

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

COLLEGE: A&S

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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: PHIL 325: Theory of Knowledge
2. Credit Hours 3
3. Course Description

An investigation of the nature, scope and limits of knowledge. Some possible topics are the connection between belief and knowledge, knowledge of other people's minds, the reliability of memory, the possibility of certainty in knowledge, theories of truth.

4. This course is (check one):
 - an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)
 - an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)
 - a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)
5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.
 - Effective Communication**
 - Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)**
 - Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)**
 - Perspectives on a Diverse World**
 - Global Awareness
 - U.S. Diversity
 - Knowledge of the Disciplines**
 - Arts
 - Humanities
 - Science
 - Social Science
 - Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)**

- Self and Well Being
- Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students.

This course is a writing intensive course in the philosophy program. Students will write 2 take-home essay exams and a substantial philosophical paper. The essay exams are devoted to understanding and critiquing arguments put forward by someone else. The substantial paper is a reasoned defense of a thesis. Students will choose an issue within the theory of knowledge, formulate a thesis and defend that thesis.

There are two main kinds of philosophical writing: (1) Critiquing arguments put forward by someone else; and (2) Defending a thesis. Students will do both kinds of writing in this class.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

Writing Intensive Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.

Students will learn how to read and write a philosophical paper. Philosophers read with two things in mind: (1) What is the most charitable interpretation of the author's argument? (2) Do the premises of the author's argument support his or her conclusion? Students will be involved in this type of reading throughout the course, as we read the work of philosophers and, in class discussions, reconstruct their arguments and critique their positions. The skills involved are critical reading and critical reasoning, most of which they will have acquired in previous philosophy courses. Students will demonstrate their ability to read and understand complex philosophical arguments by doing an in-class presentation and writing two take-home essay exams. Exam questions require both the exposition of a philosophical position and a critique of that position. Students will also learn to write a substantial philosophical paper, in which they formulate and defend their own thesis. They will turn in a thesis statement approximately three weeks before the rough draft is due. Thesis statements will

be assessed for feasibility, clarity, and appropriate breadth and depth. Drafts will be turned in for comments and students will revise their papers in light of those comments.

2. Use writing strategies that achieve the purpose(s) for writing and address the expectations of audience(s) within a discipline.

A philosophical paper is a reasoned defense of a thesis. The purpose of such a paper is to establish the truth of a conclusion. Students will learn the strategies for writing such a paper. Drafts will be turned in for comments and students will revise the paper in light of those comments. Papers will be assessed in light of the expectations of philosophical writing: (1) Is the thesis clearly stated? (2) Do the author's premises support his or her conclusion – is the reasoning sound/cogent? (3) Are controversial premises supported?

3. Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions.

Students will formulate a thesis and defend that thesis. They will consider objections to their arguments and respond to those objections.

Philosophy is not an empirical discipline. Thus, research consists of reading the relevant background literature. Students will be introduced to various databases (e.g., The Philosopher's Index) that will help them find the background literature for their paper.

4. Use discipline-specific genres to communicate information.

The genre of philosophy is that of an argumentative paper. Students will write a substantial argumentative paper, as well as two take-home essay exams in which they demonstrate their ability to understand and critique an argument put forward by someone else.

The substantial paper written in PHIL 325 will be modeled after philosophical journal articles. Although students will be writing primarily for other class members, they will acquire the skills necessary for professional philosophical writing.

5. Understand conventions for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline.

Students will understand, from reading and studying journal articles and texts, how philosophical argument is disseminated and communicated. Interpretation is an essential part of both reading and writing philosophy.

Assessment of Writing Intensive Outcomes

Students will be required to write two essay exams (partially objective and partially critical), do a presentation and write a substantial philosophical paper. The essay exams and presentation will assess whether students have learned how to read and understand a philosophical argument (outcomes 1 and 5). The exams and presentation will also assess whether students have learned appropriate methods for critiquing an argument (outcomes 4 and 5). The final term paper will assess whether students have learned how to formulate and defend a thesis and respond to objections. This paper will be done in a series of drafts. Students will revise their papers in response to comments. (Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Criteria for evaluation (final paper):

1. The issue and the thesis are clearly stated.
2. The paper is well organized:
 - a. the paper progresses logically, transitions are clear, the reader can easily follow the paper
 - b. each paragraph is well structured
 - c. sentences are well structured and grammatical; spelling and punctuation is accurate
3. The arguments in the paper support the thesis. Controversial premises are supported.
4. Terminology is used appropriately. Vague/ambiguous/technical terms are defined.

