Theory Of Knowledge - Fall 2013

Syllabus

1 Course Information

1. Course number: 01:730:220.

2. Class location: Hickman Hall, room 119.

3. Class date and time: Tuesdays and Thursday, 5:35 – 6:55PM.

4. Instructor: Rodrigo Borges.

5. Contact Information: epistemen@gmail.com.

   (a) Phone: 732-932-9861.

   (b) Office address: 106 Somerset Street, CAC, 5th. floor, room 544.

This syllabus and other course information and material will be made available at the sakai site for the course. If you are enrolled for this course you should already have access to our site. To find our site, go to www.sakai.rutgers.edu. If you experience any problems with the site, let me know ASAP.

2 Learning Goals

This course aims at enabling the student to think critically about central questions in the Theory of Knowledge such as “What is knowledge?”; “What differentiates knowledge from true belief?”, “Is knowledge possible?” and “What is the extent of human knowledge?”. 
3 Requirements

1. Class Attendance: students are expected to attend all classes. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Here is my policy for missed classes. Everyone has a no-punishable absence. Starting with the second class you miss, the following applies: if you miss a class, unless you fulfill at least one of the conditions I or II, you will be penalized (i.e., you will lose 25 points from your final grade): I - You have an acceptable excuse, such as illness or a religious holiday or an University sponsored event; II – You discuss your absence with me immediately after the first class meeting that you return.

2. Papers: There will be two (2) papers with at most five (5) pages each. The papers will be about the topic your group will present (see below for group presentations). They should be emailed to me at epistemen@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m on the day of your deadline. (See dates below.) Late papers will not be accepted on the basis of excuses such as “My hard drive crashed” or “There was no wi-fi at my place”. These are not legitimate reasons for late papers because accidents like those happen often enough to require some backup plan. On the other hand, if something that you could not anticipate happens and you can’t submit your paper on time, please, let me know as soon as possible and we will work something out. All papers must be double-spaced, and in font 12, one inch margins. They should be free of grammatical/spelling errors. If there are too many such errors, the paper will be returned to you for correction and it will automatically lose five (5) points from the total it would have otherwise received. All papers must employ some standard reference form for footnotes and bibliography. I encourage you to read this page http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html as soon as possible before you start writing your papers. There you will find essential advice on how to write a successful paper for this course.

3. Group Presentations: the class will be divided into study/presentation groups of 2- 3 people. The group will be responsible for preparing a class discussion on an assigned topic. The members of the group will also have a short paper due on the class meeting after the presentations. Your paper need not take the same position that your group will be defending.

4. Surprise Quizzes: There will be at least six surprise quizzes. The quizzes will be on the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. There are no make-up
surprise quizzes, but none will be given on religious holidays. They will all have the following general form: State as carefully as you can X’s argument that Y. You can consult any notes you took on the reading(s), but you cannot consult the reading(s) itself (themselves). The quiz will last only 15 minutes and it will be given at the beginning of class. So, if you are 5 minutes late to class, you will have only 10 minutes to complete the quiz. Once you have scored 100 points with quizzes, you need not take any more of them.

5. In-Class Mid-Term: You can use all your notes during the exam, but not the reading(s).

6. Take-Home Final: The final take-home exam will be made available sometime before exam day (see below for dates). The answers to the exam should be emailed to me at epistemen@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m on the day of your deadline. The exam will be distributed ahead of time. (Check below for dates.) The final exam is an individual activity, so, once you begin working on the exam, you should not talk with anyone about it until after 11:59 p.m on the day of your deadline. You are free to make use of all the readings and notes you took during the course, but make sure to make proper reference of any material you use in the exam. (Please read the section on plagiarism below.)

4 Final Grade

1. Short papers: 100 points (50 points each)

2. Mid-term exam: 200 points

3. Final exam: 300 points

4. Surprise quizzes: 100 points (25 points each – the best four will count towards the final grade)

5. Class participation: 25 bonus points (This will be based on the overall group presentation and your own class participation in the discussions.)

6. Attendance: -25 points for each unexcused absence (Everybody has one “free” one, but not on the day of the class presentation.)

Using a 100 point scale, the grade equivalences would be:

- A ≥ 90
• B+ = 85 - 89
• B = 80 - 84
• C+ = 75 - 79
• C = 70 - 74
• D = 60 - 69
• F ≤ 59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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There is a total of 700 points (not including the bonus ones.) The final grade will be based on your total points as follows:

• A ≥ 624
• B+ = 589 - 623
• B = 554 - 588
• C+ = 519 - 553
• C = 484 - 518
• D = 414 - 483
• F ≤ 413
5 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is ugly and the student who plagiarizes will be punished in accordance with University regulation. Please, refer to this website for Rutger’s Academic Integrity Policy: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf).

In light of that, any direct (i.e., same words) or indirect (i.e., same ideas) reference to someone else’s work has to be acknowledge in all of your papers, presentations and exams.

6 Book to buy


7 Disabilities

If you have a learning disability, please see me and we will make the necessary arrangements.

8 Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to come to my office to discuss anything related to the course. I will hold office hours on Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 and Thursdays 3:15 to 4:15 at the address above, but I could meet you at other times as well. To set up an appointment, even during the regularly scheduled time, please email me at: epistemen@gmail.com.

9 Schedule of Assignments

9/3 Introduction to the course

Knowledge of the Future

9/5 Hume (p.298-310).
9/10 Edwards (p.311-320).
9/12 Groups G1 and G2 present: Can we know anything about the future? G1, yes. G2, no.

**Inductive Knowledge**

9/17 Goodman (p.320-332). G1 and G2 papers are due.
9/19 Foster (p.333-343).

**The Regress Problem**

9/26 Sextus (p.372-374), Oakley (p.375-386). G3 and G4 papers are due.
10/01 BonJour (p.387-401).
10/03 Alston (p.402-416).

**The Gettier Problem**

10/10 Ayer (p.440-443), Gettier (p.444-446,) Clark (p.447-449). G5 and G6 papers are due. (sample mid-term questions distributed).
10/15 Goldman (p.450-463)
10/17 G7 and G8 present: Does the causal theory of knowledge solve the Gettier problem? G7, yes. G8, no

**10/22 Mid-term Exam**

10/24 Lehrer and Paxson (p.464-474). G7 and G8 papers are due.
10/29 G1 and G2 present: Does the defeasibility theory of knowledge solve the Gettier problem? G2, yes. G1, no.
Skepticism

10/31 Nozick (p.475-490). G1 and G2 papers are due.
11/05 DeRose (p.491-506).
11/07 G3 and G4 present: G3: The tracking theory of knowledge provides a good basis for understanding skepticism. G4: The contextualist theory of knowledge provides a good basis for understanding skepticism. (Final exam questions distributed).
11/12 Dretske (p.539-551).
11/14 Putnam (p.524-538). G3 and G4 papers are due.
11/19 G5 and G6 present: G5: Putnam’s semantic account provides a good basis for understanding skepticism. G6: Dretske’s pragmatic account provides a good basis for understanding skepticism.
11/21 Klein (p.552-574).
11/26 Huemer (p.575-89). G5 and G6 papers are due.
11/28 No class - Thanksgiving.
12/03 G7 and G8 present: Does Klein’s diagnosis of the evil genius argument provide a good basis for understanding skepticism? G8, yes. G7, no.
12/05 Review. G7 and G8 papers are due.
12/10 [Breathing Room]
12/15 Final exam is due.