

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-2023**

**Philosophy 2500G:**  
**Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge**

Winter Term 2023

M 10:30-12:30; W 11:30-12:30

SSC-2020

Instructor: Prof. Robert DiSalle

Office Hours: M 12:30-2:30

(and by appointment)

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**DESCRIPTION**

All areas of philosophy, and of human knowledge in general, depend on assumptions about the nature of knowledge: assumptions about how we come to know what we know, what we can know about the world, and how we come to trust the knowledge claims of other people as well as our own. The theory of knowledge thus has metaphysical, psychological, and social dimensions as well as directly epistemological ones. This course considers some of the most important problems in the theory of knowledge, from a selection of classical and contemporary viewpoints. In this way we will gain some insight into the origins, motivations, and evolution of these problems as well as their implications for contemporary thought. Topics will include the nature of perception, the relation between sense and reason, scepticism and certainty, trust in the testimony others, deductive and non-deductive inference, and the role of a priori principles in our common sense and scientific knowledge. Although there are no formal prerequisites, some prior familiarity with philosophical texts will be assumed.

**TEXTS**

Text: Huemer, ed. *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings* (Routledge, 2002)

Supplementary texts to be posted on OWL

**METHOD OF EVALUATION**

2 short essays (each 25% of final mark)

Final exam (40% of final mark)

Regular participation in class discussion (10% of final mark)

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To study classic and contemporary texts in the theory of knowledge
2. To understand the role of epistemological questions in knowledge generally
3. To understand and critically evaluate knowledge claims
4. To develop competence in critical analysis by careful reading and discussion
5. To develop skills of oral expression and argument through class discussion
6. To develop writing skills through written assignments

**AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first

week of classes.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.