

## COURSE INFORMATION

Spring 2009: Theories of Knowledge  
PHIL125W: 001 [MWF 2.30–3.20]  
117 EE WEST

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## 1. Texts, Reading List, and Schedule

Texts	
Descartes, René	<i>Mediations, Objections, and Replies</i> . 2006. Ed. and Trans. Roger Ariew and Donald Cress. Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis. ISBN 978-0-87220-798-1.
Descartes, René	<i>Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy</i> . 1998. Trans. Donald A. Cress. Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis. ISBN 0-87220-420-0. (Optional).
Peirce, Charles	<i>The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings</i> . 1992. Ed. Nathan Houser & Christian J.W. Kloesel. Indiana University Press: Indianapolis. ISBN: 978-0253207210.
Lemos, Noah	<i>An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge</i> . 2007. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
ANGEL	Additional essays available through ANGEL or distributed in class.

Reading List		
11 Jan	<b>Introduction</b>	Introduction
13		Lemos, pp. 1–9
15		Lemos, pp. 9–21.
18		No Class — University Holiday
20		Lemos, pp.22–27.
22		Gettier, Edmund. 1963. Is Justified True Belief Knowledge. <i>Analysis</i> , 23, 121-123. Hanfling, Oswald. 2003. A Gettier Drama. <i>Analysis</i> , 63 (3): 262-263
25		Lemos, pp.27–31. Also Feldman, Richard. 1974. An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counterexamples. <i>Australasian Journal of Philosophy</i> , 52, 68–69.
27		Lemos, pp.31–43.
29	<b>Foundationalism</b>	Lemos, pp.44–50.
1 Feb		Descartes, pp.6–19: Preface, Meditation 1 and Meditation 2.
3		Descartes, pp.6–19: Preface, Meditation 1 and Meditation 2 <b>Due:</b> Two-page essay Aristotle’s regress argument and Descartes’ <i>methodological skepticism</i> can both be employed for the purpose of establishing a foundationalist theory of knowledge. Succinctly summarize each of these arguments for foundationalism. <b>Activity (Formal Structure of an Essay &amp; Proofing):</b> Formal features of a philosophical essay, proofreading, proofreader’s marks, and how to give suggestions.
5		Lemos, pp.50–52. Descartes, pp.19–29: Meditation 3
8		Descartes, pp.29–35: Meditation 4
10		Descartes, pp.35–40: Meditation 5
12		Descartes, pp.40–50: Meditation 6 (cf. <i>Discourse on Method</i> , Part 4)
15		<b>Due:</b> Starting from an explanation of <i>methodological skepticism</i> and the stated goal of the <i>Meditations</i> , concisely summarize an argument of the <i>Meditations</i> . Feel free to use a condensed, revised, and proofread portion of your earlier account of <i>methodological skepticism</i> as the starting point of your essay. Be sure to include Descartes’s commitment to certain indubitable beliefs (e.g. cogito ergo sum), its place in his foundationalist epistemology and methodology, and a short identification of the role God plays in resolving skepticism. <b>Activity (Formal Structure of an Essay &amp; Proofing):</b> Identifying formal features of a philosophical text, proofreading, proofreader’s marks, and how to give suggestions.
17	<b>Criticisms of Foundationalism</b>	Lemos, pp.53–55. Peirce, pp.11–18: Questions Concerning Certain Faculties <b>Activity (Metadiscourse, Signposting, and Signaling Structure):</b> Using metadiscourse (or signposting) features that identify the structure of the essay. Its role in oral and written communication.
19		Peirce, pp.18–27: Questions Concerning Certain Faculties
22		Peirce, pp.28–30: Some Consequences of Four Incapacities
24		Peirce, skim pp. 30-38; Read 38–42: Some Consequences of Four Incapacities
26		Peirce, pp.42–55: Some Consequences of Four Incapacities Optional: Haack, Susan. 1983. Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community. In <i>The Relevance of Charles Peirce</i> . Ed. Eugene Freeman. La Salle, IL: The Hegeler Institute, pp.238–263. <b>Due:</b> Two-page essay Peirce levies an assortment of objections against Cartesian methodology and foundationalism in general. Identify one of these objections, articulate it concisely, and then assess whether or not the objection actually undermines a feature of Descartes’s <i>Meditations</i> .  Here is a truncated example: Peirce objects to the Cartesian method of beginning philosophy with skeptical doubt. He claims that it is useless and psychologically impossible to begin philosophy in this way because <i>x, y, z</i> . This objection does not accurately correspond to Descartes version of skepticism because Descartes’s methodological skepticism is useful for

