



School of Arts & Science
 HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT
 PHIL 203-001
 Skepticism, Evidence and Truth
 FALL 2014

COURSE OUTLINE

The course description is online @ <http://camosun.ca/learn/calendar/current/web/phil.html>

⚡ Please note: the College electronically stores this outline for five (5) years only.
 It is **strongly recommended** you keep a copy of this outline with your academic records.
 You will need this outline for any future application/s for transfer credit/s to other colleges/universities.

1. Instructor Information

(a)	Instructor:	Megan Shelstad		
(b)	Office Hours:	Tuesdays 4:30 - 5:30 and Thursdays 1:30 – 2:15		
(c)	Location:	Young 312		
(d)	Phone:	370-3950	Alternative Phone:	
(e)	Email:	shelstad@camosun.bc.ca		
(f)	Website:			

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. **Accurately summarize and evaluate** central problems in epistemology.
2. **Critically examine** classic and contemporary solutions to these problems.
3. Make **comparisons** between various philosophical positions and have an overall sense of the history of epistemology.
4. Take a philosophical position and support that position with good reasons.
5. **Explain** the relevance of epistemology to everyday problems concerning beliefs and values, knowledge, justification and ethics.
6. **Describe** and **critically assess** alternative challenges to contemporary epistemology.

3. Required Materials

- (a) Texts: Coursepack (available in the bookstore), **REQUIRED**

4. Course Content and Schedule

Lectures: Tuesdays: 2:30 - 4:20 **Young 217**

Seminars: Thursdays – Group A: 2:30 - 3:20, Group B: 3:30 – 4:20 p.m. **Young 217**

5. Basis of Student Assessment (Weighting)

- (a) Assignments: 15% - "Truth-Off" debate
- (b) Quizzes: 10% - 6 quizzes (2% each, best 5, no make-ups)
- (c) Exams: 20% - midterm test, 25% - final test
- (d) Other: 30% - Seminar attendance and participation with homework (see back of reading schedule)

6. Grading System

(No changes are to be made to this section unless the Approved Course Description has been forwarded through the Education Council of Camosun College for approval.)

Standard Grading System (GPA)

Percentage	Grade	Description	Grade Point Equivalency
90-100	A+		9
85-89	A		8
80-84	A-		7
77-79	B+		6
73-76	B		5
70-72	B-		4
65-69	C+		3
60-64	C		2
50-59	D	Minimum level of achievement for which credit is granted; a course with a "D" grade cannot be used as a prerequisite.	1
0-49	F	Minimum level has not been achieved.	0

Temporary Grades

Temporary grades are assigned for specific circumstances and will convert to a final grade according to the grading scheme being used in the course. See Grading Policy E-1.5 at camosun.ca for information on conversion to final grades, and for additional information on student record and transcript notations.

Temporary Grade	Description
I	<i>Incomplete:</i> A temporary grade assigned when the requirements of a course have not yet been completed due to hardship or extenuating circumstances, such as illness or death in the family.
IP	<i>In progress:</i> A temporary grade assigned for courses that, due to design may require a further enrollment in the same course. No more than two IP grades will be assigned for the same course. (For these courses a final grade will be assigned to either the 3 rd course attempt or at the point of course completion.)
CW	<i>Compulsory Withdrawal:</i> A temporary grade assigned by a Dean when an instructor, after documenting the prescriptive strategies applied and consulting with peers, deems that a student is unsafe to self or others and must be removed from the lab, practicum, worksite, or field placement.

7. Recommended Materials or Services to Assist Students to Succeed Throughout the Course

LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College calendar, at Student Services, or the College web site at camosun.ca.

STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

There is a Student Conduct Policy **which includes plagiarism**. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, at Student Services, and the College web site in the Policy Section.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AS APPROPRIATE OR AS REQUIRED

Reading Schedule (from the coursepack) to be done BEFORE class

The Analysis of Knowledge

Week 1 (Sept. 2, 4): Lecture: Introduction: the "Standard View," exercise/questionnaire
Seminar: Whyte, "The Right to your Opinion"

Week 2 (Sept. 9, 11): Plato (*The Republic, Theaetetus*)
Seminar: Gettier

Week 3 (Sept. 16, 18): Peirce
Seminar: Peirce's 4 ways – personal examples

Skepticism

Week 4 (Sept. 23, 25): Sextus Empiricus (read the footnotes as well), "The Fourth Mode"
Seminar: Bring in examples of "The Ten Modes"

Week 5 (Sept. 30, Oct. 2): Chisholm, Moore
Seminar: Moore's argument on page 237

Week 6 (Oct. 7, 9): Wittgenstein, Unger
*Seminar: ***MIDTERM TEST, THURS. OCT. 9****

