

**Fake News**

Tuesday 4/6: *Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles* – Thi Nguyen

Friday 4/9: *Fake News and Partisan Epistemology* – Regina Rini

Tuesday 4/13: *Ethics and Epistemic Hopelessness* – James Fritz

Friday 4/16: *Evidential Preemption* – Endre Begby

**SECOND PAPER DUE - 4/18**

**Disagreement**

Tuesday 4/20: Contemporary Epistemology (pp. 229-249)

Friday 4/23: Contemporary Epistemology (pp. 249-265)

**Permissivism**

Tuesday 4/27: Contemporary Epistemology (pp. 265-277)

Friday 4/30: Contemporary Epistemology (pp. 277-295)

**FINAL PAPER DUE 5/7**  
**REWRITE OPTION DUE – 5/7**