		it is an effective method for achieving, <i>a, b, c</i> . In addition, Descartes’s method of doubt does not require it to be psychologically possible for humans to doubt their beliefs. Instead, Descartes’s methodological skepticism only requires that it is logically possible to suspend beliefs for the purpose of assessing which of our beliefs is indubitable.
1 March	<b>Coherentism</b>	Lemos, pp.55–65
3		Lemos, pp.66–73
5		Lemos, pp.73–80
<b>6–14</b>		<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>
15		Lemos, pp.80–84 <b>Activity (How to use Quotations and citations correctly &amp; strategically):</b> Citation software (Endnote, Procite, Refworks, Zotero, KnightCite, Microsoft Word), maintaining bibliographical libraries, styles & strategies in citing.
17		What Price Coherence? 1994. <i>Analysis</i> . 54(3): 129-132.
19		<b>Due:</b> #1 Bibliography Sheet #2 Two-page essay Due: Foundationalism and coherentism are both theories about the nature of justification. Give a quick summary of each of these views, identify a central argument for one of these theories, and then voice an objection to it. Make effective use of at least one quotation and cite it appropriately in-text and in your bibliography. <b>Activity (Proofing quotation use and citations)</b>
22	<b>Reliabilism</b>	Lemos, pp.85–90.
24		Goldman, Alvin I. 1979. What is Justified Belief? In <i>Justification and Knowledge</i> . Ed. George Pappas. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, pp.1–23.
26		Goldman, Alvin I. 1979. What is Justified Belief? In <i>Justification and Knowledge</i> . Ed. George Pappas. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, pp.1–23.
29		Peirce, pp. 109–123: Fixation of Belief
31		Peirce, pp. 109–123: Fixation of Belief <b>Activity (Packaging, Proofing, Outlining, and Reduction):</b> How to eliminate filler, fluff, or tangential features of your essay.
2 April		Peirce, pp. 124–141: How to Make Our Ideas Clear
5		Peirce, pp. 124–141: How to Make Our Ideas Clear
7		Lemos, pp. 90–98 <b>Due:</b> #1 Two-page essay Choose <i>two</i> of the ways in which belief is fixed, clarify each and contrast them. How does one fix belief as opposed to another? What are the relative advantages/disadvantages of one over the other? <b>Activity (Packaging, Proofing, Outlining, and Reduction)</b>
9		Lemos, pp.98–107
12		Sosa, Ernest. Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue. In <i>Knowledge in Perspective</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.131–148.
14		Sosa, Ernest. Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue. In <i>Knowledge in Perspective</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.131–148.
16		<b>Due:</b> #1 Draft of Final Paper <b>Activity (General Editing, Offering Suggestions, Proofreading)</b>
19	<b>Internalism &amp; Externalism</b>	<b>Lemos, pp.108–117</b>
21		Conee, Earl and Feldman, Richard. 2001. “Internalism Defended.” In Kornblith, Hilary. Editor. <i>Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism</i> . Cambridge. MIT Press.
23		Conee, Earl and Feldman, Richard. 2001. “Internalism Defended.” In Kornblith, Hilary. Editor. <i>Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism</i> . Cambridge. MIT Press.
26		Goldman, Alvin. 2001. “Internalism Exposed.” In Kornblith, Hilary. Editor. <i>Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism</i> .