The most weight will be given to #3.

8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.

Action of the Department/College

1. Department

Vote of department faculty: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Department Head _____
Date

2. College

College Dean _____
Date

Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee _____
Date

Approval

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum _____
Date

Philosophy 325: Theory of Knowledge

Course Description: An investigation of the nature, scope and limits of knowledge. Some possible topics are the connection between belief and knowledge, knowledge of other people's minds, the reliability of memory, the possibility of certainty in knowledge, theories of truth.

The Theory of Knowledge asks questions about what we can know and how our beliefs can be justified. We will begin with skepticism – can we know anything at all? After that, we'll turn to the traditional analysis of knowledge and its problems. We'll discuss contemporary theories of justification, naturalized epistemology, externalism, relativism, and virtue epistemology.

I plan to run this course as a seminar. In other words, our sessions will be *discussions*, not lectures. We will work through the problems and issues together.

Rationale for inclusion as a Writing Intensive Course: This course is a writing intensive course in the philosophy program. Students will write 2 take-home essay exams and a substantial philosophical paper. The essay exams are devoted to understanding and critiquing arguments put forward by someone else. The substantial paper is a reasoned defense of a thesis. Students will choose an issue within the theory of knowledge, formulate a thesis and defend that thesis.

There are two main kinds of philosophical writing: (1) Critiquing arguments put forward by someone else; and (2) Defending a thesis. Students will do both kinds of writing in this class.

Writing Intensive Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.

Students will learn how to read and write a philosophical paper. Philosophers read with two things in mind: (1) What is the most charitable interpretation of the author's argument? (2) Do the premises of the author's argument support his or her conclusion? Students will be involved in this type of reading throughout the course, as we read the work of philosophers and, in class discussions, reconstruct their arguments and critique their positions. The skills involved are critical reading and critical reasoning, most of which they will have acquired in previous philosophy courses. Students will demonstrate their ability to read and understand complex philosophical arguments by doing an in-class presentation and writing two take-home essay exams. Exam questions require both the exposition of a philosophical position and a critique of that position. Students will also learn to write a substantial philosophical paper, in which they formulate and defend their own thesis. They will turn in a thesis statement approximately three weeks before the rough draft is due. Thesis statements will be assessed for feasibility, clarity, and appropriate breadth and depth. Drafts will be turned in for comments and students will revise their papers in light of those comments.

2. Use writing strategies that achieve the purpose(s) for writing and address the expectations of audience(s) within a discipline.

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3. Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions.

Students will formulate a thesis and defend that thesis. They will consider objections to their arguments and respond to those objections.

Philosophy is not an empirical discipline. Thus, research consists of reading the relevant background literature. Students will be introduced to various databases (e.g., The Philosopher's Index) that will help them find the background literature for their paper.

4. Use discipline-specific genres to communicate information.

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The substantial paper written in PHIL 325 will be modeled after philosophical journal articles. Although students will be writing primarily for other class members, they will acquire the skills necessary for professional philosophical writing.

5. Understand conventions for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline.

Students will understand, from reading and studying journal articles and texts, how philosophical argument is disseminated and communicated. Interpretation is an essential part of both reading and writing philosophy.

Text: *Epistemology: An Anthology*. Ed. Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim. Oxford: Blackwell (2000).

Course Shell: Log on to www.emuonline.edu. There will be a link to Theory of Knowledge.

NOTICES: (1) Academic dishonesty will be penalized.
(2) All cell phones MUST be turned off before coming to class.

Requirements:

Take home midterm:	25%
Take home final:	25%
Paper:	30%
Presentation:	15%
Participation:	5%

Exams

The exams will be partially objective and partially your original work. I will ask you to explain an issue or someone's position and then critique it. The critique is at least as important (if not more important) than the objective explanation.

I will give you a list of questions and ask you to pick a proper subset of them to answer. You will have one full week to complete each exam.

