General Description

This course investigates the nature of knowledge and justification as well as a number of related topics such as truth, rationality and coherence. Students will study theories that seek to understand the relation between perception and belief. Moreover, they will examine the conditions under which a token belief is justified and the conditions under which a token belief counts as knowledge. They will deliberate on the issue whether justification requires cognitive awareness of the reasons for endorsing a given belief. Additionally, they will consider what, if anything, can be said to defeat the sceptic.

Each and every lecture consists of a main topic and a supplementary, or as it is called below ‘special’, topic. The latter bridges the main topic to discussions in other areas of philosophy or different fields altogether. The supplementary topic is meant to help place the main topic in a broader context, thereby strengthening the student’s understanding and appreciation of the discussion at hand.

Please note that due to copyright restrictions I cannot upload all the required readings on Moodle, though you will find that there is still a fair amount.

Disclaimer: The compulsory readings can be changed at any time in order to respond to the needs of course participants. It is important that students check for updates on Moodle every week.

***************

Main Reading Source:

Further Reading Sources:

Please note that the following abbreviations are used below:
(AU): Audi text
(GS): Greco and Sosa guide
(SK): Sosa, Kim, Fantl and McGrath anthology
(SM): Smith anthology

MT Week 1: FOUNDATIONALISM AND COHERENTISM
Key questions: What is justification? Are there beliefs that justify but are themselves not justified by other beliefs? If so, what, if anything, is capable of justifying them? If not, how can there be any justification whatsoever? Is coherentism a viable way to understand justification?

**Essential Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**Special Topic (+Reading):** The Fundamentals of Conceptual Analysis

**MT Week 2: WAYS OF KNOWING - Perception**

Key questions: Can the justificational power of beliefs that are themselves not justified by other beliefs be imputed to the faculty of perception? What are the arguments from illusion, hallucination and perspective meant to establish? Is the idea of the given just a myth?

**Essential Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**Special Topic (+Reading):** Non-Conceptualism
MT Week 3: WAYS OF KNOWING - Testimony

**Key questions:** Can testimony be a source of justification and knowledge? Does knowledge acquired through another’s testimony depend on evidence that this person is a reliable source of testimony? Must a speaker know that \( p \) in order for a hearer to come to know that \( p \)?

**Essential Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**Special Topic (+Reading): Social Epistemology and Social Choice Theory**

MT Week 4: KNOWLEDGE ANALYSIS - Inferences and Defeaters

**Key questions:** What is knowledge? Can a satisfactory analysis of knowledge be given? If so, what would the analysans look like? Is justified true belief both necessary and sufficient for knowledge? Can the no true defeater account overcome all counterexamples?

**Essential Reading:**
Gettier, E. (1963) ‘Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?’, *Analysis*, vol. 23(6):121-123 [Also in (SK)].

**Further Reading:**

**Special Topic (+Reading): Experimental Philosophy**

**MT Week 5: KNOWLEDGE ANALYSIS - Causes and Reliability**

**Key questions:** What relation, if any, does causality have to knowledge? Can we speak of knowledge as being the culmination of reliably-produced beliefs?

**Essential Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**Special Topic (+Reading):** Prototype Theory

**MT Week 6: KNOWLEDGE ANALYSIS - Tracking the Truth**

**Key questions:** Is knowledge closed under entailment? What, if anything, does counter-factual reasoning have to do with knowing? Can Nozick’s account help defeat the sceptic?

**Essential Reading:**

**Further Reading:**

**Special Topic (+Reading):** Counterfactual Reasoning

MT Week 7: READING WEEK

MT Week 8: INTERNALISM VS. EXTERNALISM

Key questions: Do we need to know that we know in order to justifiably claim that we know something?

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

Special Topic (+Reading): Self-Knowledge

MT Week 9: SCEPTICISM

Key questions: Could we ever know that we're not merely brains-in-a-vat? If not, can we claim to know anything at all?

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:
Special Topic (+Reading): Scepticism about Logic

MT Week 10: NATURALISM

Key questions: Can the naturalist answer the sceptical challenge? Should the study of knowledge be left to the sciences and not philosophy? If yes, are there no useful contributions philosophy can still make towards this study?

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

Special Topic (+Reading): Evolutionary Epistemology

MT Week 11: CONTEXTUALISM

Key questions: Are standards of justification invariant across different contexts? If not, should they be?

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:
Special Topic (+Reading): Perspectivism

MT Week 12: COLLECTIONS

***************