28		Goldman, Alvin. 2001. "Internalism Exposed." In Kornblith, <i>Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism</i> .
30		<b>Lemos, pp.117–130</b> <b>Due:</b> #1 One page paper Concisely articulate the positions of internalism and externalism. #2 Second-draft of Final Paper The internalism/externalism debate most likely has some bearing on your final paper. Either in the main body of the text, or in a footnote, incorporate these considerations into your final paper. <b>Activity (Fine-tuned editing, immediate suggestions, final proofreading)</b>
3		Preparing your Essay for Presentation: Podcasting (Technical Details)
5		Preparing your Essay for Presentation: Podcasting (Writing a Script)
7		<b>Final Paper and Presentation Due</b>

## 2. Course Description

The theory and investigation into the nature of knowledge, or epistemology, is a central area in philosophy. This course is designed to introduce students to some of the major topics, problems, and arguments concerning the nature of knowledge and the rational justification of belief. The course begins by investigating different senses or uses of the word 'knowledge', 'to know', 'knowing', discusses problems with the traditional concept of knowledge as 'justified true belief', investigates theories of justification (foundationalism, coherentism, reliabilism), and closes with an inquiry into the factors that make beliefs justified (internalism and externalism). Various ideas, problems, and arguments concerning knowledge are initially presented through the course of reading an introductory textbook that offers a clear explanation, concrete examples, and a schematic presentation of arguments. This reading is supplemented by primary texts that give, perhaps, an intellectually nuanced and historically textured account of the theory of knowledge. In particular, 17<sup>th</sup> century French mathematician and philosopher René Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* is read as an account of foundationalism, 19<sup>th</sup> century American scientist and philosopher Charles S. Peirce's anti-Cartesian essays are read as a critique of foundationalism, and a number of short, contemporary articles are made available to assess other themes (the Gettier problem, internalism, externalism, coherentism, etc.). This course does not presuppose any previous philosophical training, but since this course has a writing emphasis, it does assume a basic level of competence in formatting, writing, and editing essays and research papers. A number of intermediate writing and research exercises are interspersed throughout the course. These activities are designed to teach students how to organize, write, and respond to philosophical essays.

## 3. Grade Evaluation, Scale, Breakdown

**30% Final Paper & Presentation:** The ultimate goal of the final paper (roughly 3000 words) is to organize and synthesize your previous work around a *thesis* so as to produce a coherent, concise, and well-reasoned argument. This paper should make at least one claim supported by multiple lines of *clear and succinct argumentation*. While the exact claim and theme of the paper is subject to your discretion, it should draw upon a theme addressed in this course. In addition, you will be asked to prepare a digital (.mp3) file where you present your paper by giving a short, audio summary of your thesis and its supporting arguments. Resources for podcasting are below.

**50% Short Writing Assignments & Participation:** A variety of short writing assignments and workshops form a part of the course. Some of these will be directed toward developing style, mechanics, the ability to tersely summarize, and/or the ability to produce a coherent, well-reasoned argument. The assignments are *developmental*, so you will be regularly asked to employ skills that you have learned earlier in the course.

**20% Quizzes (in class & online):** Assignments in the form of a quiz (online or in-class) will be assigned periodically throughout the course. These quizzes will test a very rudimentary understanding of the philosophical texts and your comprehension of writing skills learned in this course. In preparation for quizzes, it is necessary that you have done the reading and have a general idea of its major claim(s), along with the mainline of its supporting argument. Some quizzes will allow you to make use of the text in question (and your notes), so it is to your advantage if you (1) bring said text to class and (2) mark or highlight the major claims/arguments of the text.

## 0% Attendance

Although there is no grade for attendance, since quizzes, writing assignments, and activities are frequent, your satisfactory completion of the course requires regular attendance.