Paper

You are to pick a thesis and defend it. Your paper must deal with an epistemological issue, but it need not be one that we are covering in class. All paper topics must be approved by me. Everyone must turn in at least one rough draft. I will comment on your draft and return it to you. I expect you to take my comments into consideration when you revise your paper. You can turn in as many rough drafts as you want to turn in, up until the day the rough draft is due. (A detailed assignment sheet will be handed out in class.)

Presentation

I will ask you to lead the class discussion on an article of your choice. What this means is that you will present the important points from the article and raise questions for discussion. Since *everyone* will have read the paper carefully, you won't be discussing this by yourself. I will give you a handout to help you prepare your presentation.

I realize that the material in this class is difficult. Your grade will be based on how carefully you have prepared for your discussion day and how much effort you put into it. You must turn in an outline of your presentation.

Participation

Participation is essential in an upper division philosophy class. You aren't here merely to learn what other people have said about these issues (although that is important), but also to think deeply about the issues and to attempt to develop and refine your own view. Discussion with others will help you accomplish these goals.

Assessment of Writing Intensive Outcomes

The essay exams and presentation will assess whether students have learned how to read and understand a philosophical argument (outcomes 1 and 5). The exams and presentation will also assess whether students have learned appropriate methods for critiquing an argument (outcomes 4 and 5). The final term paper will assess whether students have learned how to formulate and defend a thesis and respond to objections. This paper will be done in a series of drafts. Students will revise their papers in response to comments. (Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Tentative Schedule

Note: Starred readings (**) should not be considered for presentations.

- Week 1: *Introduction to course*
Reading: Descartes, *Meditations* I and II
B. Stroud, "The Problem of the External World"
- Week 2: *Skepticism*
Reading: G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World," "Four Forms of Scepticism," and "Certainty"
P.F. Strawson, "Skepticism, Naturalism and Trancendental Arguments"
P. Unger, "An Argument for Skepticism"
SIGN UP FOR PRESENTATIONS
- Week 3: *Defining Knowledge*
Reading: E. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
G. Harman, Selections from *Thought*
R. Nozick, "Knowledge and Skepticism"
- Week 4: *Contemporary Foundationalism and Coherentism*
Reading: R. Chisholm, "The Myth of the Given"
E. Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid"
- Week 5: *Contemporary Foundationalism and Coherentism* continued
Reading: D. Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge" **
- Week 6: *Epistemology Naturalized*
Reading: W.V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" **
J. Kim, "What is Naturalized Epistemology?"
- Week 7: *Epistemology Naturalized* continued
Reading: H. Putnam, "Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized"
R. Audi, "The Old Skepticism, the New Foundationalism, and Naturalized Epistemology"
TAKE HOME MIDTERM DUE
- Week 8: *Epistemic Externalism*
Reading: A. Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?"
W. Alston, "How to Think About Reliability"
E. Conee and R. Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliability"
- Week 9: *Epistemic Externalism* continued
Reading: K. Lehrer, "Externalism and Epistemology Naturalized"
R. Fumerton, "Externalism and Skepticism"
THESIS STATEMENT DUE
- Week 10: *Virtue Epistemology and Proper Cognitive Functioning*
Reading: A. Goldman, "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology"
A. Plantinga, "Warrant: A First Approximation"

- Week 11: *Virtue Epistemology and Proper Cognitive Functioning* continued
Reading: L. Zagzebski, "Virtues of the Mind"
J. Greco, "Virtues and Vices of Virtue Epistemology"
- Week 12: **ROUGH DRAFTS DUE IN MY MAILBOX**
Epistemic Contextualism
Reading: K. DeRose, "Solving the Skeptical Problem"
- Week 13: *Epistemic Contextualism* continued
Reading: D. Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge"
S. Cohen, "Solutions to Epistemological Problems"
- Week 14: *Relativism*
Reading: M. Williams, "Epistemological Realism"
P. Moser, "Justification, Meta-Epistemology, and Meaning"
PAPER DUE
- Week 15: *Relativism* cont.
Reading: S. Stich, "Reflective Equilibrium, Analytic Epistemology, and the Problem of Cognitive Diversity" **
TAKE HOME FINAL DUE
- Week 16: All materials returned; general class discussion