Rationalism and Empiricism

THANKSGIVING DAY - MON. OCT. 13***

Week 7 (Oct. 14, 16): Kessler, Descartes
Seminar: Plato: "Meno"

Week 8 (Oct. 21, 23): Locke, Hume
Seminar: Aristotle

Week 9 (Oct. 28, 30): Hume
Seminar: on "Truthyism"

On Truth

Week 10 (Nov. 4, 6): Lynch, overview of Russell, Bradley, James (debate "TRUTH-OFF")
Seminar: work period for debate

Week 11 (Nov. 13): college closed on Tuesday
Seminar: "Truth-Off" debate

REMEMBRANCE DAY - TUES. NOV. 11***

Week 12 (Nov. 18, 20): Nietzsche, Rorty
Seminar: TBA

Epistemology, Ethics and Science

Week 13 (Nov. 25, 27): Clifford, James
Seminar: TBA

Week 14 (Dec. 2, 4): Feldman, Feyerabend
Seminar: TBA

FINAL EXAM IN EXAM PERIOD

SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS AND HOMEWORK (30%)

In seminar periods we will be analyzing and discussing various issues in epistemology. These sometimes present cases which offer examples of various situations that have happened (or not, as in "thought experiments") and provide the opportunity to practice our reasoning and argument analysis skills. The authors offer claims (conclusions) for which they provide reasons (premises) and evidence for why we should be convinced of the truth of their claims.

You should employ all the usual rules of grammar, spelling, etc. as well as using an appropriate method of citation for any quotes you may use. My preference is for typewritten work. One single-spaced page should be more than sufficient.

The following is a template you can use when analyzing arguments. There are also argument summary sheets sprinkled throughout the coursepack for your use. Check the reading schedule for specific instructions.

You need to do 10 and there are 11 opportunities so you can miss 1 for free. 1 mark for attendance/participation, 2 marks for written work.

TEMPLATE FOR ARGUMENT ANALYSIS (summary and evaluation)

1. What is the author's main point(s)? What are they claiming and trying to convince you of? Be specific.
2. What main reasons (premises) does the author offer in support of the main point? Are these good reasons? Why? Are these reasons relevant to the author's conclusion? Be specific when answering these questions.
3. What evidence is offered in support of those reasons (premises)? Is the evidence good? Why? Is the evidence relevant to the author's reasons and/or conclusion? Be specific when answering these questions.
4. Does the author's argument(s) depend on specific principles? What are they (again, be specific)? Principles (including ethical principles) are general guidelines for behavior, what we should, or should not, do.
5. Does the author's argument(s) depend on any key beliefs or assumptions? Assumptions are claims or beliefs for which we do not offer reasons or evidence but they can provide a place to begin. Are these assumptions warranted or unwarranted? Explain why (again, be specific)?
6. What objections can you think of (use the coursepack) to the author's claims or arguments? Are they good objections? Are they relevant? Did they already address them in the article in a convincing way?

Phil 203 questionnaire – What do you know?

Most of us think we know quite a lot. The following list identifies some general categories of these things and gives examples of each. The categories may overlap and they are far from precise. Still, they give us a good idea of the sorts of things we can know. Please add your own example in the space provided.

1. Our immediate environment: _____
"There's a chair over there."
"The radio is on."
2. Our own thoughts and feelings: _____
"I'm excited about the new semester."
"I'm not looking forward to doing my taxes."
3. Commonsense facts about the world: _____
"France is a country in Europe."
"Many trees drop their leaves in the fall."
4. Scientific facts: _____
"Smoking causes lung cancer."
"The earth revolves around the sun."
5. Mental states of others: _____
"Sally wants to paint her house."
"That guy who is laughing so hard found my joke hilarious."
6. The past: _____
"John A. MacDonald was the first prime minister of Canada."
"Martin Luther King was assassinated."
7. Mathematics: _____
"2 + 2 = 4"
"3 x 5 = 15"
8. Conceptual truths: _____
"All bachelors are unmarried."
"Red is a colour."
9. Morality: _____
"Gratuitous torturing of infants is wrong."
"There's nothing wrong with taking a break from work once in a while."
10. The future: _____
"The sun will rise tomorrow."
"The Toronto Maple Leafs will not win the Stanley Cup next year."

11. Religion: _____

"God exists."

"God doesn't exist."

"God loves me."

12. Supernatural: _____

"Some people are psychic."

"Extraterrestrial beings are here on earth right now."

"Angels [non-metaphorical] provide guidance for our lives."

13. Write down a claim in which you strongly believe. Select one that pertains to an important social, religious or political issue.

14. As best you can, explain why you believe this.