

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2025-26

PHILOSOP 2500G
Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

No prerequisites

COURSE DESCRIPTION

◀ This course is an introduction to epistemology. It covers a broad range of traditional questions in this field, such as:

- Do we know anything?
- What can we know?
- What is knowledge?
- Which beliefs are justified?
- How can we justify our beliefs?

Please note that this is a fully online, asynchronous course based on short online videos. Access to the Internet on a weekly basis is required. ▶

LEARNING OUTCOMES

◀ By the end of this course, you should be able to explain and evaluate the main philosophical arguments and positions discussed in this course both orally and in writing. You should acquire and/or improve upon general skills useful for critically engaging with philosophical ideas as well as other pursuits, including analyzing, and critically evaluating arguments, skills involved in effective oral and written communication, and fruitful engagement with peers. ▶

TEXT

McCain, Kevin (2021) *Epistemology: 50 Puzzles, Paradoxes, and Thought Experiments*. Routledge. (US\$29.59 from the publisher's website or CA\$44.19 from Amazon.ca)

The ebook version is available [from the publisher](#) and other sources (Google Play, Kindle Store, Apple Books). A physical copy can also be ordered [from Amazon.ca](#). Any version you find will do because there is only one edition.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

In this course, **the use of generative AI (including automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, text-generating AI assistants such as ChatGPT, Claude, and similar) is prohibited.**

METHOD OF EVALUATION

The primary method of evaluation for this course is a series of essays of maximum 850 words each. Each essay addresses a relatively narrow question about the course material. In total, you will have **four opportunities** to write essays. **Your course grade will be the average of your three best essays.**

Example

You have written four essays, for which you have obtained the following grades: 80%, 50%, 90%, 80%. We discard the 50% essay. The average of the remaining three is 83.3%. This would be your course grade before rounding.

In principle, you can have a grade of 100% by writing only three essays, but we recommend writing all four. Many students who have little practice writing essays find that they need some practice before their results correspond to their grade expectations.

The essay due dates will be spaced roughly equally throughout the term.

Anti-AI measures for essays (important!):

- In this course, **you are required to show the process by which you developed your essay.** Showing an adequate process is an integral part of the grading rubric, and you will lose points for failing to show an adequate researching and writing process. You must make accessible:
 - Your notes
 - Your outline or any similar sketch
 - All drafts
- To this end, all essay work, from notetaking to drafting and final copy editing, **must take place entirely within a single Google Docs document**, which is to be shared with edit privileges with the designated course Google Account. This allows your instructor and graders to see your entire work process through the revision history.
- **Essays submitted without an edit history showing your work from notetaking and outlining to drafting will be given a grade of zero. Such history is considered an integral part of your required submission.**
- Furthermore, when writing essays, you are required to cite all relevant parts of the course presentations or textbook with precise page numbers. Essays that fail to satisfy this requirement will incur a penalty of up to 20%.
- If your submitted document leaves some doubt regarding the method used to prepare the essay, we will invite you to discuss it in person or on zoom.

This course implements flexible deadlines in lieu of minor academic considerations. By default, we grant a grace period of 3 days (that is, 72 hours) for all essay submissions. You do not need to

say anything if your essay is handed in 3 days or less after the official deadline. If it is submitted later, however, you will be assessed a penalty of 2% per day, and we will not accept your essay if it is more than 2 weeks late unless you have a major academic consideration from your counsellor. If you only have an academic consideration for 3 days or less, we will not grant an extension since this is already granted as part of the grace period.

Please consult the **Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs**

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

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.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

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

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.

2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf. In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

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.

SCHOLASTIC 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

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

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>).

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters.

Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) 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 (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.