Grades will be rounded up from the *second* decimal point, e.g. 90.95 rounds up to 91.0 while 90.94 rounds down to 90.90. In the event that eLION does not allow for a particular grade (e.g. D+), you will simply be given the letter grade (e.g. if you have a D+ then you will receive a D, and if you have a C-, you will receive a C).

A: 91–100%;	C+: 79.0–79.9	F: 0–59.9
A–: 90.0–90.9	C: 71.0–77.9	<a href="#">INCOMPLETE</a>
B+: 89.0–89.9	C–: 70–70.9	<a href="#">DROP</a>
B: 81.0–88.9	D+: 69.0–69.9	
B–: 80–80.9	D: 60.0–68.9	

## 4. Resources

### 4.0 Following the Course & Appointments

Lecture notes are posted on the [course website](#). You can also subscribe to [my twitter account](#) to receive updates concerning due dates for assignments and class cancellations due to weather. Class cancellation will also be posted on ANGEL.

### 4.1 Podcasting

After your final paper is completed, you are required to create a short (approximately 3 minute) audio [podcast](#) summarizing the topic, principal thesis, and argument of your paper. Creating a podcast for your paper is an audio, technology-based alternative to a classroom presentation. While you are not required to publish your podcast, you will be required to post it to Angel. Creating a podcast will not require that you purchase any technology. Penn State has a number of video/audio/editing recording suites ([206 Pollock, W213 Pattee Library](#)) but you may need to schedule time to record and edit your podcast. If you can already record audio and have a computer, [Audacity](#) (Windows and Mac) is a free, open-source software that allows you to edit audio (and you can use [LameEncoder](#) to convert to mp3). You can also use alternative software (e.g. Garageband (Mac-only) or Adobe Audition) if you already have it.

### 4.2 Guides to Philosophy Literature

Bynagle, Hans E. 1986. *Philosophy, a guide to the reference literature*. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited.  
Tice, Terrence N. and Thomas P. Slavens. 1983. *Research guide to philosophy*. Chicago: American Library Association.

### 4.3 Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, & Biographical Sources

*The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 1999. Ed. Robert Audi. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.  
*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 1996. Ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
*Encyclopedia of Classical Philosophy*. 1997. Ed. Donald J. Zeyl. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.  
*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 1967. Ed. Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan.  
*Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Supplement*. 1996. Ed. Donald M. Borchert. New York: Simon & Schuster.  
*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. 1995. Ed. Ted Honderich. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 1998. Ed. Edward Craig. New York: Routledge.  
*Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers*. 1996. Eds. Stuart Brown, Diane Collinson, Robert Wilkinson. London and New York: Routledge.  
*The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century British Philosophers*. Eds. John W. Yolton, John Vladimir Price, and John Stephens. Bristol: Thoemmes Press.

*Hypatia's Daughters: Fifteen hundred years of women philosophers.* 1996. Ed. Linda Lopez McAlister. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.  
*Medieval Philosophers.* 1992. Ed. Jeremiah Hackett. Detroit: Gale Research.

#### 4.4 Directories for Journal Articles

*Année Philologique*, 1969–Present  
*ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*  
*DigiZeitschriften: The German Digital Journal Archive*  
*FRANCIS*  
*Historical Abstracts*  
*IBZ: Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur*  
*International Medieval Bibliography*  
*Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance*  
*JSTOR*  
*MLA Bibliography*  
*Philosopher's Index*, 1940–Present

#### 4.5 Undergraduate Journals in Philosophy

*Aporia*: <http://aporia.byu.edu/site.php?id=current>  
*Episteme*: <http://www.denison.edu/academics/departments/philosophy/episteme.html>  
*The Lyceum*: <http://lyceumphilosophy.com/>

## 5. Additional Administrative Information

### 5.1 Academic Misconduct

The general principles and policies relating to cheating and plagiarism, which are enforced in this class, can be found in the Penn State policy on academic misconduct. *Academic Integrity*: Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that includes, but is not limited to: all forms of fraud, plagiarism, and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one's work. Sanctions for these activities include, but are not limited to, failure in a course, removal from the degree program, failure in a course with an explanation in the permanent transcript of the cause for failure, suspension, and expulsion. If you are unclear about whether you or someone you know is engaging in academic misconduct, read the following: [University Statement on Academic Integrity](#)

### 5.2 Other Resources on Academic Misconduct

[PSU Academic Integrity](#)  
[PSU ITS:](#)  
[Plagiarism Tutor](#)  
[Turnitin](#)  
[PSU Teaching & Learning with Technology](#)

### 5.3 Disability

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the campus disability liaison as soon as possible: (name, office, telephone, email). For additional information, check the university web site for [Disability Services](#).

### 5.4 Resources to Help with Research, Writing, Documentation, and Citation

[Information Literacy Tutorial](#)  
[University Learning Center](#)  
[Writing Center](#)

### *5.5 Use of ANGEL & Email Communication,*

Please check the webpage on the [ANGEL](#) website regularly. An online version of the syllabus is available there, and you will be notified of any cancellation of a course meeting there. If you need to contact me, send a well-constructed email to [dwa132@psu.edu](mailto:dwa132@psu.edu) with an appropriate subject line (e.g. P120 Question) and with an appropriate address (e.g. "Dear David"). Failure to do either, or emailing me with multiple links attached ("check this youtube link") will result in your instructor deleting your email. Students are responsible for activity on their computer accounts so only send emails pertinent to the course.

### *5.6 Office Hours*

I do not keep regular office hours for the simple reason that there frequently scheduling conflicts between my office hours and a student's schedules. For this reason, my office hours are *by appointment*. You are especially encouraged to make an appointment if (1) you are having difficulty with the course and need extra assistance, (2) were ill and were unable to attend class, and/or (3) would like further information about other philosophy courses or materials to continue your philosophical education. I can arrange to meet with you both in my office (228 Sparks) or virtually via [Skype](#) or [Google Talk](#).

### *5.7 Drop procedures and Incompletes*

Students who simply stop attending class, for whatever reason, without officially withdrawing from the course, will receive the grade of F. If you expect a refund, be aware that the date the withdrawal form is processed by the Penn State Registrar.

Consult the Register site for [drop procedures](#)

Consult the Handbook for taking an [Incomplete \(D/F\)](#)

### *5.8 Student Guidance*

If you are in need of psychological counseling, please do not hesitate to contact Penn State's [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (phone: 814-863-0395). For any problem related to your studies, university policies and procedures, do not hesitate to seek the help of the [Student Affairs Services](#), your Academic Advisor, or arrange a meeting with your instructor who will help you obtain assistance through one of the above, or another, agency.

### *5.9 Classroom Environments*

A number of factors figure into creating a healthy classroom environment. In order to facilitate such an environment, I ask you to obey the following: (1) the use of cell phones in any capacity is prohibited (please turn ringers/buzzers off, no text-messaging during class), (2) please do not begin to 'pack up' your belongings before your instructor has *explicitly* dismissed you, (3) please come to class rested, sleeping in class is strictly prohibited, (4) please do not do other work in class. If you are incapable of performing (1)–(4) or are disruptive in class, you will kindly be asked to leave the classroom. In addition, your behavior in the online environment should be professional. Please do not use ALL CAPS when you type and use polite language when working with others.

### *5.10 Challenge Examination*

For some courses, students may request a [challenge examination](#) as a substitute for completing the usual requirements of a course. If the examination is successfully completed the credits received are described as "credits by examination" ([policy 42-50](#)).

**Elements of this syllabus are subject to modification due to unforeseen variables, catastrophic events, or other factors. The instructor will announce any of these changes in class.**